

# Building in procurement excellence from day one

Nexus Multi Academy Trust had expanded rapidly in a sector facing serious resource challenges and inexperienced in procurement. The Trust turned to the CIPS Procurement Excellence Programme to guide the establishment of a brand new procurement function with excellence at its core. Within months, the team had saved £330,000 and been recognised as an enabler of the Trust's ambitious growth plans and a beacon of best practice in the sector.



“

Our CIPS Assessor really understood that education comes first for us and how to apply the PEP framework in the context of our sector. He didn't give answers to my queries but would spark a different way of thinking that put me on the right path.”

**Lana Stoyles**

Head of Business Transformation,  
Nexus Multi Academy Trust



## Breaking with tradition

Like all public sector charities, Nexus Multi Academy Trust (MAT) has to contend with both regulatory restrictions and value for money objectives. In education there's the added tension between a mission to provide the best possible care and teaching of children and the reality of ever-tightening budgets and ever-growing energy and infrastructure costs.

Traditionally in this sector, procurement sits either within the central finance function or falls to the business managers and other ex-teaching staff on the front line running schools. Having grown from three to 15 schools in eight years, Nexus MAT recognised that if it was to achieve its planned growth trajectory and continue to be the best it can be, things had to change.

Galvanised by the passion of its first-ever procurement appointee, Lana Stoyles, together with Warren Carratt CEO and Joel Hardwick ACEO, to bring procurement expertise into education at Nexus MAT and beyond, the Trust set out on its procurement professionalisation journey with CIPS.



## Starting from scratch

At Nexus, the Procurement Excellence Programme (PEP) acted both as a benchmark of existing policies, processes and capabilities and an accelerator for the foundation of a completely new, high performing procurement function.

An early decision not just to meet every one of the required standards set out in the PEP framework but to exceed them put Stoyles on a steep learning curve. Reaching the top was only possible, she says, because of the way CIPS Assessor Mike Fairbotham encouraged and supported her aspiration, dedication and innovative thinking throughout.

One of Stoyles' most significant innovations was to immediately create a procurement team of 16 made up of all the school's resource (né business) managers. By using the PEP framework to guide the development of a new matrix management model, job descriptions, appraisal process and training, Nexus MAT ensured CIPS global standards were embedded from the start.

# The benefits for NEXUS

**Nexus Multi Academy Trust reports that achieving the Procurement Excellence Programme Award has enabled it to:**

- Professionalise procurement, raising its profile, influence and value to the organisation
- Provide expert procurement support to school staff and advice to the leadership team
- Articulate and implement a strategy capitalising on procurement's commercial power
- Increase savings through new contracts and collaborative buying
- Shape a supplier management strategy that's improving quality, delivery and relationships
- Realise the benefits of standardised category management procedures
- Improve contract management with one central register capturing all in-school procurement
- Strengthen analysis and reporting of procurement spend, best value and pipeline
- Formalise CIPS standards-based processes and templates for large tendering work
- Create a procurement manual so new recruits and leaders can continue best practices.



## Enabling everyday excellence

Nexus is only the second MAT to achieve the PEP Award, which it believes has set up the procurement function for success. By bringing home how to leverage the things it was already doing well, such as communication and leadership. And by showing what the A-Z of good procurement looks like and how to deliver excellence every day.

The Award process has also given Stoyles the confidence and knowledge that is enabling her to make life easier for Headteachers - so they can concentrate on making life better for children and young people. She has, for example, taken on some of their more complex contracts, explaining only what each Head needs to do and then managing them centrally.

As Nexus gears up to grow by more schools over the coming years, procurement is set to have a central role in helping overcome the hurdles it will face as it becomes a large MAT. In the meantime, Stoyles is spreading the word. 'Education is a big family,' she says, 'and if we can roll out this best practice across other Trusts that would be amazing.'



What Nexus has achieved in a year is astonishing. The sponsorship and support of the CFO and CEO were invaluable as was Lana's passion for better procurement in education and the fact that everyone knows who she is and how she can help them.,,

**Mike Fairbotham**  
CIPS Assessor

**1300**

**1300 staff**

**15**

**15 schools**

**£56m**

**Annual budget of £56m**

**£11m**

**£11m annual procurement budget**

**£250k**

**Annual savings of £250,000 on temporary teaching staff**

**£80k**

**£80,000 saved by new processes and contract terms**



“

The Procurement Excellence Programme is about asking, 'has something been developed, has it been communicated and is it embedded at all levels'. It's a disciplined way of making sure these three things have been done for every aspect of procurement.”

**Mike Fairbotham**  
CIPS Assessor

**The CIPS Procurement Excellence Programme is an independent and comprehensive assessment of your procurement team function designed and delivered by world-class, leading experts.**

- Globally recognised award
- Demonstrates how well your procurement function is performing against an internationally recognised standard
- Helps your organisation build a function fit and ready for future challenges



Scan the QR code for more information

**Want to see how we can develop your procurement and supply team?**

Get in touch with us:  
[corporate.solutions@cips.org](mailto:corporate.solutions@cips.org)

[www.cips.org/cips-for-business](http://www.cips.org/cips-for-business)