

# CIPS helps Academy Trust free up funds for frontline education services

Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust set out to transform its procurement function from a small, back-office operation to a high profile, value-adding contributor to its mission. CIPS Procurement Excellence Programme - regarded by the Trust as the equivalent of an Outstanding rating by Ofsted - was chosen to guide and fast-track its development. In just six months, procurement improvements were enabling the release of funds for frontline spending to improve students' learning outcomes.

**CASE STUDY**  
**PROCUREMENT**  
**EXCELLENCE**  
**PROGRAMME**



“Our procurement practices can release funds that help front-facing education. If I can get more efficient contracts in place at better value for money I know that more money is available for frontline services. Ultimately, that should be the goal of all public sector procurement.”

**Geoff Hopper**  
ex-Head of Procurement  
Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust



## Enhancing learning outcomes

The Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust's limited procurement function had always had its work cut out: the Trust encompasses 14 schools and academies plus a post-16 college with nine centres across the south east of England. Add to this rising costs, the legacy of the pandemic and a shrinking labour pool for outsourced contracts and it was clear something had to change.

In the face of this growing complexity and financial stress, the Trust determined to realise the potential of procurement as a driver of savings and enabler of value, particularly for major contracts. At the heart of its ambitions was the achievement of benefits that would directly impact the learning outcomes of its 1500 pupils and students, who have a wide range of learning abilities and additional needs.

Change started with the establishment of a new Head of Procurement role and the recruitment of a professional, Geoff Hopper, passionate about unlocking procurement's power in schools. He also came with personal experience of the Procurement Excellence Programme (PEP) and knowledge of the Department for Education's funding scheme for procurement improvement in schools.

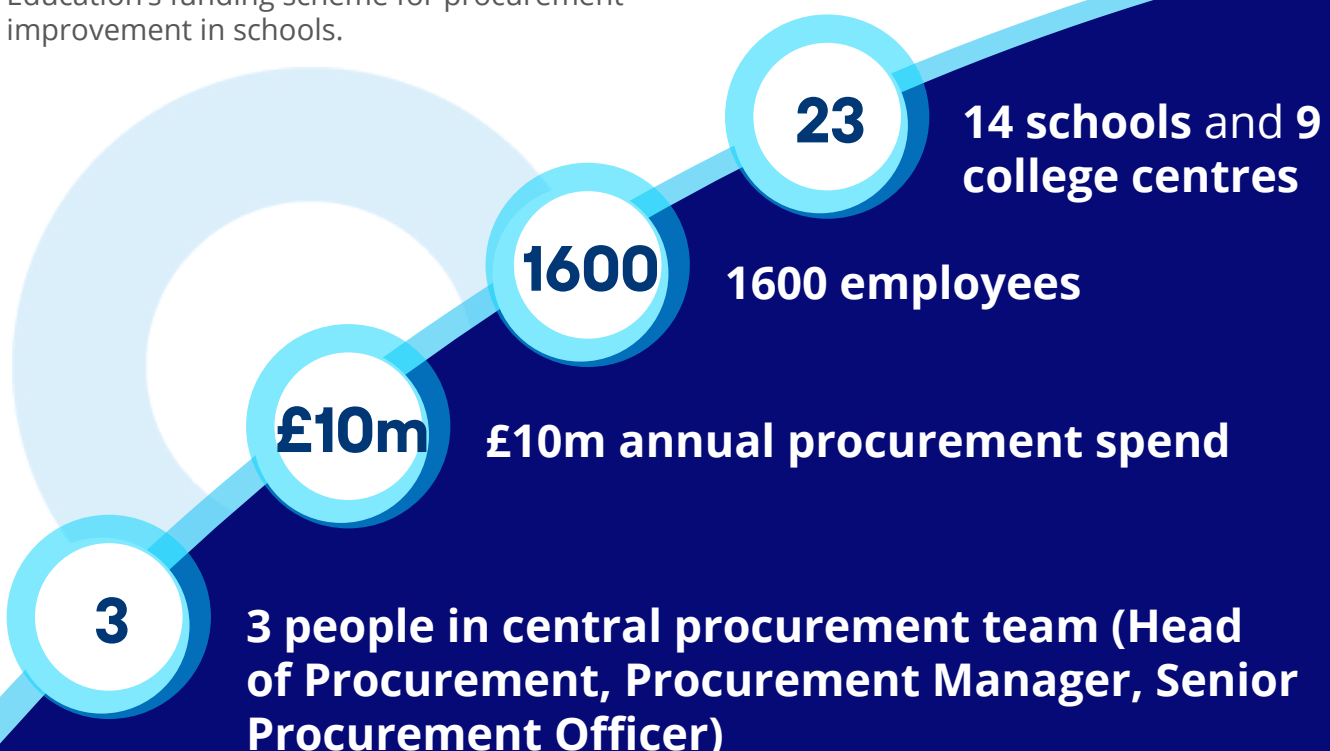


## Focusing on standardisation

By accessing this funding, the Trust undertook the Procurement Excellence Programme, starting with a diagnostic phase, leading to the main PEP assessment and improvement process. Hopper found this first phase enlightening – and invaluable in terms of mapping out the strengths and weaknesses of how the function was run.

The diagnostic highlighted strong leadership expertise and financial control and identified areas requiring attention. These were primarily around standardising processes and templates, particularly for higher value purchases. While strategic processes were fundamentally good they tended to be stored in people's heads and needed to be formally recorded.

As Hopper worked through the PEP process he made good the gaps identified, with his CIPS Assessor helping him, as 'a critical friend and mentor', reflect on how procedures and processes could be made more efficient. One of the outcomes of this work was a comprehensive procurement manual containing essential information for the consistent high quality operation of the function.





## Becoming a value enabler

The Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust became the first multi-academy trust to achieve the Procurement Excellence Programme Standard Award. In the process, it built a centralised team proficient in strategic purchasing which now manages tenders for Trust-wide projects, from building repairs to cleaning and catering services.

With contracts such as these providing better value for money and processes saving time and resources, the team is delighted to know that every pound being saved by procurement is a pound that can be spent on the children and adults in the Trust's care.

The Board and senior management are very aware of the contribution the procurement function is now making to the organisation. The word has also spread to the wider education community, giving the Trust a reputation as a trailblazer and a role as a source of inspiration and insights for other academies seeking to replicate its results.



## The benefits for Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust

**The Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust says that the Performance Excellence Programme Award is enabling it to:**

- Provide tangible value to the organisation and its educational mission
- Relieve in-school procurers of the stress of managing major tenders
- Reassure suppliers that it is a CIPS-accredited organisation with expertise and integrity
- Strengthen control and consistency through the standardisation of processes and procedures
- Reduce supply chain risks through a reviewed and enhanced risk register
- Be more appealing to new recruits and better equipped to manage their performance
- Increase the confidence of the procurement team who now know what excellence looks like
- Be better prepared when going out to market through the introduction of a procurement pipeline
- Increase its reputation and influence within the Trust and the multi-academy trust community.



“

By going through the PEP process, the team was able to stitch together all their best previously disconnected processes and link their refreshed procurement strategy and its clearer objectives with the performance of individual team members to create a coherent whole”

**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



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