



Star



CIPS PEP helps multi-academy trust take procurement to the next level

Star Academies champions procurement as a strategic tool to help make every child's learning journey easier and more productive. Aware of the impact CIPS Procurement Excellence Programme has had on education outcomes for other multi-academy trusts, it signed up. By strengthening and standardising core processes, procurement has embedded best practices that will benefit schools, teachers and pupils now and prepare the ground for future development of the function as the organisation grows.



CASE STUDY
PROCUREMENT
EXCELLENCE
PROGRAMME



Tackling complex challenges

Star Academies runs a network of primary and secondary schools across England dedicated to improving the life chances of children and young people by helping them succeed at the highest levels of education, employment and the professions. The challenge facing procurement wasn't just to continue to add value for every child despite decreasing budgets and increased costs. The complexities inherent in operating across a wide geographical area and with unique site requirements was increasingly demanding a more formalised and disciplined approach to procurement.

Hearing what other multi-academy trusts had achieved through the CIPS Procurement Excellence Programme (PEP), the team became convinced that it would facilitate the maturity it was aiming for in a logical, structured way. Other trusts had also found that the PEP process could ease the introduction of the new documentation regime required by the Procurement Act 2023.

Full funding from a Department for Education initiative to support upskilling within commercial functions across education sealed Star Academies' commitment to embarking on its own CIPS PEP journey.



Fast-tracking progress

Star Academies quickly discovered two unexpected bonuses. The first was that its PEP assessment was to be preceded by a diagnostic exercise. The second, that evidence gathered for the assessment itself can now be discussed with the CIPS Assessor rather than submitted in a written format.

The team found the CIPS diagnostic incredibly useful, identifying as it did the procurement function's maturity level and strong baseline processes as well as procedure and process gaps, and what it needed to do to close them. As a result, the team was able to set to work immediately on three priority areas: strengthening the management of risks and contracts and creating a more robust hierarchy of policies and procedures.

When it came to the assessment itself, the team was in a position to easily and quickly provide robust, comprehensive evidence. This meant its CIPS Assessor was able to target his expertise on the areas that would make the biggest difference in closing all gaps and embedding the new best practices.

The benefits for Star Academies

According to Star Academies, the CIPS Procurement Excellence Programme has enabled it to:

- Benchmark its procurement function against others in the sector and wider public sectors
- Improve process rigour and efficiencies and save money
- Reduce non-compliances and risks throughout the supply chain
- Improve alignment between organisational and procurement strategy
- Share resources and ideas with other multi-academy trusts with experience of the PEP
- Improve the influence of procurement across the organisation
- Boost the professional development and confidence of the procurement team
- Attract the best procurement employees looking to work for high-performing organisations



Optimising procurement performance

Star Academies is clear that, with the excellent support of the two CIPS experts, the PEP process has enabled it to take procurement to the next level and add even more value and optimised service delivery management to its schools, teachers and pupils.

Undertaking the PEP has led to a widened view of procurement risk and a more structured and robust approach to risk control and mitigation. It has also generated clearly defined strategies and processes for supplier sourcing, segmentation and management. All the resulting newly formalised documents are now shared with schools via Star's online systems as an invaluable resource.

The procurement team believes that understanding what good looks like through the PEP requirements will shape the function's future structure and strategy, enabling it to be seen not as a corporate function but as an integrated operational service excellence team dedicated to getting the best value for everyone.

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We were already implementing best practice in many areas but some of it wasn't being documented fully or didn't have a formal structure behind it. Now we have formalised our processes into a cohesive whole. I am proud that we are only the third multi-academy trust to achieve the CIPS PEP award – it's important to demonstrate best practice in all areas of our organisation”

Matthew Little

Procurement Manager, Star Academies



“

In education, procurement has environmental and social benefits that it can bring to bear alongside financial and economic benefits and the PEP tests all of these things, making it a great way of standing up and being counted for the things you are responsible for as well as teaching and learning”

Gillian Askew

CIPS Diagnostics Lead

36

primary and secondary schools across England

3,100

employees

£50 – 60m

annual procurement spend

“

Achieving the Procurement Excellence Award allows Star Academies to demonstrate that it knows what it is doing, giving confidence to governors, teachers, parents and their communities that its schools are well run and well-resourced and focused on the best outcomes for their learners.”

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

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