



EDUCATION ELECTIONS CENSUS

Company

- Surrey County Council re-evaluation of parental preference forms handling

Challenges

- New regulations demand a faster and more effective way to meet the challenges of co-ordinated admissions
- Manual procedure slow, expensive and an error prone process
- Risk of stage 2 appeals and potential maladministration cases

Solution

- Design specialist forms
- Overprint of pupils details
- High-speed data capture processing of forms including the validation and verification of records against database of names, addresses and schools
- Secure delivery to LA and upload to MIS system

Implementation

- Following a number of trials with other vendors, Surrey LA selected DRS

Results

- Quicker and more effective and accurate method of collecting parental preference data
- Technology enabled LA to meet requirements of the new co-ordinated admissions arrangements
- Fast, effective system that not only gather and co-ordinate information, but also validates at the same time

“

The admissions forms were printed and the data was collected in almost half the time it took previously. Our relationship with DRS has not only allowed us to provide a quicker and more accurate way of getting application details onto our MIS system, but it has also reduced the burden and pressure on our staff of meeting such a tight deadline.”

Margaret Ronayne
Admissions & Transport - Surrey LA

LAs across the country are under increasing pressure from the government to process parental preference forms more quickly than ever before. After the School Standards and Framework Act in 2002 and the advent of the Common Application Form, the traditional manual procedure for handling parental preferences has been thrown into the limelight.

It is a slow, expensive and error prone process and is no longer compatible with the needs of today's admissions teams. As the volume of admissions data is expected to increase significantly with the inclusion of primary school parental preferences, the new regulations demand a faster and more effective way to meet the challenges of co-ordinated admissions.

Logistical problem

When Surrey LA decided to re-evaluate the handling of parental preference forms, it was clear from the onset that their existing system of hiring temporary staff to input the data presented logistical problems and did little to ensure that information was accurately recorded and target dates met.

With the increased demands of co-ordinated admissions, the reputation of the Council was at stake, and the risk of stage 2 appeals and potential maladministration cases higher. The LA needed a quicker, more effective and accurate method of collecting parental preference data. Following a number of trials with other vendors, it was after a recommendation by Capita Education Services, that Surrey LA went to data capture specialists DRS.

Increasing MCQ Assessments

After a number of in-depth discussions, DRS developed a cost-effective solution that would best suit the needs of the Surrey LA admissions team and support services at a very pressured time of year.

Measuring teaching quality with student feedback



EDUCATION ELECTIONS CENSUS

About DRS

DRS has over 40 years' experience in delivering data capture projects around the world. Specialising in examination and assessment processing and electronic marking, it also provides solutions for elections and censuses.

Systems are implemented using the company's extensive expertise in document design, printing, award winning scanning and image capture technologies, software, logistics, project management and consultancy.

As a pioneer of electronic marking solutions, DRS' e-Marker® offers a variety of modular and scalable electronic marking approaches for awarding and professional bodies, including the UK's largest awarding body, the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and the Welsh awarding body WJEC. Electronic marking is now gaining acceptance in many regions of the world and DRS has completed successful e-Marker® pilots in several countries including Africa and India as a precursor to further expansion overseas.



The first process involved designing specialist forms and overprinting them with details of known pupils provided by Surrey LA. Once these forms had been filled out by the parent or carer, they were dispatched to the secure DRS Bureau division for processing. This involved scanning the admissions forms on specially designed DRS data capture scanners, which electronically captured the images and data using unique drop out imaging techniques to recognise where fields had been completed.

The records are then validated against databases of names, addresses and schools, and verified before being securely returned to the LA in the standard XML format for uploading to the MIS system.

Overprinting

For the 2005 round, this process has been refined to take account of the Common Application Form and the increased requirements of co-ordinated admissions, and a standard form developed which can be personalised for each LA by laser overprinting.

In 2004 the parental preference information is being captured and returned by DRS to 18 LAs in the DfES standard XML format via the secure medium of S2S, ready for processing by each LA, or transmission to neighbouring LAs or the Pan London Register.

With the known difficulties and inaccuracies associated with manual data entry, LAs need to ensure this data is captured quickly, accurately and securely. From specialist form design and production, to using the latest technology to electronically capture and verify parental preference forms, DRS can help admissions teams to electronically collect the data required within the tight time frames set out by the DfES.

Manual data punching is a real headache so the use of the DRS service and technology plays a crucial part in enabling Buckinghamshire LA to meet the requirements of the new co-ordinated admissions arrangements."

Debbie Munday
Senior Admissions Co-ordinator - Buckinghamshire LA

"DRS was able to provide a fast, effective system that could not only gather and co-ordinate the information needed, but also validate it at the same time. Without this solution we would be concerned about our ability to meet the tight deadlines stipulated by the government, and to manage the increased workload next year resulting from changes with our procedures for dealing with primary school admissions."

Martin Jackson
Admissions Manager - Education Bradford