



# School Property Matters

*Independent experts in pupil capacity*

## How data improves budgeting, planning, fund allocation and engagement at Flying High Trust



### Flying High Statistics

- 28 primary academies
- 3 Local Authorities
- 7643 pupils
- Operating in Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire



### School Property Matters Project Statistics

- 25 Condition Surveys
- 1 Capacity Report
- 2 CAD Plans with others to roll out
- Engaged in January 2019 and ongoing



### Key Project Outcomes

- 100% of schools equipped with 3-5 year development plan
- Stronger bids for funding
- Twice the physical footprint achieved for the same budget in an expanding school



## BACKGROUND

East Midlands based Flying High Trust is a rapidly growing organisation looking after 28 primary Academies in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.



Here, Operations Manager at Flying High Nick Layfield describes the Trust's experience of working with School Property Matters – and the benefits of a data driven approach to facilities management that the Trust is now enjoying.

### Challenges

“The big challenges we face in education are limited funds, multiple stakeholders’ expectations, and vastly different skill sets,” says Nick.

“A Headteacher’s job is to look after their pupils’ education. They aren’t experts in building and surveying so they need to be able to trust their advisors and contractors.”

### Lack of transparency

“When I joined the Trust six years ago we were locked into contracts with external companies who would conduct building surveys and then go on to quote for work that they would deliver themselves. There were too many vested interests vying for public money, and it didn’t sit right with me.

“We wanted a knowledgeable and experienced partner who could conduct independent and transparent assessments and condition surveys of our school buildings.”

### Prioritisation

“Regarding funding, schools tended to be very reactive in their budgeting. Without detailed information about the state of their buildings, they would not be aware of how to prioritise funds for the best, leading to problems getting bigger and more expensive!” says Nick.

“We needed a partner who would help us improve our budgeting and planning processes too.”

## WHY SCHOOL PROPERTY MATTERS

### Trust

“As soon as the incumbent contracts came to an end I initiated a competitive tender process.

“School Property Matters demonstrated early on why we could trust them. Jeremy and his team were very upfront and were prepared to shape their offer to meet our constraints,” Nick explains.

### Adaptable offer

“They were respectful of our budget. Rather than try and sell us everything they could do, they helped us focus and start in the right place. They understood where we wanted to invest and what would be most helpful along our journey.

“Such a flexible approach to our requirements has been very influential in winning over the Trust’s Senior Leadership Team,” says Nick.



## APPROACH

### Services

Outlining the services provided Nick says: “Over a period of 4 months School Property Matters conducted 25 condition surveys across the Flying High Estate.

“We also commissioned School Property Matters to produce a couple of CAD plans, and to carry out a capacity report for one of our schools which was expanding.”

### Adoption

“Our schools were full of praise for the way School Property Matters conducted themselves on site, and the condition surveys themselves have been adopted as rolling development and maintenance plans by all our Academies,” Nick comments.

### Deliverables

“Each survey details the remediation work that needs to be addressed. It equips site managers with a

structured report that they can easily prioritise. This helps them identify the work that they need funding for and the work that they need to take responsibility for out of their own school’s budget.

“The cost estimates that School Property Matters provide are extremely accurate, based on their extensive research and knowledge of the sector and the likely contractor fees.

“Each survey is professionally presented with photographs of work to be carried out. This makes the report relevant, real and useable immediately, not only on site but in governors’ meetings too.”

### Expertise

“School Property Matters have a vast array of expertise, and can also draw on trusted partners from their own network. This gives us confidence that there is a good working relationship and any differences of opinion can be handled efficiently and painlessly!”

## RESULTS AND BENEFITS

### Improved budgeting and planning

“The Condition Surveys have been a budgeting game-changer,” says Nick.

“They have enabled 100% of our schools to operate a 3-5 year development plan. They have provided the structure and strategy for a proper conversation about how schools are allocating their maintenance budgets, and what additional funding they require over what time period.

“The data School Property Matters provides helps to formulate a logical sequence of what needs to be done. Headteachers and site managers can see things in black and white from an independent source.

“We are already seeing that schools are

taking greater ownership of their own funding responsibilities. They have more appreciation of how to balance their individual needs with the collective needs of the Trust.

“With robust data business managers can make best use of their resources and take a ‘little and often’ approach to maintenance rather than face huge costs when remedial work has been put off for too long,” states Nick.

### Improved engagement and communication

“The development plans make a big difference to parent engagement as well. When parents are

concerned about the toilet block needing replacing it's a lot easier to explain how it's being budgeted for and when it will happen," Nick explains.

"Having the right data and information presented professionally enables the Trust to identify possible funding sources before a school joins the Trust and to submit robust bids to access this funding.

"All in all it makes communication with all our partners and stakeholders so much more straightforward."

## Maximising space, minimising cost

"We needed to apply to the Local Authority for funding to expand one of our schools," Nick continues.

"Jeremy and the team at School Property Matters were able to advise on how to manage the space, and what the school would be entitled to in order to accommodate more pupils.

"With their help we were able to demonstrate how to maximise what we could get for the available funding.

"Thanks to their knowledge and expertise we achieved twice the physical footprint than we might have done for the same money.

"We also made savings in playground resurfacing costs by following their advice on outdoor space utilisation."



## WHAT'S NOW POSSIBLE

### Evidence-based Due Diligence

Nick explains: "When I joined the Trust six years ago the aim was to grow to 16 schools. We are now nearly double that and looking to convert more schools to Academy status in the future.

"School Property Matters have been instrumental in helping us understand our existing investment commitments and gauge our appetite for risk with new joiners.

"We look forward to involving School Property Matters earlier in the Due Diligence process, so we can identify as soon as possible the level of investment that new joiners need."

### Improving asset management

"We are also developing a clearer view of our assets and look forward to being able to manage assets more dynamically. To assist in this we hope that we will be able to take advantage of School Property Matters' asset management approach," says Nick.

### Recommendation

"School Property Matters not only understand the condition of our schools they also listen to where we want to get to and help us plan accordingly. We definitely consider them to be a trusted partner.

"School buildings need to be assessed by an independent third party. We would heartily recommend School Property Matters to any Trust wishing to achieve greater clarity and transparency."



## WHAT SCHOOL PROPERTY MATTERS SAY

*Flying High Trust are doing very well and it's been a pleasure to support them in collating the condition surveys across their Estate.*

*We are delighted that Flying High is experiencing greater confidence in their budgeting and planning processes, as well as greater engagement from stakeholders and stronger bids for funding – all from a data driven approach.*

*We look forward to supporting Nick and his colleagues in the future.*



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**Property  
Matters**

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Take control and optimise your school estate.

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