

VIP LOUNGE

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VIP CASE STUDY

In this case study, a VIP visitor outlines their experience at the Schools and Academies Show. Their perspective highlights the show's role in helping education professionals' access new ideas, network with sector peers, and discover solutions that support improved outcomes across schools and trusts.

MS JUDY ELLIS

Job Title: School Business Manager

Organisation: John Grant School

I am a School Business Manager with 27 years of experience in schools. 11 years as Business Manager at John Grant Special School, previously 2 years in a secondary academy and 14 years mainstream primary. I lead all non-teaching business operations to support pupils and the school community. I also lead the Business Operations for Broader Horizons (a group of 10 schools in the Great Yarmouth area). I am a member of NASSA (Norfolk Association of Special School Administrators) and ABMNS (Association of Business Managers Norfolk Schools), using sector networks to share best practice and drive efficiencies.

1

How did you initially hear about the Schools & Academies Show?

Through sector networks (NASSA and ABMNS), hosted leader outreach, and direct communications from the organiser. I received show related correspondence from GovNet, which helped confirm logistics and post event follow-ups.

2

Which version of the show did you attend, London, Birmingham or both?

Both.

If the Birmingham show, did you come for both days of the event?

Yes, the two-day format was a valuable improvement. This allowed time for constructive networking, positive conversations with exhibitors and resultant impact to school with time for attendance at speaker events and workshops.





3

Did you come to the show on your own or with colleagues from your School?

I attended with a colleague from my school and another from a special school in Norfolk.

If you came with colleagues, what do you see as the main benefit of coming as a group to the event?

The benefit of engaging as a small, focused group post event is that we can evaluate proposals quickly, validate operational fit, and maintain pace on procurement decisions without losing context.

4

What are your main reasons and objectives for attending the show?



Operational improvement across estates, compliance, ICT/telephony, transport, and energy.



Market scan & supplier comparison to identify best value solutions for a SEND context.



Networking with school business leaders via hosted leader support to accelerate shared learning.



Immediate trials/demos for school improvement and planning software (SDP/SEF).



5

What are the main benefits and outcomes for you, in attending the show?

Direct product trials and proposals secured at the show e.g. SchooliP - Demonstration Recap from Liam Reece (Derventio Education), with trial access and proposals provided the same week.

Preferential commercial terms, e.g., iAM compliant software, improved cost proposal and implementation the same week.

Actionable estates and energy conversations, including finishing the final phase of LED conversion and scoping additional solar to drive long-term savings.

Compliance and safety improvements through vendors specialising in sports equipment inspection.

Procurement momentum in transport (minibus), pool refurbishment, ICT/telephony, and estates consultancy, each with directly attributable supplier follow-ups, quotes, and brochures.



6

If you had to quantify, how much money do you think you will save for your School by attending the show?

The savings will come from a mix of preferential pricing, avoided duplicated systems, and energy efficiency gains (LED/solar). Figures are difficult to quantify financially at this stage, but I would estimate £10,000 minimum.

7

How many exhibitors and solution providers did you meet at the show?

I engaged with most of the exhibitors and solutions providers at the show. The two-day event allowed time to split the exhibitors between the days and to attend valuable workshops e.g. DfE Buying for Schools.



Were there any specific stand out organisations that have supported you in your role?

I will be engaging with the following organisations further post event;

Springfield – Specialist papers (reduction of laminating pouches)

DfE Energy for Schools – Free energy audit

Access Education – CDP

Making IT Green – IT recycling, paid contributions and refurbished IT schemes

Lyreco – Consumables and waste efficiencies

Lenovo – Laptops for schools

Wesleyan – Face to face presentation arranged for staff re pensions

EnergyS – Energy review

Rock Steady – Pupil music workshop

The Key – Online staff training platform to be implemented – improvement and cost saving existing provider

Bramble – New discussions regarding procurement hub locally

iAM compliant – Implementation of new compliance software

Cosy – Discussions regarding modular building to support bespoke learning

SAAF Consultancy – Community funds audit service to be implemented

YPO – Procurement benchmarking exercise to be completed

Churchill – Support to review cleaning contractors to be reviewed

NAHT – Union transfer to be arranged

Steinbeis Paper – Recycled paper to be priced and purchased in line with school sustainability plan

NGA – Governance support for governing board – transfer to Foundation school support in the near future

YESSS Electrical – Implementation of portal and procurement cost savings (Amazon cashback for school) to be arranged

Univent – Gas ventilation systems maintenance and provision – new supplier required for future estates management

Rivervale and Jurni – Operating lease quotations ongoing to proceed with new minibus lease to support increased number of pupils

School iP – New software ordered to support School Development Plan and SEF, improved management of SDP and efficiencies for leadership resources

RHS – New resources to support pupils outdoor learning, forest schools and sensory/wildlife planting. Membership implemented and links to lead coordinators in place.

Containex – Contact in progress regarding modular buildings to increase provision of learning environments for students

Thinking Solutions – Quotes requested for professional services e.g. initial enquiry regarding DPO service

Sportsafe – Quotes requested and communications regarding future PE equipment inspections and maintenance

Sustainable Energy First – Discussions to be arranged to review energy and linked sustainability plan

8

Were there any specific content sessions or theatres which have helped you or provided you with information which will save money or drive efficiencies in your School?

DfE Buying for Schools



Department
for Education

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How critical is attending the Schools & Academies Show to your role?

Critical. As the leader for buildings and nonteaching operations in a SEND context, I need current market intelligence, compliance updates, and peer benchmarking. SAAS consolidates high quality suppliers and sector content into one efficient engagement, enabling me to progress multiple improvement strands (software, estates, transport, compliance) in days rather than months.



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Are there any recommendations or changes you would make to the current format of the event?



Reintroduce the Hosted Leader programme:

This support is invaluable for school leaders, particularly in the current financially challenging climate, and is often the deciding factor in whether attendance is viable. Restoring it would materially increase access and impact for schools like ours. I understand nonattendance has previously been an issue; to protect the programme's viability, a reasonable nonattendance fee (or recovery of any travel/accommodation support) could be applied where confirmed delegates do not attend without prior notice. This would help ensure places are used responsibly and costs are recovered.



Hosted Leader Scheduling:

More structured slots that align theatres with vendor categories (e.g., "Estates & Energy Hour") to reduce switching costs.



SEND Specific Stream:

Curated sessions focusing on the operational nuances of special schools (transport, therapy spaces, hygiene/compliance).



Follow-Up Hub:

A post-event portal where hosted leaders can download all vendor collateral/proposals captured at the show to cut email chase up.



Data & Compliance Corner:

Drop-in DPO clinics alongside software demos, given how often procurement stalls pending data protection checks (e.g., we're awaiting Derventio's DP information for SchooliP).



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Would you recommend attending the event to other Schools and colleagues?

Absolutely. SAAS is an efficient route to evidence-based decision making, especially for schools managing complex estates and multi-stream operations. The combination of networking, live demos, and negotiated offers (e.g., Access Education, iAM compliant) creates tangible value for schools.



Contact Us



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Interested in attending?
Register free today

