



Portman Square House
43-45 Portman Square
London, W1H 0HE
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 207 969 27 74
Fax: +44 (0) 207 969 28 03

Springwell Dene School: Special Needs School Calls for Special Timetabling Solution

Springwell Dene is a special needs school designed to meet the needs of children who are experiencing difficulties with their education. The education is provided through a system of individualized action-planning for each of Springwells' 65 pupils.

Full Name

Springwell Dene School

A real need for individualized planning and timetabling was what led Springwell Dene to look for an alternative approach to their pen-and-paper and trial-and-error methods.

Website

[http://
homepages.enterprise.net
/springwelldene](http://homepages.enterprise.net/springwelldene)

Graham Stafford, information and communications technology co-ordinator at Springwell Dene School, Sunderland faces a timetabling task which, on the surface, appears to be a very simple one: 65 pupils to timetable into a total of 15 rooms with 16 teachers available. In reality, with a varying mix of students of different abilities and learning capabilities, timetabling takes on a greater complexity. This added complexity is derived from a number of other issues that are faced in establishments of this kind, such as taking care to put together groups of pupils who can work at a similar pace, in a particular environment, and with certain other pupils. This is one of the real challenges for a school like Springwell Dene.

Sector

Education

No. of people

16 teachers, 65 pupils

Country

England

Springwell Dene was thus looking for a system that afforded them greater flexibility in their increasingly complex timetabling tasks, facilitating easy modification of their timetables for the unavoidable last minute changes that take place in this kind of school.

Challenge

Timetable within complex
constraints

After evaluation of several other products positioned on the timetabling market, Springwell Dene opted for ADE by ADESOFT. The results were quasi-instantaneous: "I sat down at nine o'clock and did the timetable in two hours," said Mr Stafford. "It paid for itself the first time we used it and did a better timetable than we could have." A rapid return on investment was not the only advantage that Springwell Dene has derived from ADE, in fact Graham Stafford finds that ADE offers more options than he has at this moment been able to integrate into his timetabling.

Platform

PC, Windows 98



“It paid for itself the first time we used it and did a better timetable than we could have”

Timetabling at Springwell Dene is a question of finding the right balance between the best use of limited resources whilst providing a one-to-one education for pupils. ADE, according to Graham Stafford, significantly improves Springwell's provision of "a better solution in line with restrictions" that the school faces. For example, in a small school such as Springwell Dene, there is always the danger that a class will spend half or full days studying different subjects but with the same teacher. Using ADE, Graham Stafford finds that he can very efficiently align his courses so that pupils will never be taught for long periods by the same teacher.

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www.adesoft.com



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