

Swiftlier and Blackheath Conservatoire

When the Blackheath Conservatoire needed to modernise enrolment processes and improve operational efficiency, they turned to Swiftlier – The all-in-one platform for education.



Streamlining admin to empower a creative community



Positioning itself as “the home of creativity for people in South East London”, the Blackheath Conservatoire runs year-round art and music courses, one-to-one music tuition, holiday arts programmes and a calendar of one-off performance events. With around 200 courses a week and 650 individual learners coming for weekly lessons, the Conservatoire supports people of all abilities and backgrounds interested in learning in the arts.

The Conservatoire came to the Swiftlier team looking for a smoother customer enrolment journey and a more efficient solution to their administration than the disjointed series of platforms they had been juggling previously. With three-quarters of their learners aged under 18, they needed a solution that could effectively manage parent-child relationships, as well as one that could handle group classes, orchestras and one-to-one tuition.



The Situation pre-Swiftlier

Staff had been using a multitude of separate tools for different administrative tasks, such as making bookings, taking and reconciling payments, sending receipts, generating and taking class registers and administering room planning. This was time-consuming, frustrating and inefficient for staff, and often inconvenient for customers.

The bookings element of their admin burden had been a particular source of frustration. “We had attempted to set up online bookings at the Conservatoire on a number of occasions previously, but none of these had been successful until Swiftlier,” CEO Patrick Holden remarks. “Because all bookings had to be taken in person or over the phone, when we released new programmes we had to take on extra staff to process them manually. There were queues out of the building!”

“When I joined the Conservatoire, I felt like I’d gone back in time,” recalls Deb King, Front of House Administrator at the Conservatoire. “A lot of our processes involved a combination of systems and spreadsheets, which were slow and unintegrated. For example, taking a booking involved enrolling the student into

our old database, generating a receipt using a spreadsheet, printing that off and stapling the PDQ receipt to it – before emailing the confirmation to the customer and filing the paperwork. It was slow, inefficient and very easy to miss a step or make a mistake.”

Recognising the need for a more streamlined system, the Conservatoire started the search for a software solution that could handle their diverse course catalogue. Finding a platform that could integrate activity scheduling, booking management and payments was high on their priorities – as was a system that could handle the nuances of operating courses for younger learners through effective management and understanding of parent-child relationships.

“There were not many platforms that understand the distinction between payer and attendee – and all that this entails regarding responsibility for onboarding and knowing who to contact in an emergency – as well as offering everything else we needed,” Patrick notes.



A booking system transformed

As one of Swiftlier's earliest adopters, Blackheath Conservatoire agreed to a phased rollout of functionality that took place in agreed stages. Online bookings were the top priority, so these were implemented immediately – thanks to which those “queues out of the building” are now a thing of the past.

“Within three months it was clear that the daily administration difficulties we had faced previously were in most part simply removed,” Patrick recalls. After three months, the percentage of the Conservatoire's bookings being taken online has been consistently above 70%, freeing up staff time for serving customers, supporting learners and other high-impact activities. This has been welcomed by customers, who've been complimentary about the new online booking system.

The admin team has seen considerable time savings when it comes to setting up activities and taking bookings. “Our Front of House and booking processes are much more efficient and largely paper-free,” Deb notes. “Now that most customers make bookings online, we can focus on improving

processes and services.”

Swiftlier has streamlined other areas of the organisation, too. The Conservatoire's 100+ tutors report that taking registers is now much quicker and easier through the dedicated Instructors' Portal, as is the process of managing the regular progress reports they supply to their one-to-one and group learners.

“Feedback from tutors about the registers is positive,” says Deb. “They find them easy to use, quick to complete and important information about SEN, medical conditions and allergies is flagged.”

The Conservatoire HQ team has also noted a huge improvement in their handling of bookings for private music tuition. “The biggest thing is speed,” Deb explains. “Our tuition team reports that being able to book individual lessons with a tutor, book a room and raise an invoice all in one go has been transformative – previously they had to do each step separately, in different systems. Swiftlier has made us more efficient and it's much easier to get everything right first time.”



Patrick Holden, Chief Executive
Blackheath Conservatoire



Fast support when needed

Patrick also highlights the support they've received behind the scenes from the Swiftlier team. "The support from the Swiftlier helpdesk has been universally appreciated by our admin team," he says, noting that staff are "polite, patient and knowledgeable". Any queries staff have raised, he adds, "have been resolved very rapidly or added to a roadmap for future functionality".

Deb agrees. "The team are brilliant!" she enthuses. "They're friendly, professional and responsive, they don't assume technical understanding and explain things clearly."

She's also appreciated the team's receptiveness both to feedback and to the Conservatoire's operational requirements, noting that their customer base encompasses people of all ages whose needs "aren't always obvious if you aren't in daily contact with them."





"Booking was seamless. It looked amazing, I loved the personalised recommendations, and I thought the process was great (no phone queues!)."

Blackheath Conservatoire customer

What's next?

The transformation of Blackheath Conservatoire's admin won't end there. The Swiftlier team's core philosophy of 'automate wherever possible' means we're constantly listening to their users, and working with them to spot opportunities to make their experience, and that of their customers and students, even easier.

Tom Whale, Head of Customer Success at the Swiftlier team, says, "We pride ourselves on building meaningful, long-term relationships with our clients, and we have an ambitious roadmap of features to help Blackheath Conservatoire and other education organisations sell more, automate their admin, and delight their customers!"



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