MHR



Navigating HR and payroll for education

A guide to MHR

Get started

Introduction

Education providers in the UK are experiencing huge pressure to continually improve education standards. And currently, that's in the face of some of the biggest challenges the sector has seen.



Educators are having to manage an abundance of people data, along with the preparation for and adherence to mandatory reports and inspections. On top of this, they must maintain a motivated and engaged workforce, all while facing the underlying need to do more with less budget.

At the heart of these challenges lies the need for innovative, effective, and reliable HR and payroll solutions tailored to the specific needs of the sector.

We are proud to have been serving the education sector for over 30 years and are now a trusted partners to over 1,800 educational establishments across the UK. Our success is anchored in a deep understanding of the sector, and a firm commitment to creating the right solutions. All built and adapted to address the evolving challenges the education sector faces.

This guide will help you navigate HR and payroll for your establishment.

You'll discover how we can help:

- Ease the headache of reporting and compliance
- Remove your payroll problems
- Improve data management
- Attract and retain a happy and engaged workforce
- Extract maximum value from your HR and payroll systems

Reporting and compliance

The challenge

With the requirement to maintain specific records and submit reports for regulations like KCSIE, SWC, FEWDC and HESA, being able to access accurate and up to date information at short notice is critical. But more often than not, it's a challenge that's time consuming, has inconsistent results and places unnecessary amounts of stress on those involved.

Often, this stems from an overreliance on manual processes and outdated systems that create data silos. Without the ability to analyse reporting data holistically, you'll struggle to make informed decisions that could lead to long-term improvements.

> "It is vital that the university has the capability to generate reliable, timely and accurate management information which we can use for the benefit of the university, its employees and to meet external and statutory obligations. MHR gives us the ability to do this."

Jayne Billam, Director of HR, Nottingham Trent University

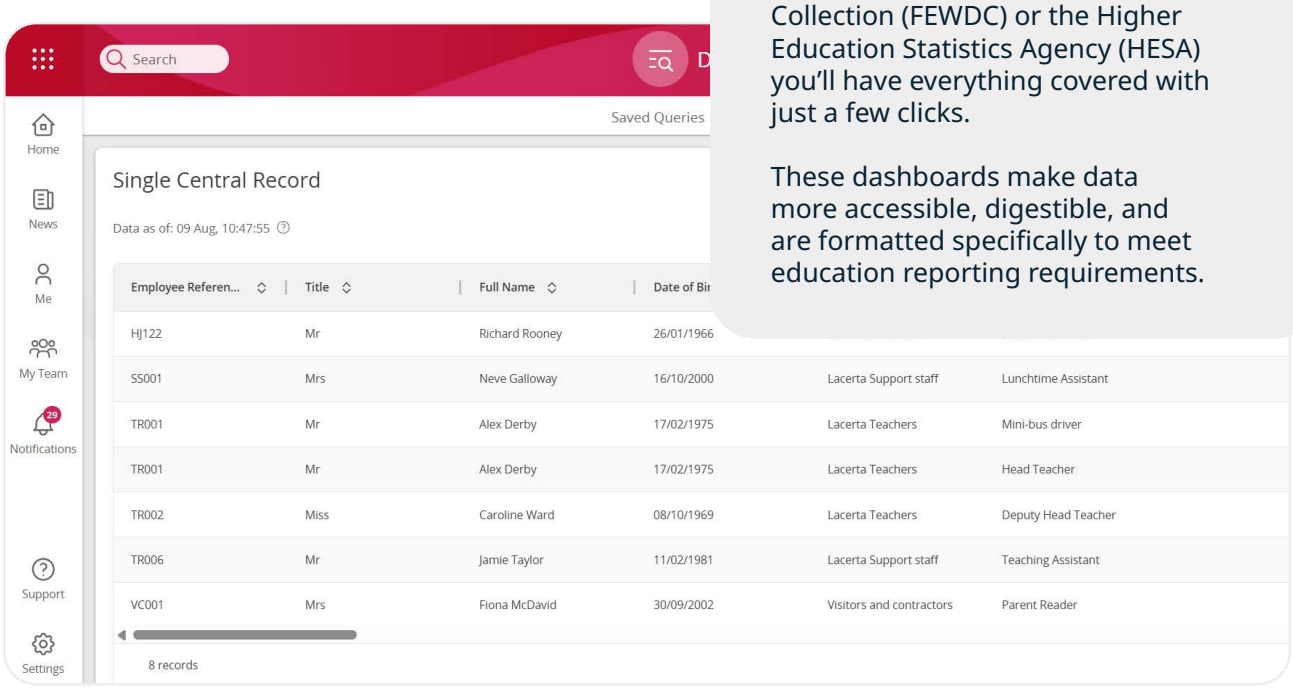
The solution

To tackle these challenges head-on, we've developed innovative solutions that empower educational establishments with faster, easier, and more strategic reporting capabilities. Our tools are designed specifically to meet the unique needs of the education sector, simplifying compliance and turning reporting data into actionable insights.

1 Comprehensive dashboards at your fingertips

Our pre-built dashboards, powered by tools like PowerBI, enable instant access to all necessary reports and data. Whether it's data for the likes of Single Central Record (SCR), the Schools Workforce Census (SWC), Further Education Workforce Data Collection (FEWDC) or the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) you'll have everything covered with just a few clicks.

These dashboards make data more accessible, digestible, and are formatted specifically to meet education reporting requirements.



Automatic updates 2

Regulations and guidelines frequently evolve, leaving educational establishments scrambling to stay current. Our tools are updated automatically to reflect changes in reporting requirements and submission deadlines. You'll no longer need to worry about missing crucial updates or deadlines, as our solutions work proactively to keep you informed and compliant.

Enhanced data quality and integration 3

Our solutions consolidate data from diverse sources and systems into one integrated platform. With a single source of truth for all your data, you can rest assured that your decisions and reports are based on the most accurate and up to date data. To back this up, built-in validation checks flag potential inconsistencies, so you can trust the accuracy of your reports.

"MHR has delivered added value through detailed management information reports and dashboards – something we couldn't do easily before due to data being spread across multiple spreadsheets and databases."

Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

"No more fiddling around with Excel spreadsheets, probably saves me two days per month."

People Director, Leigh Academies Trust

Advanced analytics 4

Why stop at compliance when your data can support strategic decision-making? Our advanced reporting functionalities transform your raw data into actionable insights. Giving you visibility into critical trends across staffing, student performance, and resource allocation, helping you make decisions and scenario plan based on your actual data.

Alleviating pressure and reducing risk 5

By automating a substantial portion of the reporting process, our tools eliminate the last-minute rush and errors that occur when manually collating and interpreting raw data. Whether it's responding to inspectors or meeting a submission deadline, our solution delivers peace of mind that you'll be working with the most accurate and up to date data, ensuring you remain compliant without the associated pressure and stress.

Payroll

The challenge

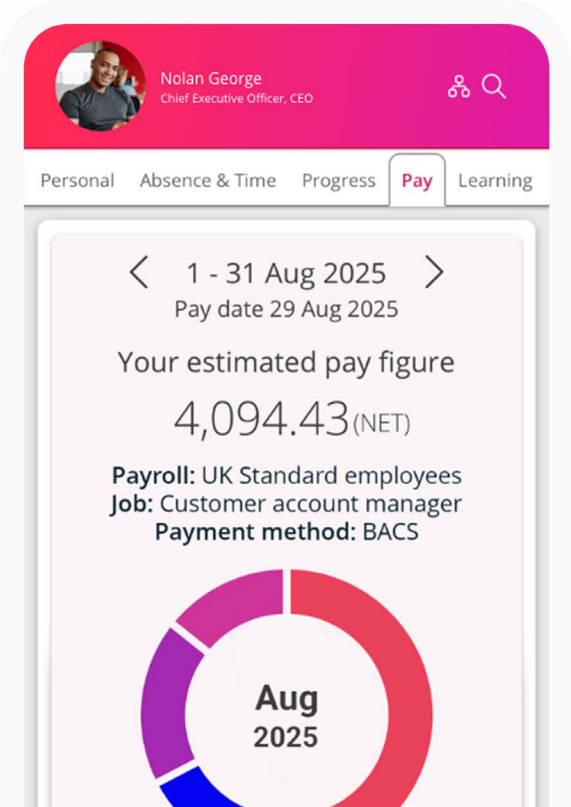
Managing payroll for an educational establishment comes with a host of complexities and nuances. Whether that's handling multiple posts and positions, varying rates of pay, hours, term-time only contracts or pension agreements. There's a string of considerations that are difficult to navigate, time-consuming, and often tied to hard deadlines that place payroll teams under pressure that inevitably leads to mistakes.

Our research shows that **89%** of organisations have made payroll mistakes in the past 12 months. But there is a better way.

> "We no longer have a need to take on a new payroll person every time an academy joined LAT, creating a 20% saving in terms of staff – not through losing people, but not needing to hire them as LAT has grown."
>
> **People Director, Leigh Academies Trust**

The solution

Our trusted payroll engine delivers accurate pay runs to over half a million education-based employees every month. With the ability to manage complex pay set ups, automate processes and remove the pressure that comes from manual admin, you can free your team to focus on strategic initiatives that can support your workforce.



Real-time processing 1

Our payroll engine eliminates hours spent fixing payroll errors and amends en masse by continuously calculating pay as it's earned. Changes can be made throughout the month like adding new starters and are immediately visible, freeing your payroll team from the pressure of a monthly payroll cutoff and driving a positive employee experience from the outset.

Automatic updates 2

With an array of schemes and pension legislation to adhere to, it's hard to keep track of updates and deadlines. Our systems are automatically updated in line with UK, ROI, Isle of Man and Channel Islands legislation – giving you the confidence that you'll not be hit by unexpected fines and missed deadlines.

Employee Self Service (ESS) 3

Alleviate the demands from regular payroll admin requests by giving employees autonomy and control over their data, bank details, pay documentation and expense claims – significantly reducing the workload faced by the central payroll team. And with real-time insights, your workforce can gain an accurate picture of earnings, expenses, tax and pension contributions, supporting their financial wellbeing.

Complex scenarios 4

Our comprehensive solution can handle more complex requirements often seen in the education sector, like multiple job roles and pension schemes. From setup to corrections, and scheme handling, you can manage an employee's payroll all without the need to manage multiple records.

Actionable insights 5

Get a bird's eye view of your payroll operations with dashboards that display live data for your entire establishment, helping you identify issues before they arise, track trends and make more informed decisions.

"The process with MHR has helped us streamline payroll and pensions reporting."

Head of HR,
Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

"MHR has taken a laborious process off our hands."

Michael Kinchlea, Payroll Manager,
Oaklands College

"ESS allowed people, support staff, and all staff to access their payslips online, which was a big step forward for the foundation."

Wayne Coomey, HR Manager,
Mill Hill Foundation

Managed services

When you don't have the capacity to run payroll in-house, use our CIPP qualified experts as an extension of your team. We currently pay over 10% of the UK workforce through our systems every month, with 99.98% accuracy. And with over 30 years' experience in the education sector, you can rest assured that our team can run your payroll with the efficiency, accuracy and compliance you need.

Data management / strategy

The challenge

Educational establishments deal with immense amounts of information on a daily basis. From student attendance records, grades, and behaviour logs to staff payroll and employment checks, not to mention operational data. Handling this volume of sensitive data is a monumental task, with the burden often falling on already strained administrative teams. Without a defined data strategy and the right systems in place, educational establishments will find themselves buried under a mountain of paperwork, spending time struggling with fragmented records, and facing significant risks around inaccuracies and data loss.

When staff are busy battling inefficient systems and processes, they can't focus on strategic initiatives like improving teaching quality or fostering engagement. Poor data management serves as a bottleneck that slows down decision-making at every level, from academic staff to senior leadership teams.

The solution

Secure, centralised, and streamlined data management

The need for secure, centralised and integrated solutions is clearer than ever. Robust data management can transform your operations by eliminating inefficiencies, improving data accuracy and compliance, and protecting sensitive information.

Our single integrated system enables you to manage all of your people processes from HR to talent management, workforce management and payroll through one platform - eliminating inefficiencies, improving data accuracy and security.

Single source of truth 1

Centralise and connect data from multiple sources or link to a data warehouse to create a single source of truth for all your data. With all your data stored in one location, you'll benefit from more advanced reporting capabilities like our custom education reports, performance monitoring and safeguarding.

Full integrations 2

Our ready-made integrations with key platforms used across the education ecosystem reduce the duplication of work to improve efficiencies, simplify adoption, and ensure the accuracy and security of data flows between systems.

Arbor

isams By IRIS

stonefish eRecruitment Software

SIMS

Bromcom No.1 Choice for Cloud MIS & Finance

Enhanced security 3

Customise access levels to data pools and reports, ensuring the right people have access to the right information when they need it.

Actionable insights 4

With your data organised in a single location, you'll benefit from instant access to real-time insights. Enabling leadership teams to spot trends, identify potential issues and make informed strategic decisions about a single site or your whole organisation, based on real-time data.

"We've seen a lot of efficiencies now we are providing data via the DataMart. Previously it used to take us about a week to produce our quarterly dashboards...we've devolved the DataMart to our leaders so they can see real time-information and track what's going on in their service areas."

Leeds Trinity University

Admin efficiencies 5

Automating the multitude of manual tasks like attendance tracking or payroll calculations reduces the risk of mistakes and the time taken to rectify them. Data can be translated and presented easily at a moment's notice so that compliance reports and inspections are no longer a chore.

"We have further assurance about what the impact on projected costs would be."

Graeme Lavery, Vice Principal Finance & Resources, Reaseheath College

"MHR have provided us with a platform with one single source of data, which is absolutely perfect and critical for us as a business."

Zena Hall, Systems Specialist, University of South Wales

Recruitment and retention

The challenge

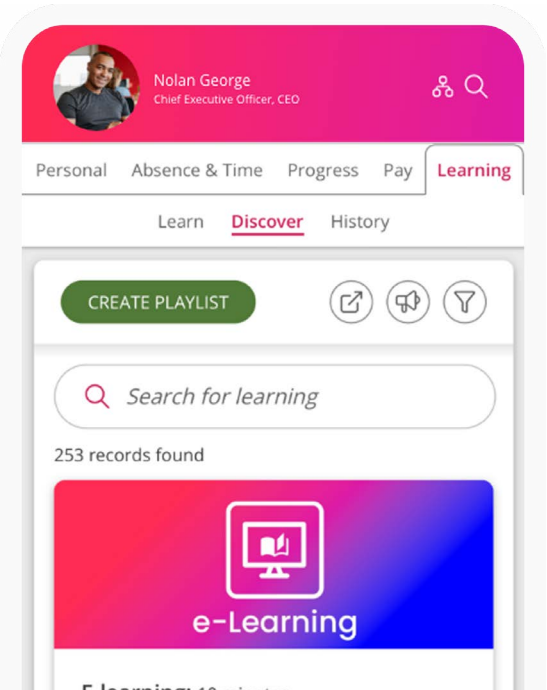
The statistics around academic wellbeing paint a troubling picture. Mounting staff shortages, burnout, stress and high turnover rates are straining the education system, making it harder to maintain stable, high-quality learning environments.

These challenges don't just disrupt your operations; they have a direct impact on the wellbeing of students, adding further pressure to an already fragile system. The need for practical, impactful solutions has never been greater.

- 44% increase in those wanting to leave the profession in the past year
- 78% of all educational staff are stressed (84% of senior leaders, 74% of academic staff)
- The education sector loses 10% of its workforce each year
- 59% of staff have considered leaving the sector in the past academic year due to pressures on their mental health and wellbeing (67% of senior leaders, 59% of academic staff)
- 55% of staff have actively sought to change or leave their current jobs (58% of senior leaders, 53% of academic staff)
- 68% of staff cited volume of workload as the main reason for thinking about leaving their jobs (83% of senior leaders, 66% of academic staff)

The solution

We've designed our HR and payroll platform with one central aim: to deliver an exceptional employee experience at every stage of the employee lifecycle. From onboarding to talent management and development, the features and functions within our solution help tackle these people challenges head on, creating environments where administration teams feel supported and all employees can thrive.



Regular check-ins 1

Our platform facilitates regular communication through easy check-in features, ensuring employees feel heard. Added support from the latest AI functionality takes the pressure off both parties in the conversation, allowing team members to voice concerns or challenges early on, helping you address small issues before they escalate into bigger problems.

"One of the big changes we've made is around our recruitment processes. Previously it was very long winded, we've completely streamlined how we do that whole process from requesting to recruit all the way to interviewing and filling the vacancy."

Head of People Systems, Leeds Trinity University

Personalised learning pathways 2

We help educational establishments show commitment to growing and investing in their team's professional development. With AI recommended learning pathways, employee profiling, skill gap analysis, and tailored opportunities, staff gain the support they need to grow in their roles and feel valued, future proofing your workforce.

"The employee experience is much better. Using the system they can login and book leave themselves, as well as training courses and managers are provided with notifications to authorise it. It's one place where people can go and simply book what they need to."

HR and Systems Specialist, University of South Wales

Surveys and sentiment analysis 3

Our survey and sentiment analysis tools enable you to gauge the overall morale of your teams. Managers get actionable insights into how staff are feeling, allowing them to address underlying concerns before they impact retention rates.

Recognition and visibility 4

Shine a spotlight on individual contributions through our recognition tools, helping staff feel seen, heard, and valued. By enhancing visibility around achievements, you'll foster a culture of appreciation and connection.

End-to-end workforce management 5

Our platform streamlines the entire employee lifecycle—from recruitment, to onboarding, development and reporting. With AI-powered tools, you can attract, screen and create personalised development plans swiftly, ensuring you engage from the outset. Enhanced reporting and ready-made dashboards support better decision-making and operational visibility across all of your people date.

Comprehensive reporting 6

Gain clarity and control with reports and dashboards that capture all of your people data points. Whether you want to identify absenteeism, skill gaps, workloads, engagement levels or develop a talent pipeline for succession planning, you can make informed proactive decisions that support your team today ensure you safeguard smooth operations, even in times of change.

Generating maximum value

The challenge

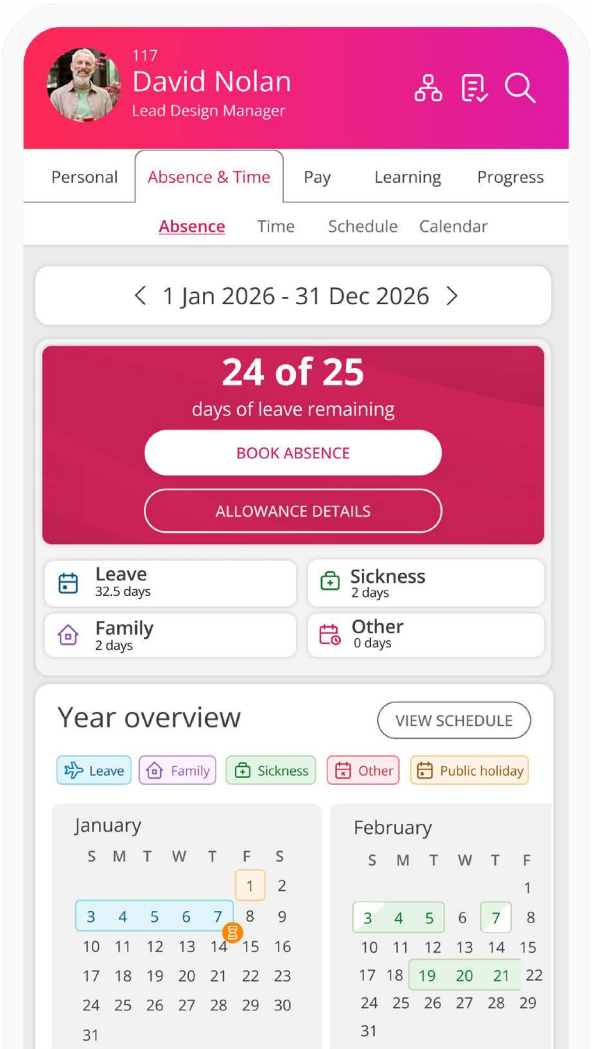
Financial concerns across the education sector are at an all-time high, impacting independent schools, MATs, colleges and universities alike. Beset by reduced funding, tighter budgets, and rising costs, the sector is under constant pressure not only to do more with less but also to ensure every penny is accounted for.

For many, this has created a need to measure efficiency relentlessly, assess return on investment, and make tough decisions to keep operations sustainable.

While investing in a new HR and payroll system may be at the bottom of the priority list in the current climate, streamlining system management with support from the right HR and payroll solution could unearth the hidden cost efficiencies the sector needs.

The solution

Our market leading solution has efficiencies at its core. Whether that's through automation, integration, or by creating strategic focus, we can transform how educational establishments manage their resources, ensuring that every pound stretches further.



1 Automating manual processes

One of the most powerful ways educational institutions can reduce costs is by automating manual processes. As outlined throughout this guide, our comprehensive system ensures that the tasks that previously required significant time and resources, from payroll calculations to report generation, can now be automated. While automating processes reduces the risk of human error, which can be costly in highly regulated operations, staff and administrators alike gain time to focus on meaningful activities that add value to the organisation.

> "We've seen a lot of benefits in the last eight years at the university, particularly around giving our managers data at their fingertips, via Power BI, self-service for our managers and employees, as well as in a lot of repetitive tasks that people used to do manually."

Head of People Systems, Leeds Trinity University

Streamlining workflows 2

Our solution simplifies workflows, promoting a faster, more efficient HR experience through tools like employee self-service. These features empower staff by enabling them to access pay slips, update personal details, or manage leave requests independently. This not only reduces the administrative burden for HR and payroll teams but also fosters open communication and improves employee engagement.

“The tangible impact on business performance has been through value-added time back, where we streamlined and digitised a lot of our legacy ways of working.”

Deputy Director of People Operations, University of Portsmouth

“We’ve had a very pragmatic, honest, trustful relationship with MHR over the years. We don’t stay with organisations for this length of time unless there’s something good happening.”

Head of HR Services, Queen’s University Belfast

Reduced system management 3

Managing multiple systems can be resource-intensive, both operationally and financially. Our integrated HR and payroll platform eliminates the need for separate tools and removes the need for duplicate data entry in your MIS while providing consistent, seamless functionality. This drastically reduces the cost and effort of maintaining disparate software systems.

Strategic focus 4

By freeing HR and payroll teams from routine administrative tasks, resources can be shifted towards strategic initiatives. This may include identifying upskilling opportunities, or retention strategies that ultimately drive better ROI through improved staff utilisation and satisfaction.

“MHR to me is incredibly good value for money.”

HR Director, Mill Hill School Foundation

Navigating challenges in the education sector

It's clear that the challenges facing the education sector today are significant, but with the right technology and systems in place, they're not insurmountable.

Automation, integration, data management and strategic focus can transform how educational establishments manage their resources, driving efficiencies that will create a more sustainable financial future.

Our solutions are developed with the complexity and flexibility to meet the needs of every educational establishment. By focusing on addressing the unique challenges faced within the sector, we'll enable you to optimise operations, meet compliance, evidence maximum ROI and give you the scalability and flexibility to adapt to changing needs.

Discover how we've helped institutions like yours get the support they need in our education customer case studies, or simply book a demo to find out more.

View case studies

Book a demo