

# Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board

Big Savings for your School with Way2Pay.

## CHALLENGE

The school year is measured out with frequent requests for contributions towards field trips, book loan systems, tours, sports or after-school activities. This is true for parents of schoolchildren, administrators and secretaries alike. Payment reminders are usually sent in envelopes, which often get stuffed into schoolbags. Many are only remembered when parents drop their children at the school gates, leaving them no choice but to hand children the cash there and then.

Managing payments creates weeks of administrative work for schools, from set up to notifying parents, to managing the receipt of monies. Keeping accurate records and assigning payments to the right activity, as well as following up outstanding contributions, is extremely time consuming. There are also security risks, particularly in rural areas where cash may need to be stored on-premises for longer periods before it can be safely lodged in a bank.

With 18 post-primary schools across Clare and Limerick, the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) felt this problem acutely. It saw a clear need for an automated payment method that would provide an easier way for parents to make contributions and would allow schools to manage those payments efficiently, safely and transparently. Mary Troy, Finance Officer with LCETB explains: “we looked for a system to make it easy for parents to pay and virtually cut out the manual handling of cash in school offices. With schools of up to 1,200 students, you can imagine all of the envelopes coming in several times per year. Year Heads were collecting and chasing up monies for various activities and handing it over to the school secretary to receipt and lodge, and all with just a single secretary per school trying to manage all that. We wanted a system to make that seamlessly flow from the parent to the school and right through to our financial database. We also wanted a system where parents could log in, pay in instalments and have an oversight of the contributions they pay during the year.”



Caroline Crowe (Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh school secretary), Elaine Collins (Way2pay), Colm Buckley (Three education account manager) and Aileen Healy Byrne (Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board)



“Three has been excellent; they’ve listened to us and taken our feedback on board. In the long term, we’d love our schools to go completely cashless. With the power of Three, we should be in a position to do that in the near future”

## SOLUTION

After researching and evaluating several payment systems, LCETB went to tender and Way2Pay, a cashless system designed for schools was selected as the winning tender. Now, participating LCETB schools can schedule SMS notifications to be sent to parents, who can quickly pay in a few clicks from a smartphone. Parents still have the option to pay the school with cash, for example if they do not have a debit or credit card, and the school can record the cash payment in Way2Pay. Receipts are automatically sent by text or email to parents in all cases.

Way2Pay setup took just a few hours with the support team inputting all student names, year-groups and parent contact numbers. This information can also be imported from the school database.

For LCETB schools, administering 10 or more activities per year has been made much easier, and school principals can easily see payment records by activity. “Now the school principal and finance department can see, on any given day, how much has been lodged and how much money is outstanding. Every school has lots of activities, field trips, after-school activities, book loan systems, transition year activities etc. These could involve a couple of hundred euros per family. Schools want to be able to track payment of each activity separately. This used to be done on an Excel spreadsheet by each teacher but now it’s automatically tracked in the Way2Pay system,” says Mary.

Combined with a competitive text messaging bundle and ongoing service from Three Ireland, there’s a significant cost saving for schools. “It depends on the size of school, but you will typically have texts around school closure, after-school activities, various term-time changes and reminders. I would say parents get a text at least once a month. We’re encouraging schools to send all texts through Three/Way2Pay because they provide us with a very good reduced rate,” says Mary.

## RESULTS

More than 90 percent of students’ parents at LCETB’s Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh pay online now. A relatively new school in Limerick City, it has more than 600 pupils with another 150 anticipated by 2018. School secretary, Caroline Crowe, remembers how a lot of her time used to be spent recording payments, issuing receipts and making lodgements. “Every August, we would have been three weeks working on parent notifications for the start of the school year, manually creating our own invoice template and merging the various activity costs for every single student or family in the school. It was never a straightforward simple process of just sending invoices. There was a lot of work in the background,” she says.

Caroline estimates that postage costs were as much as €400 every school year to manage the old process but this has now been saved. It has also eliminated the printing costs of various letters. “For us to send an SMS is 3.5 cent, so it’s a fraction of the cost of posting a physical bill. With Way2Pay, parents just log in and pay.”

The best feature of Way2Pay, from Caroline’s point of view, is that it automatically sends SMS reminders only to those parents who still have an outstanding payment. This has eliminated the time spent checking back through receipts and spreadsheets for late payments and follow up letters. “Way2Pay has greatly reduced the amount of time spent on doing annual school bills. Once you have every parent set up on the system, creating activity bills at the start of the school year just takes a couple of hours compared to three weeks. That leaves me with more time to concentrate on the needs of the students and staff,” she says approvingly.

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