

epraise



CASE STUDY

# Valley Gardens Middle School



# Introduction

Valley Gardens is a large middle school in the heart of the Whitley Bay community. The school has always been a popular school which is oversubscribed each year. In 2016 it exceeded its Pupil Admission Number to accommodate more pupils who wished to attend.

Valley Gardens is a school with high attainment, significantly in excess of the national averages. Alongside academic success, the school is well known for its incredible range of extra curricular opportunities which adds to its appeal.

We caught up with their Deputy Headmaster, Matthew Hope to find out more about their experience with Epraise.



# What were the challenges you faced?

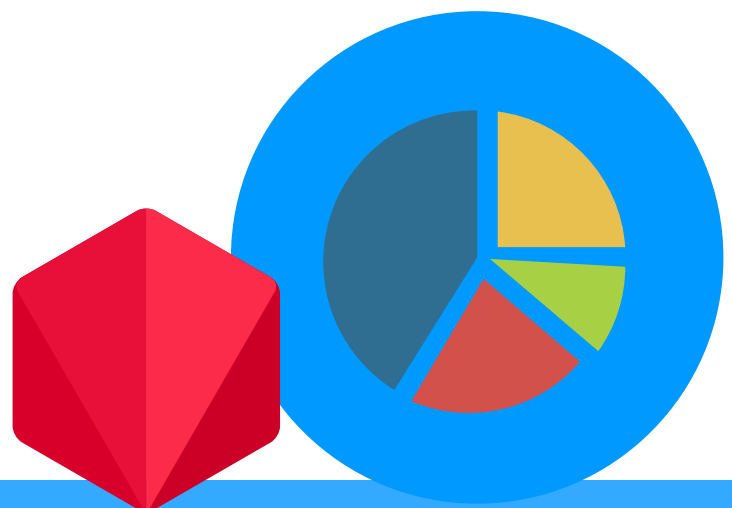
We used to have a very basic House point system where the kids would all have a planner with a page which a teacher would sign if they wanted to give a reward. The problem was that it was very difficult to then get that information out of the children's planners to a place where we could use it.

Even more frustratingly, it didn't seem to bring any tangible benefits. Some children like getting house points because it's a nice thing to have but there were also a lot of children who didn't seem to care about it.

We wanted an electronic system, so we shopped around. We looked at a couple and were quite impressed by Epraise. We felt that it was good because it was web-based with easy access and it didn't require a high level of technical expertise.

We also liked the fact that you could customise a lot of the features. Epraise is very adaptable, with the ability to turn things on and off for example. We decided to use it entirely as a positive reward system.

We were also drawn to the shop and the fact that students could see clear benefits coming from having gained points. It was almost like a source of currency and we haven't looked back since!



# How did Epraise solve this problem? Were there any unexpected benefits?

## Visibility

With Epraise it immediately became a lot easier to see how many points everybody had. You could also see which members of staff were awarding the Epraise points and which ones weren't, making everything a lot more transparent.

Another unexpected benefit is you could assess which classes were getting the most points and which weren't receiving many at all. If it was because a teacher isn't giving out any Epraise points then we could speak to that member of staff to better understand why.

## Built staff and student morale

The staff were very positive about it and a really great benefit came from trying to develop a way of spending the Epraise points that worked for the students. We originally offered various rewards, but we wanted something more tangible, so with this in mind we set up an Epraise afternoon at the end of every term where points could be exchanged for activities in the shop.







## Made points more desirable

For the children it was a real seller. It really made the approach to points important and it put it on the map. Nobody wanted to be the kid that didn't have enough points to do the activity with their friends so you'd have children in the run up to it going "How can I get a few more Epraise points?"

We didn't want any child in the school not to be able to do anything. So if there was a child that, for whatever reason had not managed to achieve the Epraise points, we would offer an alternative activity in order to allow them to participate.

We have also benefited from the accolades and award system. Our school is well known for its extracurricular activities. We do lots of team sports, music competitions, trips and visits. It was another nice way to give recognition to the children. It's also good for the teachers because you can look at a child on your phone and see what they have achieved.

## Powerful tool to monitor attendance

Finally the other unexpected benefit of Epraise is it's also been a very powerful tool for attendance. I worked to investigate the whole use of the attendance write-back module, so moving away from Epraise as just a reward system.

With Epraise you can enable the attendance modules and have your daily attendance which I really like. I love the format of it. With the attendance page for instance, I can see straight away if there's a class that hasn't been registered and missing marks.

The amount of times I've had issues with other software and members of staff saying they can't get onto the system, the computer crashed taking too long to load, or they forgot to click save. It would appear that Epraise has eliminated all those issues since we began using the attendance system.

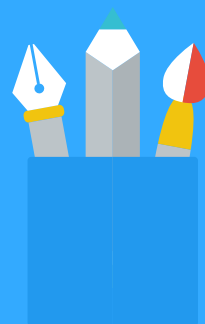
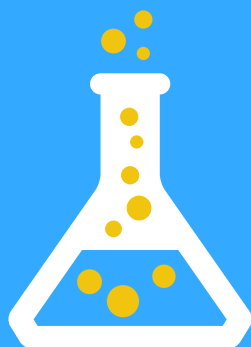
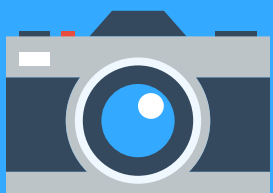
# What has it been like to work with Epraise and how easy is it to set up?

## Regular developments and updates

What I like about Epraise is just how versatile it seems as well as the fact that features are constantly being improved. Since 2016 it has been upgraded on numerous occasions and they've pushed out into different areas like attendance and messaging.

## Fast communication

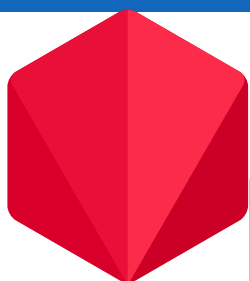
In terms of customer support, it's been great. When we've had issues in the past they were very quickly resolved. Communication has been incredibly fast and my account manager was excellent in terms of customer service and guiding me through. He was able to demo the system and explain what it could do and couldn't do. When there were things it couldn't do he was keen to explore this further and share with their programmers for future developments.



## Easy to use

In terms of training the Epraise platform is really easy to use and nobody's ever said to me that they find Epraise difficult to use. The Google login improvement was a big game changer because people were able to log into their school account and then use that to log into Epraise. It prevented all the issues we've had of forgotten passwords or usernames.

All the menus are really easy to use. I haven't had to watch any tutorials or ask for help on how to use the attendance interface. It all makes sense. What I like about Epraise is that the way we've got this configured is probably very different to other schools. It's very adaptable to our school's needs. I remember with the attendance module my account manager actually wanted to have a meeting with me to take me through how to do all the attendance stuff and how to set it up but he also sent me some PDFs. I was just able to use the PDF to activate the things I wanted which meant I didn't actually need a walk through.



# What improvements have you seen?

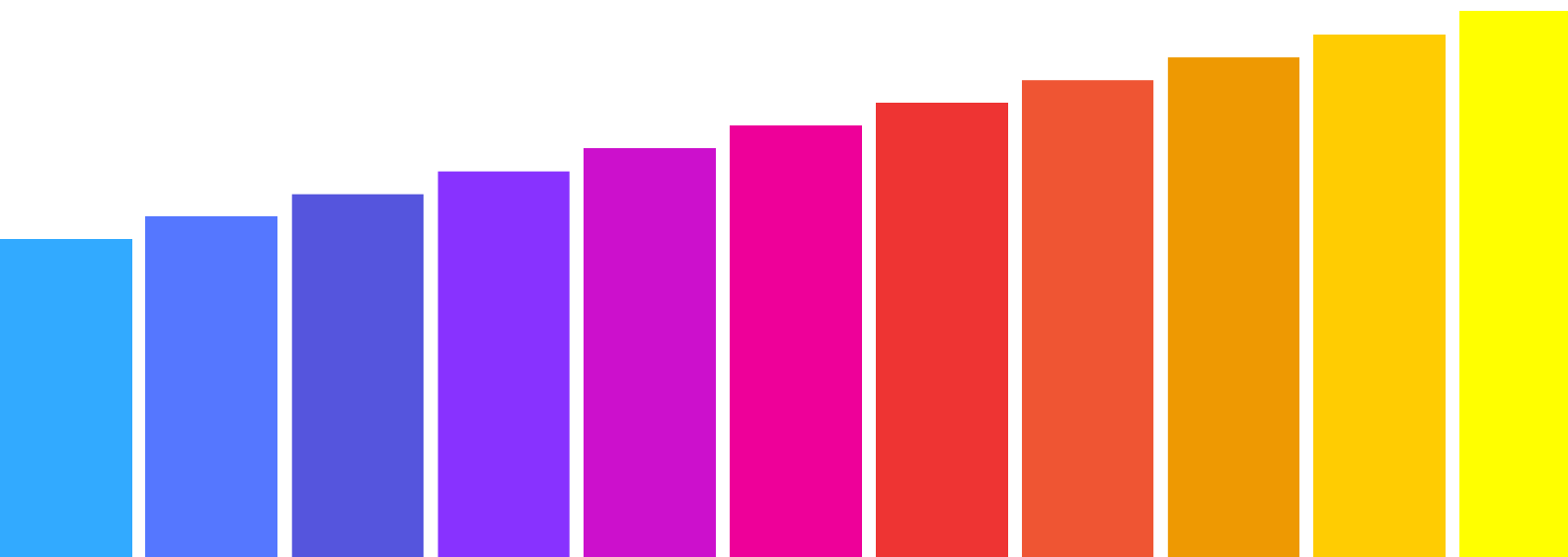
## Students have excellent feedback

If you speak to the children, they're much more positive about the fact that they are rewarded. Before we used Epraise, there were some pupils that didn't think they would get a single house point and they were just being overlooked.

House points became the kind of thing that were for the very bright and able children in the class. And then you had this sort of tier of children that perhaps were quiet, hard working, diligent children who would do good pieces of work, but it wasn't necessarily getting recognised. So what has been quite positive is that everybody now receives points.

## Able to identify students who need support

We have done an analysis of Epraise points across all the year groups and we've identified a cohort of children who were significantly behind their peers. And when we looked at those children, we asked ourselves why are they so far behind their peers?





Sometimes it's an attendance problem and we've now enabled an automatic Epraise point if you have 100% in a week. Sometimes it's because they've been overlooked in class. Epraise allows us to go back to those teachers and ask them to check in with these children and find opportunities to give them more Epraise points. If you speak to the children they do feel they're rewarded and it is a good way to encourage positive behaviour.

## Secondary school students are also motivated

We're in a middle school and run from year five to year eight. In Year 5 they're still in primary age. They're very, very keen on rewards and they love Epraise. I would say they're very excited. But our year eights who by that stage are starting to become teenagers, get a little less excited but at the same time you can see they are quite proud and take satisfaction from getting Epraise points because it is a more tangible reward.

# How do you use the Epraise shop?

Students can exchange points for activities at our Epraise afternoon event. This is an opportunity for the whole school to go off the timetable, with every single member of staff carrying out an activity. If you're the PE teacher you might hold an afternoon on the pitch playing football for example. It could also be outside of school; we have a teacher who is a keen cyclist and he was able to offer a cycle ride. Then we would set a price for those. For example, 15 Epraise points to buy the football activity and 25 to go cycling because you get to go out of the school grounds.

We set it up so that you can award merits through Epraise points for kindness, resilience and respect. The staff have been guided in what each of those mean in practice.

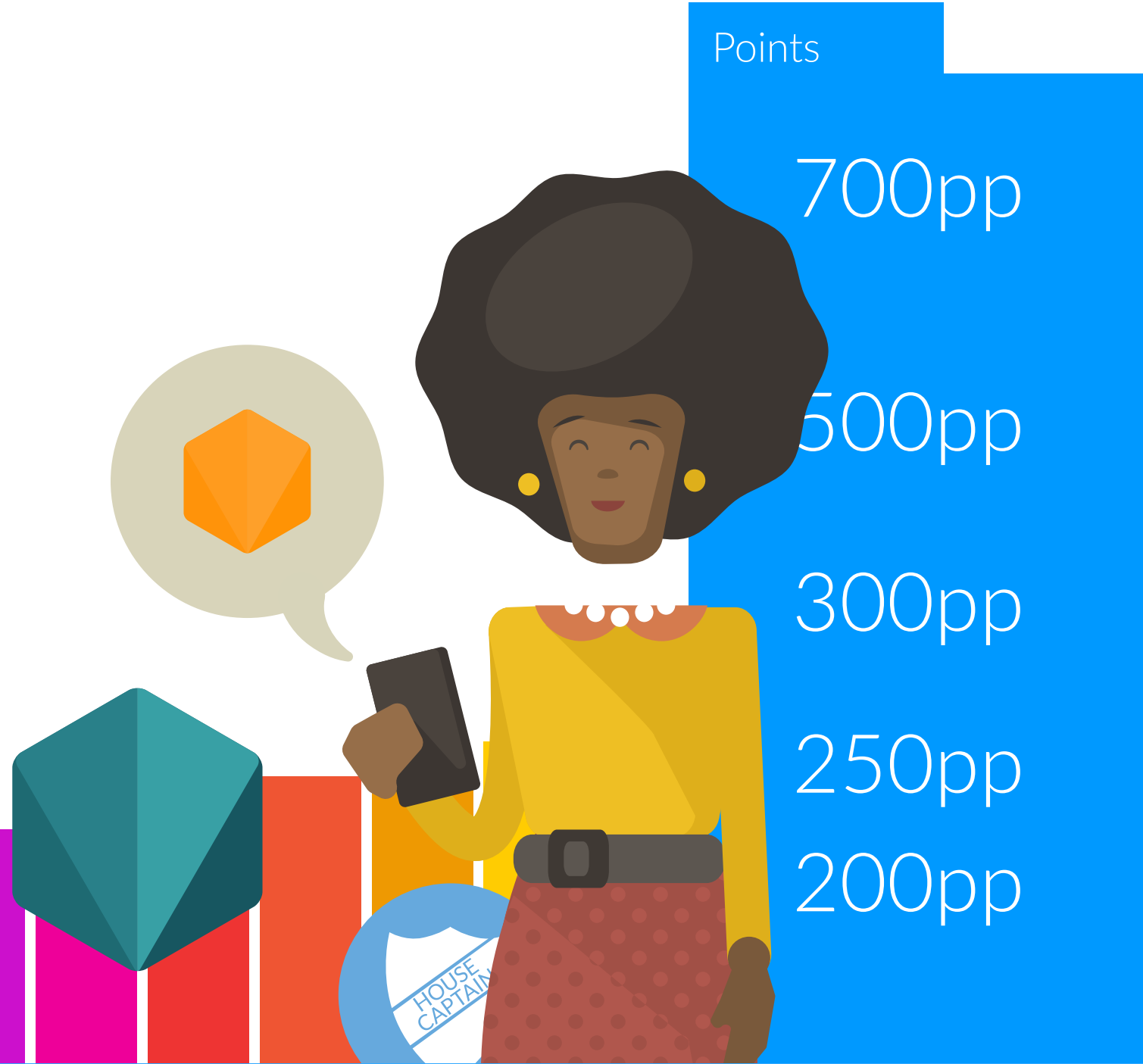
So respect would usually be for good pieces of work. If you've shown respect, you've worked hard in class and have been doing what is expected of you. Kindness would usually be given out for people that are assisting others. Resilience is for children that perhaps have taken on additional challenges or pushed themselves. What's quite nice is that it allows us to see this in a profile for each pupil.

It's also set up so that the points come from subjects. It means that we're able to look at which subjects are awarding points for particular categories. The kids also automatically get Epraise points for good attendance.



# What are your future plans?

Parental engagement is a big one for us and in the future we would like to provide parents with access to Epraise. It's a very powerful way to get parents more actively aware of how well they're child is doing at school. It also encourages them to be more engaged with the whole process. We would also like to see if there's any additional modules that would benefit us such as the extracurricular one.



# epraise

If you would like to chat to someone about epraise, you can email us at [hi@fireflylearning.com](mailto:hi@fireflylearning.com) or get in touch via our website [fireflylearning.com/epraise](https://fireflylearning.com/epraise)