"Better performance and reliability, combined with ease of use and simplicity, deliver a human-centric approach to innovation that is ideal for the school environment."

Keith Marshall
IT Technician
Kirkby College

Kirkby College deployed the PRIMEFLEX® Cluster-in-a-box for an all-in-one server and storage solution with maximum uptime and increased performance.

At a glance
Country: United Kingdom
Industry: Education
Founded: 2012
Employees: 60
Website: www.kirkbycollege.org.uk

Challenge
Kirkby College's legacy IT infrastructure was in urgent need of refreshing. It needed to find a new cost-effective server and storage solution that could be easily deployed and managed while also introducing highly available, hyper-converged and virtualised capability.

Solution
The College consulted with local IT partner Atom IT Solutions, which recommended PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box, a balanced combination of server, storage, and networking components in one compact enclosure that can be operational within minutes of installation.

Benefit
■ Minimal manual intervention and management required, freeing up precious IT resources

■ Improved performance means a better, more productive user experience for students and teachers

■ Provisioning new applications and services is quick and simple

■ PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box can easily and cost-effectively scale to meet future needs - even beyond the expected five-year lifecycle

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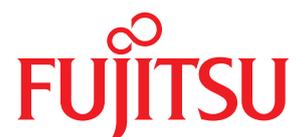
Customer

Kirkby College is a secondary school and sixth form with academy status, located in Kirkby-in-Ashfield in Nottinghamshire, UK. Central to the success of the College is the three-way partnership between students, the school and parents/carers. The aim is for each of its 500 students to leave Kirkby College as well rounded learners, able to deal confidently with the challenges of the world around them. The College endeavours to ensure that every student has access to the very best teaching and learning.

Products and services

- FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX®
  Cluster-in-a-box

Challenge

Kirkby College was dependent on an aging storage platform that was out of warranty and a drain on IT resources in terms of management and maintenance. Given that the school relies on stable, highly available access to information, it needed to find a new cost-effective solution within a tight budget.

"We were ready to refresh our old infrastructure, which was overly complex, difficult to keep running and performing poorly," explains Keith Marshall, IT Technician, Kirkby College. "It was also extortionately costly and when things went wrong such as a failed motherboard, it was a nightmare to fix."

The College works with local IT partner Atom IT Solutions Ltd for most of its technology requirements and so approached it for advice. The key criteria were performance, cost and ease of management, against which several vendors were judged. The FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box solution came out as the clear leader.

"We are working under budget cutbacks and have very little money to spare," says Keith. "The Fujitsu solution offered an elegant, all-in-one system at attractive pricing that could scale to meet future needs."

Solution

PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box offers a balanced combination of server, storage, and networking components in one compact enclosure. With PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box, Kirkby College received a hyper-converged solution including Microsoft Windows Server 2012 R2 pre-installed and pre-configured as a virtualised high availability cluster. Two server nodes, appropriate storage, network connections as well as redundant power supplies and fans are pre-fabricated within this single box.

Over the course of the Easter holiday, Atom IT Solutions Ltd migrated ten virtual servers as well as 4 TB of data, to the new platform. As it was carried out during the holidays, there was no disruption to the operation of the College.

"I wasn't involved in the deployment of the new Fujitsu solution so came back after the break to a totally new environment that had all been preconfigured and installed with all our applications and data," says Keith. "My initial thoughts were that it looks much easier to manage and wraps everything up in a single, neat package."

"PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box now supports 490 students and 60 staff via a range of applications, including standard productivity tools, Heritage Cirqa library management, Adobe, SQL and Impero School Management software," adds Keith.

Benefit

The most noticeable advantage of the new Fujitsu solution is that it requires minimal manual intervention. Whereas previously, Keith and his team would spend hours firefighting infrastructure issues, now they are free to focus on more strategic tasks and objectives.

"PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box simply sits in the corner and gets on with things so since the simple and quick installation, I have had very little to do with it," continues Keith. "For example, it updates Windows automatically by moving everything to one cluster and then swapping it back when complete, without interrupting service and without needing me to fiddle with settings. That makes my life easier and frees up valuable resources."

The new platform is also delivering increased performance and optimal availability, all within a tidy form factor. This ensures that lessons are never interrupted and teachers and students alike have access to the resources they need to learn.

"It not only delivers better performance and enhanced reliability, it is also actually very stylish and doesn't take up lots of precious space," comments Keith. "Combine these factors with its ease of use and the simplicity of provisioning new services, and you have a human-centric approach to innovation that is ideal for the school environment."

PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box is also highly scalable and, even though its 10 TB is more than sufficient for Kirkby College's current requirements, Keith can easily add more storage, nodes and components as the need arises. Furthermore, the college has also invested in 30 Fujitsu laptops and plans to purchase more in the near future, cementing its partnership further.

"We expect PRIMEFLEX Cluster-in-a-box to last beyond the expected five-year lifecycle because it is designed to be extensible to meet new demands," concludes Keith. "I am confident that during that time I will be able to concentrate on helping the College evolve rather than babysitting the hardware."