

Case Study

The Warren School

»From the very first conversations with Fujitsu, we felt there was a real commitment from them. We were very excited about the solution that they were proposing – and the added value that we could see from working directly with experts.«

Andrew Szymanski, Network Manager, The Warren School



The customer

The Warren School in Chadwell Heath near Romford is a mixed community comprehensive for 11 to 18 year olds located in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. With almost 1,300 pupils it is larger than average and its dual Specialist Engineering and Specialist Sports College status reflects in part its historical proximity to the huge Ford production plant at Dagenham and West Ham United football club, whose training ground is just a stone's throw from the school gates.

The challenge

The Warren School is striving to improve its performance, the GCSE and A level results of its pupils and to be a beacon of opportunity in a local community that has suffered from a range of social and economic difficulties in recent years. However the ambitions of its teaching staff and students were being thwarted by an old and unreliable IT infrastructure, legacy servers and limited storage capacity.

“When I joined the school in 2011, our IT infrastructure was about eight years old and predominantly consisted of Microsoft Server 2003 or Exchange 2003 servers,” says Andrew Szymanski, Network Manager at The Warren School.

“It had served us well but it was reaching end of life. Basic steps such as logging in to the system were a daily problem and the difficulties impacted on everyone; teachers, students and administrators. When teachers brought in their own teaching software, it took us time to check, approve and distribute it to each of the PCs required and doing software upgrades on individual devices was a logistical nightmare.

“As the only full-time IT person I was constantly fire fighting problems and so there was no time to make any changes for the better. And in common with most schools these days our budget was very tight. At best, I thought some sort of an upgrade was about all we could consider,” Szymanski recalls.

When new Business Manager Claire Hutley joined the school, she and Szymanski concluded that, for the school to achieve its objectives, it was vital that a vision and a strategy for IT be created, followed by a comprehensive solution specification to deliver the vision.

The customer

Country: UK
Industry: Education
Pupils: 1,300
Website: www.thewarrenschoo.com

The challenge

The Warren School was striving to improve performance and exam results. To support this it needed an innovative and affordable way of replacing its old and unreliable IT.

The solution

Fujitsu PRIMERGY servers and Fujitsu PRIMEFLEX® vShape 25 virtual infrastructure, combined with a close working partnership between the school and Fujitsu, featuring regular site visits to talk to staff and students about how to get the most from the solution.

The benefit

- An agile solution moves high performance IT resources to where teachers and pupils need it
- Reduced energy costs and more efficient use of support staff
- Motivated and engaged teachers and students, using the latest educational tools
- Flexible infrastructure enables further developments such as “bring your own device”

"We could have just fitted some quick fix products to overcome storage problems and then upgraded to Server 2008," says Szymanski, "but we knew that that was not a long-term solution. The problem with a simple server upgrade is that the IT is still limited and a couple of years later, we would have faced similar problems."

Hutley was equally determined that The Warren School deserved better. "Our students come from a neighborhood where there are fewer opportunities and more hurdles to overcome. For example access to a computer at home is not always possible, so our school has an even more important role to play in the education of our pupils."

The solution

Both Szymanski and Hutley knew that, given the shortage of internal resource and expertise, they needed to establish a partnership arrangement with a company that not only had the right technology at the right price, but could also help them realise their vision for the school.

"We chose Fujitsu because, from the very first conversations, we felt there was a real commitment from them. We were very excited about the solution that they were proposing – and the added value that we could see from working directly with experts."

The school selected two new Fujitsu PRIMERGY servers that will enable the transition from physical desktop computers to easily managed virtual desktops, providing a more flexible and future-proof way to manage IT in education.

In addition to replacing its legacy servers with Fujitsu servers, the school also selected the Fujitsu vShape 25 high-availability package, optimised to deliver up to 25 virtual machines (VMs). Using VMs enables the school to effectively move computers and resources around the school at the click of a button.

Fujitsu vShape will also enable The Warren School to offer staff and students remote access to files and applications, radically improving the way in which students complete and submit homework. In the medium term vShape will also enable staff and students to bring their own devices – such as tablets and laptops – to school and safely and securely connect to the school network.

"When we complete the move of our existing IT system to Fujitsu vShape in September 2013 it will enable us to do so much more than we previously thought possible. We're not only improving the way we work and teach but by enabling our staff and students to take advantage of the latest teaching resources, lessons are more stimulating and interactive and teachers and pupils are so much more motivated as a result," said Szymanski.

"Given our limitations, working in partnership with Fujitsu to move to vShape makes implementing the new technology incredibly simple."

The benefit

The Warren School is already reaping twin benefits of its move to a partnership solution with Fujitsu.

"We have moved from outdated physical desktop computers to a 21st century infrastructure with virtual desktops, more storage resources and a flexible, affordable way to manage our IT. Our new systems are robust, efficient, virtual and future-ready," says Szymanski.

Applications usually limited to computers in particular departments – such as an art and design package or piece of maths software – can be delivered instantly to anywhere in the school and provide a more flexible use of classrooms.

The school's legacy servers will be retained to run some old software applications, but the new equipment will yield cost savings and IT efficiencies, according to Szymanski. Staff and students will eventually enjoy remote access to files and applications, improving how students submit homework.

"Amongst other shortcomings, our old technology consumed a lot of power. The new consolidated infrastructure will consume less power, save us money and help us with our green initiatives."

The new infrastructure will also enable the school to initiate a 'bring your own device' (BYOD) programme for staff and students to be rolled out in 2014. With this in mind the school's wireless network is also being upgraded.

But for Hutley and Szymanski, of equal significance has been the ongoing commitment of Fujitsu to deliver a real partnership, with tangible added value.

"It is a real revolution for our school," says Hutley. "Fujitsu people have been coming into school working with us on the solution – and directly with our students too. We are planning to have speakers from Fujitsu to talk to students in groups and individually about technology and careers in IT."

"This is so important for our young people, to feel that investment, not just in money and equipment, but in time too. That personal commitment is very inspiring for our students who are often struggling against the odds without many role models."

"We hoped for a partnership that would deliver added value for us, but the reality is that we now have far more than that. Fujitsu has done a great job so far on all fronts and we look forward to a long relationship with them."

Contact

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