"Students have a familiarity with IT in their everyday life and they have that expectation that when they come into college they can carry on accessing their mobile devices, accessing services throughout the evening, and whenever they want to and that expectation definitely comes into the college."

Chris Fry
Head of Technical Solutions
Sir John Deane's College

Fujitsu are working with Sir John Deane's College to implement a VDI solution and put the classroom in the cloud

At a glance
Country: UK
Industry: Education
Website: www.sjd.ac.uk

Challenge
SJD wanted to allow students and staff to use their own devices without compromsing on security or reliability.

Solution
Fujitsu have provided a VDI solution that supports over 500 users at the college. The solution runs on ten RX2540 PRIMERGY Servers with Nvidia M10 Tesla Graphics Cards and one DX200 ETERNUS Storage Array with Flash Storage.

Benefits
- SJD have a flexible robust new infrastructure implemented with minimal disruption

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Customer

Sir John Deane's Sixth Form College (SJD) is a sixth form college in Northwich, Cheshire. They provide specialist A Level provision in more than 30 subjects and are proudly ranked the highest achieving Sixth Form College in the country.

In April 2018, Sir John Deane's College converted to Academy status, as part of The Sir John Brunner Foundation Multi Academy Trust.

Products and Services

- Fujitsu Server PRIMERGY RX2540
- Fujitsu DX200 ETERNUS Storage Array

Expanding horizons

As one of the UK's leading Sixth Form Colleges, Sir John Deane's attracts incredible talent, and their award winning teachers are second to none. The college prides itself on its long tradition of academic excellence and provides unrivalled levels of support and guidance to its many aspirational students and inspiring staff.

As Head of Technical Solutions Chris Fry explains: "The philosophy of St John Deane's is that we want to make sure that the students come in and get the best grades that they possibly can get. It doesn't matter what their background is, they can come here and leave as successful as they possibly can be. We make sure that every child matters, every child is important to us whether they are students with lower abilities, higher abilities, we look after all of them and try and get the best outcome really for them."

SJD wanted to use technology to empower their students and staff to do more in less time. IT environments are becoming ever more complex and IT departments need tools to make things simpler and easier. SJD has a wide range of users, both on and off premise and with differing needs. The IT department wanted to use tools to do more with less and better support their users. Chris Fry adds: "Students have a familiarity with IT in their everyday life and they have that expectation that when they come into college they can carry on accessing their mobile devices, accessing services throughout the evening and whenever they want to and that expectation definitely comes into the college."

Putting the classroom in the cloud

Fujitsu and ACR (Fujitsu Expert Accredited Delivery Services partner) implemented a new VDI solution that supports over 500 users at the college.

A virtual desktop has the same look and feel as a standard PC desktop. However, unlike these, a virtual desktop is stored on – and accessed from – the server farm. Virtual hardware is allocated to the desktop upon provisioning, and is able to run demanding applications such as high-resolution video and graphics intensive applications: the hardware isolation means that infrastructure can still deliver a rich IT experience no matter how many users access the system from anywhere and at any time, making the use of IT more flexible for staff & students.

As Chris Fry explains: "We introduced this virtual desktop infrastructure set up, and we initially brought that in to service the students' personal devices. We brought it in primarily to allow students to come in with a laptop or a tablet, walk around college and access everything that the college has, without sacrificing security, without me as an IT Manager worrying about whether that device is updated, what the antivirus is. The students, whether they log onto a computer or they log onto a tablet, or their own laptop, it is exactly the same experience no matter where they are. And that was the whole point of bringing in the VDI."

The solution runs on ten RX2540 PRIMERGY Servers with Nvidia M10 Tesla Graphics Cards and one DX200 ETERNUS Storage Array with Flash Storage.

Chris Fry explains again: "We bought ten PRIMERGY servers to run the estate, so you're looking at roughly about 100 virtual desktops to each computer which is more than we needed but it gave us scope for fail over. So should any server fall down, actually nobody is going to notice which is ideal for me. And that's all backed up on to central storage so that again if any of those servers fail the storage is there to work off. We also do quite a bit of graphical work here in a number of areas so to support things, some of the graphics packages that we have like Photoshop and Sketch Up we've also invested in the NVIDIA Tesla cards which give us that ability to have the power we need."

Supporting reliable digital learning

Chris Fry explains the benefits of choosing Fujitsu: "we went with the Fujitsu servers from a price point very similar to other vendors but they did offer this promise on the service, almost a guarantee that if the server fails in the first 12 months that we could get our money back and I have to say I haven't been so disappointed that I haven't had a server fail yet. I keep hoping but it hasn't happened! But from a reliability point of view these servers now are critical in how this college works. If they all fail I've lost the whole network and I need to have confidence that they are going to work, and the fact that Fujitsu are prepared to put that promise in place gives me the confidence well actually, they have probably tested it to death before they even put it into us, and even if it does go I've got fail over and I'll get my money back but yes, so that built confidence with us in our decision. It was a big factor in choosing the Fujitsu."

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