> "Before the Fujitsu solution it would take at least a couple of hours to provision a new server. Now, we can do it in minutes without interrupting workflow or service. That allows me more time to work on the development side and add more value to the school."

Adam Green
Network Manager
St. Bede's Catholic High School

St. Bede's Catholic High School deployed a combination of virtual servers and storage from Fujitsu to replace the aging, unreliable servers.

At a glance

Country: United Kingdom
Industry: Education
Employees: 100
Website: www.sbchs.co.uk

Challenge

St. Bede's Catholic High School relied on aging, unreliable servers and had no robust disaster recovery capability in place, meaning failure would be catastrophic. It needed to find a flexible, scalable and reliable alternative.

Solution

The school turned to educational IT specialists Virtue Technologies, which recommended deploying a combination of virtual servers and storage from Fujitsu to replace the legacy hardware.

Benefit

- Fit-for-purpose DR capability, eliminating the risk of downtime
- The new system boasts much faster performance, making users less frustrated and more productive
- Minimal maintenance and management requirements reduce the burden on the IT team, freeing up time to be spent more effectively
- New applications can be provisioned in minutes rather than hours

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Customer

St. Bede's Catholic High School is a co-educational secondary school located in Ormskirk, Lancashire, North West England. It aims to nurture an ethos of a caring Catholic community built on respect for each other while delivering the improvements needed to move St. Bede's from Good to Outstanding as per its Ofsted rating. It embraces best practices in teaching and learning and uses technology as a key facilitator of this process. St. Bede's employs 100 staff to educate and guide approximately 700 children aged 11-16.

Products and services

- 2 x FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS DX60
- 2 x FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX2530

Challenge

St. Bede's had accumulated a number of aging servers which were beginning to buckle under the pressure of the school's growing infrastructure. Frequent disc failures caused downtime while the lack of a modern disaster recovery (DR) capability meant that any serious incident could have catastrophic consequences.

"Our DR was very simplistic and would have taken a long time to get back up and running in the event of significant failure," explains Adam Green, Network Manager, St. Bede's Catholic High School. "We rely on our servers for everything from the management information system to file servers, databases and data analysis programmes so we could not afford the risk."

When five discs on one server went down at the same time, it proved to remind the school it needed to act. Adam had worked with school IT specialist Virtue Technologies in the past and asked them for advice. Together, they identified reliability, availability, cost and scalability as the key criteria.

"We didn't want to have to upgrade again in a few years so we needed a flexible platform that could grow with minimal additional investment," adds Adam. "Virtue Technologies recommended a virtual server and storage solution from Fujitsu and it was clear that it ticked the right boxes."

Solution

Virtue Technologies installed two Fujitsu ETERNUS DX60 storage arrays, which deliver reliable operation at an affordable price. Management software, included at no extra cost, flexible support for different network connections and remarkable scalability make it the perfect storage solution for St. Bede's.

At the same time, two Fujitsu PRIMERGY RX2530 servers were deployed to replace the legacy equipment. These are 2U dual socket rack servers with high usability, scalability and cost-efficiency. The Intel® Xeon® E5-2600 v3 processors work in conjunction with DDR4 memory technology to optimise performance and meet St. Bede's requirements.

One of the Fujitsu ETERNUS SANs acts as the DR host, using VEEAM software for backup. The other supports the servers, which use VMware to host 20 virtual machines. Thus, St. Bede's has been able to consolidate down from the five existing servers to just two with significantly more capacity and better performance. The school then worked with Virtue Technologies to transition to the new platform during the holidays using DFS replication for data transfer so the old servers could still be used.

"Even though we performed the migration during the summer break, exam results were due out so the new system had to be up and running in a very tight timeframe," says Adam. "Virtue Technologies pulled out all the stops to migrate 5TB of data and applications in just a week so we could meet the deadline."

Benefit

The school's priority was to eliminate risk and implement a robust DR solution and that has certainly been accomplished. However, there are numerous additional benefits, including speed of performance, ease of maintenance and reliability.

"The speed is tremendous and the hardware works perfectly; we haven't had to reboot or call Virtue Technologies for help – it simply sits in the corner and gets on with the job," continues Adam. "It's really easy to manage and all the documentation is very clear so it has given me much more confidence in our overall IT infrastructure."

The new Fujitsu server and storage solution also relieves the burden on the IT team. Not only has it eradicated the constant firefighting demanded by the previous servers, freeing up precious time, it also makes the delivery of new applications and services quick and simple.

"Beforehand, it would take at least a couple of hours to provision a new server. Now, we can do it in minutes without interrupting workflow or service," comments Adam. "That allows me more time to work on the development side and add more value to the school."

With this project being a resounding success, St. Bede's is confident it will explore other areas where it might partner with Fujitsu and Virtue Technologies: "This was our first experience with Fujitsu and it has impressed us with the quality, performance and reliability of its hardware. I'll definitely look at the Fujitsu brand again in the future. The virtualised server and storage solution from Fujitsu gives us peace of mind and means we don't have to worry about hardware. It means I can be more strategically proactive and makes all our users more productive," concludes Adam.

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