



“Our current network was struggling with the rising demands on bandwidth due to the rise in teaching departments wanting to increase their use of both wired and wireless devices.”

Adrian Lake, ICT network manager at St Thomas More RC Academy

COMPANY NAME:
St Thomas More RC Academy

COMPANY SIZE:
1,700 students

INDUSTRY:
Education

COMPANY WEBSITE:
www.stmacademy.org.uk

GEOGRAPHIC REGION:
Tyne & Wear

CASE STUDY: EDUCATION

A soSmoothly network upgrade

BACKGROUND

St Thomas More RC Academy serves the Catholic population within the St Oswin's deanery, with a capacity for 1,700 students from year seven right through to sixth form. Having converted to academy status in December 2011, the school prides itself on giving individuals the opportunity to develop their full potential and helping them grow into confident and resourceful young people.

In recent years, advances in technology have played a key part in helping the academy achieve its aims, by giving staff and students access to additional resources to help them teach and learn more effectively.

PROBLEM/OBJECTIVE

As in many schools across the country, the prevalence and value of staff and students using technology at the academy to support learning, has risen in recent years. However, this reliance on technology and the increasing demand of mobile devices, video streaming and shared resources on networked servers has put a strain on the network infrastructure, as Adrian Lake, ICT network manager at St Thomas More RC Academy explains:

“Our current network was struggling with the rising demands on bandwidth due to the rise in teaching departments wanting to increase their use of both wired and wireless devices. The sheer load on the network started to take its toll on the aging infrastructure, highlighting unreliable switches and failing power supplies, which in turn, was also leading to connectivity problems.”

This was having a detrimental effect on staff and students, with network downtime during school hours impacting on their ability to teach and learn. It was also inconvenient and a drain on time and resource for IT support staff, who were battling to resolve the issues and spending time proactively firefighting rather than planning for the future.





“The extensive support and attention to detail from soVision - from specification right through to set-up - was a huge plus point in working with the team and helped to deliver the network upgrade smoothly and seamlessly.”

Adrian Lake, ICT network manager at St Thomas More RC Academy

SOLUTION

To provide a reliable and robust solution, Adrian needed to future proof the network to cope with the demands of the connected classroom and increased reliance on technology which is only set to grow in the future. This meant an entire network upgrade which would involve the replacement of core and edge switches for higher reliability and backbone speed across the entire network.

In order to achieve this, Adrian turned to soVision. Following a discussion about the existing layout and the academy's requirements, a solution was proposed and detailed through network diagrams. The academy was confident in soVision's ability to provide the right solution for the right price which would tick all of the boxes. “We needed a network upgrade that would see us through the next five to seven years, with the ability to scale to 10GB, but on a budget suited to 1GB. We put a tender out to several hardware providers and the specification, price and quality of the solution offered by soVision set it apart from the competition,” adds Adrian.

As part of the solution, the team at soVision set-up and configured three ProSAFE® LAN Access and Aggregation Chassis Switches over four days, to meet the needs of delivering services to both edge and core deployments, as well as coping with 1GB/10GB mixed infrastructures. The high flexibility, low complexity and value price point also made it the ideal solution, particularly as the infrastructure upgrade was needed on time due to the school's reliance on the network over the summer exam result period.

To help the academy cope with increased demand and future growth, 27 ProSAFE® S3300 Series Gigabit Stackable Smart Managed Switches were implemented. With four 10GB ports and stackable design they can easily scale as the academy's network grows, providing flexibility to support faster server and storage connection needs as required.

RESULTS

“The extensive support and attention to detail from soVision - from specification right through to set-up - was a huge plus point in working with the team and helped to deliver the network upgrade smoothly and seamlessly. Any queries along the way were dealt with promptly and professionally,” explains Adrian.

Since the upgrade, St Thomas More has not experienced any unplanned downtime across the network and individual switch issues have been eradicated. This has resulted in vastly improved reliability for staff and students enabling them to teach and learn uninterrupted. For instance, in the event of a power cut, the academy would have previously expected some switch failures; an issue which has now become much less of an inconvenience.

Additionally, due to the management facilities of the new hardware, connectivity can be regularly tested across the whole school. As a result, the IT team has seen significant time savings through not having to diagnose individual port issues or replace switches. “We now have a reliable backbone for our network, with the option to expand and upgrade to suit our future needs. We have been very impressed throughout the whole process, from the proposal through to quotation to after sales support,” adds Adrian.