CISCO HELPS MIDLANDS CITY ACADEMY STRIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Built upon the former TP Riley Community School, Walsall Academy introduced a Cisco IP data and voice solution and is now developing a reputation for good behaviour, improved academic performance and excellence in IT resources.

Cisco IP data and voice expertise wins through

Walsall Academy, near Birmingham in the West Midlands, is one of the UK's first City Academies. Built upon the site of a former school, Walsall Academy aims to provide its pupils and teachers with the best educational environment possible. As well as offering the full National Curriculum, City Academies also have a speciality; at Walsall Academy it is business and technology. At Walsall Academy, technology is also seen as a key education tool. As a result, the Academy decided to go outside education to the business community to create an innovative technology infrastructure.

Peter Andrews, who has been in the corporate sector for over 13 years, was appointed IT director. His role was to develop an IT network infrastructure for the new Academy and then introduce systems and applications designed to support, enhance and improve education. From the outset, Walsall Academy has run its technology much like a medium-sized business. Andrews, for example, focuses entirely on IT and has no teaching role.

Because Walsall Academy was a new-build site, it had the opportunity to create an entirely new and leading-edge network infrastructure. While many schools buy off-the-shelf, the policy at Walsall Academy is to have best of breed. The new-build environment was also an opportunity to introduce both an IP data and an IP telephony system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME
- Walsall Academy

INDUSTRY
- Education

BUSINESS CHALLENGE
- Create an environment that encourages more effective learning
- Develop a reliable, high-quality IT infrastructure to support and improve education
- Use the most advanced technology available

NETWORK SOLUTION
- Cisco AVVID IP voice and data network

BUSINESS VALUE
- Enables closer communication between pupil, teacher and parent
- Establishes a foundation for improving and enhancing learning and education
- Cisco infrastructure fundamental to education and administration

Although the Academy researched the market, Andrews had previous experience of Cisco Systems. Apart from the quality, reputation and excellent past record of Cisco equipment, Andrews also knew that Cisco was one of the only suppliers capable of providing an integrated IP data and voice solution.
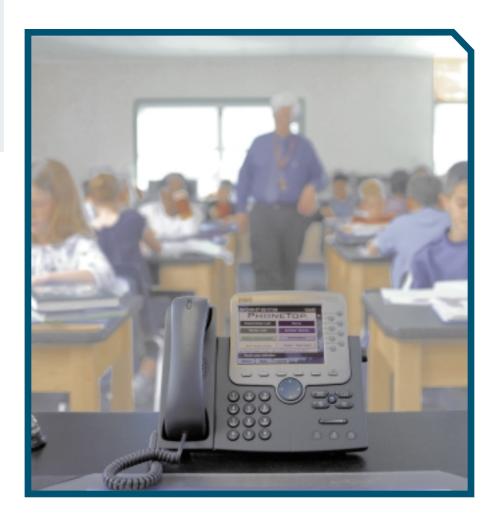
Cisco – foundation of the IT infrastructure

"At Walsall Academy, technology is at the core of everything we do – the curriculum, registration, the telephone, facility management - so the network has become critical to the running of the Academy," says Andrews. "We've used Cisco as the foundation of the network infrastructure because we needed a solution that was reliable and performed well."

Walsall Academy has built its entire data and telephony system using Cisco. The network architecture - which supports 360 workstations and 14 servers – uses Cisco AVVID (Architecture for Voice, Video and Integrated Data), Cisco switches and 100 Cisco IP telephone handsets. The Academy also uses Cisco Call Manager for IP telephony and Cisco Unity for unified messaging. The solution was implemented at Walsall Academy by Cisco Silver Certified Partner, SkyNet.

"Cisco IP data and voice technology has enabled Walsall Academy to create a foundation upon which we can develop more applications which improve learning and education. The infrastructure that Cisco technology has helped create is largely unseen, but it is fundamental to what we are aiming to achieve at Walsall Academy," says Andrews.

Peter Andrews, IT director, Walsall Academy

The Cisco network supports a number of systems and applications for both teaching and administration. Linked to the network via a workstation and PCTV card are 62 smart whiteboards. These allow TV and video to be broadcast into every classroom. Each week there is a live news and information broadcast from a member of the senior management team. When the Academy held its opening ceremony, it was relayed via the smart whiteboards to pupils, parents and friends who could not be accommodated in the theatre.

The Cisco data and voice solution provides staff with unified messaging so that they can access voicemail and email from a telephone or computer. The network also supports remote access for teachers and management staff working from home. The finance director, for example, can access facility management services from home, so that building temperature and lighting is regulated effectively.

A separate CCTV system is linked to the Cisco network so that recorded images can be viewed remotely or from any workstation on the network. This was used to help the police win a conviction for a non-related incident outside the front gate of Walsall Academy.

Cisco technology fosters culture of appreciation

"I believe that the technological environment that Cisco helped provide has had a significant effect on the ethos of Walsall Academy," says Andrews. "It's very apparent the pupils respect and appreciate their environment. We operate an open-door policy so no IT rooms are locked and pupils can use any computer, but we've had no vandalism. This is obviously also a tribute to our students."

The Cisco IP telephony system, in particular is a critical tool in fostering a better learning culture. Walsall Academy's policy is to create a close, three-way relationship between pupil, teacher and parent and effective communication is a key element supporting the initiative. In the future with a Cisco IP handset in every classroom, the teacher will be able to simply key in their personal extension number while in the classroom so that parents have direct contact with their child's teacher. If the teacher is unavailable parents can leave a message, confident that only that teacher will get the message.

Cisco technology is fundamental to what we are aiming to achieve at Walsall Academy

Cisco technology has also helped to enhance the effectiveness of the Academy's CCTV system. Footage from a two-week period can be viewed at any workstation on the network. Advanced software maps a specific image – such as the time prior to a bag being stolen – then searches the same image map over two weeks to identify at what point and by whom the bag was removed.

With the network infrastructure in place, Walsall Academy is now starting to introduce additional applications, including plans for a learning management system running across the network to enhance the teaching process. This will help the Academy capture and preserve knowledge and skills of teachers and education experts for future generations.

The value of knowledge sharing was recently demonstrated when an external professor developed an experience about fluid viscosity which was written down on a sheet of paper. Walsall Academy used it to create a multi-media presentation combining a video of the experience, text and an interactive quiz which is now available on the Cisco network and can be used by many pupils concurrently, for many years to come.

"Cisco IP data and voice technology has enabled Walsall Academy to create a foundation upon which we can develop more applications which improve learning and education. The infrastructure that Cisco technology has helped create is largely unseen, but it is fundamental to what we are aiming to achieve at Walsall Academy," says Andrews.

CISCO SYSTEMS

Corporate Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-4000
　　 800 553-NETS (6387)
Fax: 408 526-4100

European Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Haarlerbergpark
Haarlerbergweg 13-19
1101 CH Amsterdam
The Netherlands
www-europe.cisco.com
Tel: 31 0 20 357 1000
Fax: 31 0 20 357 1100

Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
170 West Tasman Drive
San Jose, CA 95134-1706
USA
www.cisco.com
Tel: 408 526-7660
Fax: 408 527-0883

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Capital Tower
168 Robinson Road
#22-01 to #29-01
Singapore 068912
www.cisco.com
Tel: +65 6317 7777
Fax: +65 6317 7799

Cisco Systems has more than 200 offices in the following countries and regions. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco.com Web site at www.cisco.com/go/offices.

Argentina • Australia • Austria • Belgium • Brazil • Bulgaria • Canada • Chile • China PRC • Colombia • Costa Rica • Croatia • Czech Republic
Denmark • Dubai, UAE • Finland • France • Germany • Greece • Hong Kong SAR • Hungary • India • Indonesia • Ireland • Israel • Italy
Japan • Korea • Luxembourg • Malaysia • Mexico • The Netherlands • New Zealand • Norway • Peru • Philippines • Poland • Portugal
Puerto Rico • Romania • Russia • Saudi Arabia • Scotland • Singapore • Slovakia • Slovenia • South Africa • Spain • Sweden
Switzerland • Taiwan • Thailand • Turkey • Ukraine • United Kingdom • United States • Venezuela • Vietnam • Zimbabwe