St Albans High School
for Girls

THE SUNDAY TIMES
Independent Secondary School of the Year
2015-2016

"Our Fujitsu servers are trouble-free with zero downtime so far. That means we can use our internal resources more effectively and deliver better value to the school."

Bahram Tavakoli
Head of IT Services
St Albans High School for Girls

The school wanted to implement a VDI to reduce costs and enable secure remote access. Working with IT partner, Cutter, it deployed Fujitsu servers to support the VDI.

At a glance

Country: UK
Industry: Education
Founded: 2010
Employees: 1889
Website: www.stahs.org.uk

Challenge

St Albans High School for Girls wanted to replace costly, aging PCs with a virtual desktop infrastructure. It needed to find the right server and storage hardware to support this project at the back-end.

Solution

Working with long-term IT partner, Cutter, the school decided that Fujitsu provided the best price-performance ratio and deployed three servers to support the VDI, two for applications and one for disaster recovery.

Benefit

- Fast, reliable and secure remote access with easier management
- Zero downtime, frees the IT team to use their resources more effectively
- Scalable platform enables the school to provision new seats quickly as it continues to replace old PCs
- Reduced costs thanks to the extended thin client lifecycle and reduced maintenance burden

shaping tomorrow with you

FUJITSU

Customer

St Albans High School for Girls is a selective, independent day school for girls aged four to eighteen years, which is affiliated to the Church of England and accepts girls of all faiths or none. There are approximately 310 pupils in the preparatory school with 480 in the senior school and 160 sixth formers. It was recently awarded the prestigious accolade The Sunday Times Independent Secondary School of the Year 2015-2016.

Products and services

- 3 x FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX300
- 2 x FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX2530
- 1 x FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX2540
- 1 x FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS DX200

Challenge

St Albans High School for Girls has a large estate of 600 PCs across its campus which it refreshes on a three-year cycle. However, maintaining these devices is time-consuming and costly; moreover, providing consistent remote access can be difficult. A virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) appeared to be a more efficient way of delivering the necessary resources. "We wanted to implement a virtual desktop running on thin clients in order to reduce costs and extend the typical lifespan while also enabling secure remote access, which until then had been a clunky and unreliable affair," explains Bahram Tavakoli, Head of IT Services, St Albans High School for Girls. "With a fifth of our PC estate coming up for refresh, we decided it would be the right time to pilot this virtualised environment."

The school worked with its long-term IT partner Cutter to evaluate the back-end infrastructure required to support this ambitious project. It needed a combination of high-performing servers and storage to host the virtual platform. "We evaluated a number of proposals from various vendors with price and performance as the key criteria," adds Tavakoli. "Fujitsu provided the most cost-effective solution without sacrificing quality so it was the natural choice to support the VDI."

Solution

St Albans High School for Girls worked with Cutter to deploy and configure three FUJITSU PRIMERGY RX300 servers as the basis for the VDI. This versatile dual socket rack server provides a modular concept that supports expandability in a single 2U rack housing. Storage is provided by a FUJITSU ETERNUS DX200, a scalable and unified system with enterprise-class functionality.

"The Fujitsu equipment was easily installed and configured to initially support 100 VMware vSphere licences," continues Tavakoli. "We also deployed Teradici Zero Clients on the desktop to replace aging PCs."

The immediate success of this project encouraged the school to quickly add a further 100 seats, which could be easily provisioned thanks to the scalability of the Fujitsu platform. The following year, it also led to the deployment of two FUJITSU PRIMERGY RX2530 servers in the data centre to provide the engine to run all the school's applications and resources, such as file/print, finances, student records and subject-specific software. In addition, the school chose to deploy the FUJITSU PRIMERGY RX2540 server in its data centre to provide disaster recovery capability for the campus.

"Our initial experience was positive so when it came to upgrading our server room, we didn't hesitate to invite Fujitsu to provide the necessary hardware," says Tavakoli. "Working closely with Cutter ensured it was a seamless and pain-free transition."

Benefit

The new hardware infrastructure delivers multiple benefits on many levels. On the desktop, the thin clients are more easily managed with a longer life span of up to ten years and remote access by authorised users from any device is now fast, reliable and secure. "With no local processing power, the thin clients require few resources and can be managed remotely with no fuss," comments Tavakoli. "The longer refresh cycle will provide long-term cost savings."

From a server/storage perspective, the school now has a robust, high-performing and scalable platform with optimal uptime and minimal need for manual intervention. This allows Tavakoli and his team to focus on more strategic tasks rather than firefighting.

"In some organisations server crashes happen on an almost daily basis to the point where it is accepted it as a necessary evil, however, in an education environment this is no longer acceptable. Our Fujitsu servers are trouble-free with zero downtime so far," remarks Tavakoli. "That means we can use our internal resources more effectively and deliver better value to the school."

St Albans High School for Girls also enjoys scalability so it can simply ramp up the VDI as old PCs come round for refresh, with the ultimate intention of making at least 50 per cent of the estate virtualised: "This year, we'll be adding a further 50 thin clients as part of our refresh programme."

The school is enjoying a secure, cost-effective VDI that provides dependable remote access, in combination with a low maintenance, high-performance server and storage platform. As the solution matures, the school is confident that Cutter and Fujitsu will continue to play a vital role. "The best aspect of the Fujitsu hardware is that it sits in the corner and gets on with supporting the school. We simply don't have to worry about them. Our journey with Fujitsu began with a significant investment that has proved worthwhile. We now have the reliable, scalable and sustainable platform we need for the future," concludes Tavakoli.

The Cutter Group

The Cutter Group of companies is one of the world's leading suppliers of virtualised computing solutions. Its aim is to deliver cutting edge expertise in providing sustainable, cost-effective solutions and services delivering optimised performance of IT infrastructures. Headquartered in the UK, with subsidiaries in the Netherlands and Cyprus, the Group's reach is far and wide. The Group has wide ranging experience across multiple sectors, including education, local and national government, financial services and many others. It has a very strong reputation with a proven track record in delivery with over 40,000 desktops deployed and managed worldwide and an extensive and diverse range of virtualised server environments.

IN COLLABORATION WITH