

Case Study: Perins School

Corporate ICT help Hampshire-based specialist Sports College to flourish in the 21st Century

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Phil Burridge - Finance Manager

Perins is a thriving mixed comprehensive school for 11 to 16 year olds which is located in the small market town of Alresford in Hampshire. Its results place it amongst the top schools in the country and as a result, Ofsted recently described it as a 'very good school'.

The school was first established in the 17th Century by local businessman, Henry Perin and it has been located on its current site since the beginning of the twentieth century. It is bounded at the back by the local steam railway line, so despite the passage of time, students at Perins still have their lessons to the accompaniment of whistles from steam engines!

Now, in the early twenty-first century, the school continues to educate children to the highest possible standards, and in September 2002 it was awarded specialist Sports College status. This allows Perins to encourage every child to develop a happy and healthy lifestyle, whilst also supporting its drive towards academic excellence by providing similar opportunities for sporting excellence.

Focus on technology

Perins school has recently been awarded the ICT Mark, an award which recognises the school's success in developing the strategic use of ICT in both administration and across the curriculum. It is awards such as these which show the dedication of the school and it's senior staff to staying at the forefront of modern technology. Something which was also demonstrated by the decisions which the school took when it came to upgrading their communications systems

in early 2006. Phil Burridge, Finance Manager for the school, explains further:

"Our existing Telrad system had been in place for 12 years and was definitely some way behind modern technology. It had always been very reliable but there were many basic features which it could not provide, such as the ability to leave messages, or to transfer calls. We were also starting to have problems with maintenance, as the parts for the system were no longer available, so it was definitely coming to the end of its useful life. As a result, at the start of 2006 we started to consider upgrading to a new telecoms system for the school."

Choosing a top scoring supplier

Phil formed a committee which included the school's Head Teacher and a number of key users, and then set about the process of identifying a new supplier. They had been approached over the years by many telecoms providers, so it was not difficult to identify a list of potential companies, which offered a range of different systems between them.

North London based Corporate ICT, who proposed the Samsung OfficeServ 7200, were amongst the suppliers being considered, although initially Phil and the IT Manager had been in favour of an Avaya IP Office system. From the original list, six companies were short-listed and invited to tender, including Corporate. Phil explains how the selection process worked:





"The county council were keen for us to use a matrix system, with a range of questions on price, functionality and so on being asked of all suppliers on the tender list. We then graded the answers to these questions, which ultimately gave us a clear picture of which company and which system would best meet the school's requirements.

The outcome of this exercise was that Corporate ICT, who recommended the Samsung system, were identified as being the best provider for our needs - and so were successful in winning the tender, even though they were not originally on the county council's recommended supplier list."

To ensure minimum disruption, the system was installed in August 2006 whilst the school was closed for the Summer. It has 60 digital extensions, networked over eight separate buildings and Corporate were also involved in installing the additional cabling which was required as part of the implementation.

The new Samsung OfficeServ system provides all users with voicemail capability and each department has their own incoming DDI, whilst the senior staff also have individual DDIs coming into their offices. After the implementation, the school's Headteacher, Janice Bernard, commented:

"Our new telephone systems sits well within our plans for the strategic development of improved communication within school and with our community. We are very pleased."

Future developments

With the capacity for around 100 extensions in total, the system gives Perins school everything that they required, including the ability to leave messages and transfer calls which the old system lacked. Phil is already looking to upgrade the system and has recently started the process of adding 10 additional digital extensions for a new department which has recently been set up within the school. He concludes:

"There were a few teething problems, as is always the case with new technology, but Corporate dealt with these efficiently and the system was fully up and running by the time the pupils and staff returned in September 2006.

It is the mark of a good company that they are able to respond to problems and solve them and we were very happy with the service that Corporate provided initially, and are now providing on an ongoing basis. If any other school is looking for a telecoms provider, I'd say that they are definitely worth talking to."

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