Founded in 1868, Bishop’s Stortford College has grown to be one of the country’s leading co-educational day and boarding schools for 4 to 18 year olds. The College has embraced technology. Its network supports 420 desktop computers in classrooms, offices and seven IT labs. The College was one of the first in the country to install a wireless infrastructure to provide campus-wide access to the internet and to encourage the use of personal mobile devices for work, recreation and communication.

The Challenge - Contingency, Continuity and Recovery
An understanding of the positive impact that IT has on teaching and learning has always been at the heart of Bishop’s Stortford College’s IT strategy. Teachers and administrators now rely almost entirely on electronic services so these services need to be stable and reliable.

With the existing server infrastructure nearing the end of its useful life, the College decided to migrate to a virtualised environment with an additional disaster recovery site in order to ensure stability and reliability as far as possible. “Our existing environment, although solid, would have taken a long time to restore in the event of failure. Backups were being sent to off-site locations but there were no failover servers so a disaster in the server room would have brought all services to a stop,” explained Bishop’s Stortford College’s IT Manager, Stephen Bacon.

With an aging server farm the College was conscious that its disaster recovery and continuity capabilities were not as effective as they could be. “Continuity is crucial to our school and we needed to be entirely confident in our ability to fully recover quickly should we encounter serious failures across our infrastructure,” Stephen explained.

“It’s essential in a school of this size because we store a substantial amount of information which teachers, students and administrators depend upon, we support a wide range of services and of course we must meet compliance requirements.”

The Solution - Hyper-V: The Future
A virtualised environment would be far easier to manage and address these critical aspects. It would mean that the IT team could focus on student needs, further develop innovative use of the IT systems, and help drive excellence through the efficient and resilient delivery of IT services.

“We believed that existing virtualisation technology was expensive and would absorb a substantial amount of our overall IT budget,” explained Stephen Bacon. “That all changed when Microsoft launched Hyper-V. Here was a cost-effective solution that seemed tailor-made for our College, which would deliver the continuity and recovery capabilities that we needed, allow us to deliver a more reliable and scalable service, free up critical resources, and help reduce costs.”

Stephen invited EACS to a meeting to discuss the College’s requirements and was immediately struck by the company’s knowledge and expertise. “EACS impressed us right from the beginning,” said Stephen Bacon. “Their proposal was comprehensive and cost-effective. The price was right, they clearly knew what they were doing and they took the time to fully understand our needs and objectives.”

Working with the Bishop’s Stortford IT team, EACS began the project, which also included upgrading Microsoft Exchange and the main file server to enable the College to more easily and efficiently manage its IT environment.

Within a relatively short space of time, however, the project ran into two problems: manufacture and delivery of the hard drives originally specified was hit by

“Microsoft Hyper-V brings tremendous benefits to educational establishments and the technology, combined with EACS’ expertise, gives schools and colleges access to an efficient, flexible and cost-effective virtualised environment.”

Stephen Bacon, IT Manager
Bishop’s Stortford College
flooding in Taiwan; and an incompatibility arose between the EMC SAN and the Microsoft MPIO framework.

"Although neither of these problems were disastrous, they did threaten to delay the implementation which had been scheduled during school holidays to minimise disruption," continued Stephen Bacon. "The way in which EACS addressed this, liaising with the vendors to develop a fix and sourcing alternative drives was very impressive and reassuring and the communication to ensure that I was kept fully informed of their progress was exceptional."

The virtualisation project is now successfully implemented and Bishop’s Stortford College is reaping the benefits of its new IT infrastructure.

Microsoft Hyper-V has given the College an efficient, flexible and cost-effective virtualised environment which has streamlined day-to-day management issues and simplified the roll-out of application enhancements and updates.

Virtualisation has reduced the number of servers required from fourteen to six, decreasing the amount of server room space required and removing the need to invest in an additional two servers to support applications and data. With storage now consolidated onto one highly resilient platform, data management and backup procedures are now simple, automated procedures that do not detract IT staff from their core activities.

The enterprise features of the solution have also delivered increased flexibility, allowing the College to manage and enhance their infrastructure and services without impacting ongoing availability to students and staff.

Enhanced visibility, automation, and control across the virtualised environment has given the College better insights and knowledge of the cost and quality of IT services, allowing Stephen Bacon to make informed, fact-based decisions aligned to the ever evolving demands of students and staff.

Additionally, with a single set of controls in place across the virtualised environment to monitor application performance, service availability, security and end-user experiences, problems can be identified and addressed quickly and before they can escalate to potentially disrupt services.

“Hyper-V’s enhanced capabilities and features help consolidate our servers effectively while making maximum use of our resources,” added Stephen Bacon.

But, as Stephen stresses, the key objective of the virtualisation project was to implement an effective, trusted and easy-to-manage continuity and disaster recovery capability. "With automated procedures and proven technologies, this solution now gives us comprehensive disaster recovery capabilities.”

When the new virtualised infrastructure went live, Stephen Bacon asked EACS to assume responsibility for monitoring and support. Issues that arise are now identified and addressed quickly and efficiently – frequently before Stephen Bacon and his team are aware of the problem. "We had great confidence in EACS and it seemed a logical step to ask them to monitor our infrastructure," continued Stephen Bacon.

“We have been very impressed with the entire process and the way in which EACS responded to our requirements," he concluded. "They have been and remain focused on our needs, and have an excellent team of pre-sales specialists, consultants and technicians. Microsoft Hyper-V brings tremendous benefits to educational establishments and the technology, combined with EACS’ expertise, gives schools and colleges access to an efficient, flexible and cost-effective virtualised environment.”

Benefits:

- Efficient, flexible and cost-effective virtualised environment delivers a fast and efficient service to students
- Comprehensive backup and disaster recovery capabilities enable quick recovery from failure with minimum impact on operations
- Reduction in servers saves space and energy and removes need to invest in additional equipment
- Decreased management and maintenance overheads allow IT team to focus more on student and staff needs.

Microsoft Partner

Gold Management and Virtualization
Gold Midmarket Solution Provider
Silver Messaging
Silver Devices and Deployment
Cloud Accelerate

For more information, please contact us:

EACS Limited
7 Ramsay Court
Hinchingbrooke Business Park
HUNTINGDON
Cambridgeshire PE29 6FY

T: 0845 3379 146
F: 0845 3379 147
E: information@eacs.com

www.eacs.com