

CASE STUDY

How Ultra Thin-Clients in the classroom turned an uphill struggle into a big leap forwards.



Little Heath School

Client: Little Heath School
Sector: Education
Product: Service Desk & Professional Services

The Client

Little Heath School is a co-educational comprehensive secondary school, located in the Little Heath area of the Reading suburb of Tilehurst, in Berkshire.

The school is managed by West Berkshire Local Authority, but serves communities in both West Berkshire and Reading. A mixed 11-18 school, it has approximately 1,750 students on roll, with 400 of these in the Sixth Form. The school is currently over-subscribed.

Founded in 1963, Little Heath School is proud of its reputation as a traditional school built on old-fashioned values.

The Situation

Many schools are faced with fundamental challenges around how they meet increasing levels of demand to provide better access to ICT. Little Heath School, a Reading secondary with specialist status in Science and Mathematics, is no exception and they have been keen to address this through the use of cost-effective, new technology.

A real problem existed for the school when it came to measuring up against government e-learning initiatives.

Large parts of the campus suffered from slow or unreliable connectivity and teachers using resources from the internet, quickly became so frustrated that ICT based lessons were often abandoned.

Pupils were also experiencing a huge gap between the performance they had come to expect from their home PCs and the school systems they used for learning. The software installed on their ageing computers was mostly out of date, with machines running a combination of Windows 95 and Office 97 until recently.

As Head of e-Learning at Little Heath, Ed Podesta has been heavily involved in developing strategy for integrating ICT as a teaching tool. When summing up the experiences of his colleagues he outlined the importance of technology in day to day activity but went on to say that "the unreliability and restrictions meant that teachers were rapidly becoming disillusioned".

The Solution

Little Heath School initially fitted out three classrooms with Sun Ray 2 Ultra Thin-Clients as a means to provide more ICT resource to the pupils. The operating environment was fully Microsoft, with Windows Terminal Servers providing each device with its own desktop



display. One part of the campus was installed and configured to illustrate a "Classroom of the Future", giving teachers the ability to remotely view individual pupil's sessions and deactivate the entire suite in order to switch attention to the front of class.

As a state funded school Little Heath was under significant pressure to meet increasing IT demands within the confines of an extremely tight budget. By finding a solution that was suitable for much of their day-to-day ICT requirement they have been able to make impressive headway against targets for e-learning and 21st Century Teaching as well as providing a secure easy-to-manage service for the staff and students.

The ukngroup UTC solution, by design, means that new hardware will be good for at least 7 years of operations and possibly more, depending on growth and server requirements. By essentially doubling the time normally expected before a desktop refresh is necessary, the school can expect to make significant long-term savings.

The school subsequently tendered for a fully managed ICT service and from a list of 12 possible suppliers, ukngroup were short listed and eventually chosen as their provider.

The Results

The new systems are now noticeably faster and provide a far more reliable user experience. Log in times have been greatly reduced, a fact that means teachers no longer feel restricted about how they incorporate ICT into their lesson plans.

The project underlined how moving elements of the PC estate over to UTC does indeed provide a good Return on Investment (ROI), as both the setup costs and the refresh

cycle are more cost-efficient than the previous in-house developed systems. Because all of the UTC terminals are centrally managed, less time is being spent by ICT staff visiting classrooms to resolve problems.

As a higher percentage of desktop PCs are moved to UTC, the financial advantages increase exponentially. The solution is also proving well suited to the rigorous usage expected in schools and the small size of the client device means they can be mounted out of sight. The units themselves have no moving parts or valuable components, so major challenges of theft and vandalism have been simply avoided.

The impact of the new technology has been felt immediately - with teachers and pupils both benefiting. Mr Podesta in particular has been very pleased and his comments provide reassurance to others considering a change:

"In the future I would like us to be able to start to offer students a taste of the excitement and possibilities that ICT offers us in our working lives and in encouraging our creative faculties"

"Our teachers should be more and more confident, and excited about using the communication possibilities of today's internet technologies to help students learn away from school, and to take responsibility for their own learning"

"In short, with ukngroup's help, we would like Little Heath to become a centre of excellence for e-Learning."



Excellence Through Innovation

UKN Group has established itself as a leading industry innovator with its approach to centralised technology and highly cost-effective desktop computing solutions.

With over ten years experience of providing support and managed services to a diverse base of organisations, clients benefit from access to expert knowledge and a carefully chosen network of world-wide technology partners.

Through collaboration on strategic goals and commitment to achieving rapid, ongoing development, our services are building blocks for sustainable growth and success. The company provides a complete portfolio of end-to-end business solutions with the best-practice guidelines of the ITIL framework firmly embedded into our own way of thinking.

