



Learn Academies Trust creates consistent management of school IT

HPE ProLiant Easy Connect delivers cost, management and collaboration efficiencies

Objective

Create consistent compute, storage, and networking across seven schools, against tight install deadlines and with predictable costs

Approach

Examined options with HPE partner, CDW

IT Matters

- Simplified IT management across seven schools, saving time and resource
- Enabled quick and easy installation across a varied estate
- Created a flexible IT infrastructure capable of accommodating new locations and integrating other cloud applications

Business Matters

- Established a platform to host centralised management across applications for administration and curriculum
- Ensured predictable annual costs, helping long term financial planning



Learn Academies Trust is a multi-academy group of seven primary schools, formed in 2016. To work effectively the Trust needed a consistent IT infrastructure. HPE ProLiant Easy Connect delivers a tightly integrated compute, storage and networking solution, simplifying management and reducing costs.

Challenge

Uniting seven diverse schools to deliver learning excellence

Learn Academies Trust is a multi-academy group of seven primary schools in and around Market Harborough, Leicestershire. The schools had developed a loose collaboration since 2012, but the Trust was only formalised in 2016.

“We have a mixture of small and large schools - some small, church village schools with 60 pupils, and larger, town schools with about 400 pupils,” says Stef Edwards, CEO of Learn Academies Trust, and head teacher at one of the member schools, the Great Bowden Academy. “There are around 1,500 pupils in total!”

“I don’t have to travel between sites to manage server issues. Everything can be managed from a portal, via the cloud, from my desktop or anywhere. Plus, not having to pay and deal with separate third party IT service providers creates huge cost savings.”

– Joe Bladon, IT systems manager, Learn Academies Trust

Formalising the Trust presented several challenges, Edwards continues. Governance, leadership and central management systems all had to be resolved, she says, along with a common goal: “As a group of schools we are absolutely committed to developing excellence in learning across the curriculum. Our aim is excellence in academic, social and cultural learning for children.”

IT presents one of the biggest challenges, and greatest opportunities. Each school had different systems, different hardware and different levels of connectivity. There was no central management; the majority of schools outsourced IT support to third party suppliers, with different SLAs and costs.

“We needed cohesion and consistency in IT provisioning,” says Edwards.

Specifically, according to Joe Bladon, IT systems manager for the Trust, the priority was creating an acceptable level of connection between schools: “We want the schools operating on the same level, and for that to happen we need up-to-date technology for the server infrastructure in every school.”

This was complicated further by the tight deadlines – the Trust needed to be fully operational by September 2016, and within budget.

“Centralisation should bring economies of scale advantages,” says Edwards, and the Trust wanted to avoid cost shocks: “Ideally, with any investment, we’ll know costs upfront and can budget effectively.”

Finally, any solution install needed to allow for the unique character of each school. The Trust’s estate includes modern builds and Victorian brick. “We won’t always have a huge amount of space in which to work,” says Bladon.

Solution

Everything in one box

The HPE ProLiant Easy Connect EC200a Managed Hybrid Server met all of Bladon’s needs. The first product in the HPE ProLiant Easy Connect family, EC200a changes the way small education establishments can solve their IT needs by taking end-to-end ownership of deployment, monitoring, and pro-active maintenance.

The design features tightly integrated compute, storage, and networking, together with Zynstra virtualisation and cloud management software, and is delivered as a managed service by HPE partner, CDW. It delivers high-performance commercial services and solutions across the public sector.



It helps customers minimise risk, working consultatively with them to maximise quality of service delivery and deliver real value against savings targets. For the Trust, all patches, upgrades and low-level fixes are taken care of.

“We worked to make sure HPE ProLiant Easy Connect came pre-installed,” says Steve Johnson, CDW. “The Trust needed a robust solution that was going to work from day one, but it also needed something that was flexible and could scale. We took away all the pain.”

Crucially, Learn Academies Trust has one annual cost, no price shocks and with agreed SLAs.

“The appeal of HPE ProLiant Easy Connect was that it had everything inside the box,” says Bladon. “You’re getting Active Directory, with users replicating across all sites, from day one. You’re getting file sharing between sites, and you’re getting a large amount of storage per site, which is then automatically backed up in-house and to the cloud.”

Also, says Bladon, preconfigured and small enough to fit in the tightest of spaces, installation would be straightforward: “It’s already provisioned with your custom VMs, if you chose them. There’s no set up for IT to do on-site; it’s just a matter of plugging it in and connecting to the internet.”

Benefit

Consistency, connectivity, cohesion

HPE ProLiant Easy Connect has brought consistency, connectivity and cohesion to the seven schools within the Learn Academies Trust. It has done so at a cost that is transparent, and delivered savings in terms of time and management effort.

“I don’t have to travel between sites to manage server issues,” says Bladon. “Everything can be managed from a portal, via the cloud, from my desktop or anywhere. Plus, not having to pay and deal with separate third party IT service providers creates huge cost savings.”

The size and preconfigured set-up of the HPE ProLiant Easy Connect box meant installation was done quickly and without disruption. “It was simple - maybe an hour to get everything up and running at each site,” says Bladon.

For Johnson at CDW, the advantage of HPE ProLiant Easy Connect is that he can look to upgrade service expectations: “Because HPE ProLiant Easy Connect is so reliable, and we can manage issues remotely, we have more time to develop new services or look at the implication of new technology for customers.”

Case study

Learn Academies
Trust

Industry

Education

Customer at a glance

Hardware

- HPE ProLiant Easy Connect EC200a
Managed Hybrid Server

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The solution allows for centralised IT management, and enables Trust staff to move between sites. “We have centralised users who may need to be at one school one day, and another the next,” says Bladon. “Having them all connected and having accounts replicated across the schools means that they can jump from site to site with no issue at all. Previously, you would have needed individual logins, individual files, and individual set ups at each school.”

The Trust plans to run a centralised financial management application on the HPE ProLiant Easy Connect solution, allowing a consistent view of each school’s budgets. Edwards hopes it can impact teaching applications.

“What’s really exciting is that we may be able to share research and lesson best practice across schools,” she says. “At the moment, teachers would come into one site to share and discuss. In the future we’ll be able to share video clips. It will be far easier to communicate and collaborate.”

“We can add new schools to the system quickly and easily, should the Trust expand. This flexibility future-proofs us.

“Also, and this is a huge issue in education, we have encryption between sites with Azure cloud backup. Security is a very important aspect in schools.”

Edwards says the advantages of HPE ProLiant Easy Connect mirror the aspirations of the Trust. “We want to work together; we value collaboration really highly,” she says. “Human beings think better when they work together, and that’s what we want for our group of schools. We want to encourage teachers to work together, and for the Trust to be seen as a centre of excellence for professional learning focused on the pupil.”

Learn more at
hpe.com/servers/ec200a

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For Bladon, the hybrid nature of the HPE ProLiant Easy Connect solution is a key feature. “Being a hybrid solution, we have the flexibility to use any of the cloud systems that any of the schools might wish to use, tomorrow or further down the line. We can also with any ISP, choosing the most appropriate for each site.

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