



Case Study:

A Partnership for
Technology Transformation

Client:

Avon Valley College and Salisbury Plain
Academies Trust

Core Vendors:

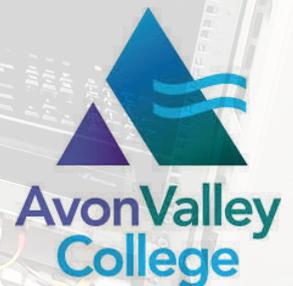
Microsoft, Promethean, Acer, HP, Securly

Technology Partners:

Avon Valley College
SPA

Project Date:

April 2019 ongoing



Avon Valley College, Salisbury Plains Trust and Computeam *"A partnership approach"*

Avon Valley College is a secondary school with a sixth form, located in the heart of Wiltshire, close to the ancient site of Stonehenge. It serves a large military catchment, with several military bases being situated on the Salisbury Plains area. It is the lead school in a 6 school trust spread around the local area.

Acting head Louisa Paston, is rightly proud of the school, *"It is a school that is dedicated to achieving the best for our young people, our community and our staff. Over the last three years, AVC has gone from strength to strength and is in the top 1% of the most improved schools in the country. Our recent success have been achieved through effective teamwork and growing our partnership with parents and the local community."*

The Challenge

How can you move a school to the cloud, improve staff experience and save money.

Avon Valley College had a mixed estate of IT that had been on a replacement cycle for years with no strategic thought or direction. As old kit became redundant, it was replaced with like for like, with staff working in the same way as before. Out of date operating systems had led to compatibility issues with new resources, causing unreliability in teaching areas and staff losing confidence in teaching with technology. This was the same approach with their infrastructure too, with like for like replacements, and no progress on improving speed and resilience around the site.

This was supported with a full-time contracted on-site technician with Helpdesk support, accessible via the walkie-talkie

system, that led to a fix rather than solve approach, with staff becoming increasingly reliant on this resource.

All of the schools' systems were on site, including their email server, which was unreliably hosted on failing hardware. The MIS system was bolstered with guardian access to assessment data and as a communication avenue with home.

The Solution

Move services to the cloud, improve reliability and staff confidence

Computeam took on the schools' IT support and soon realised that the current situation was unworkable going forward. The school had been reliant on the incumbents' approach to resourcing the school that lacked strategic planning and was not forward thinking.

A full and exhaustive audit was completed whilst supporting out of date technology, which was very difficult in the beginning, with the school expecting instant results.

A ticketing Helpdesk was deployed across the site for all staff and the daily on-site visits reduced to change school support expectations and to encourage the use of more effective remote support utilising Computeams' in-house ticketing and RMM tools.

Fiona Richards, the Schools ICT Lead and Vice Principal noted, *"At first the change in support methods were difficult to rationalise, with staff so reliant on the walkie-talkie, but we soon started to see the idea behind it and our staff became more up-skilled as they were shown how to solve simple everyday problems with email, chat and phone support."*

There was an immediate need to move the email system off site, so a full Microsoft Office 365 deployment was completed and all email services moved. As their digital platform expanded, a remote teaching and learning platform utilising Microsoft Class Teams was rolled out to support home learning, reinforced with on-site and remote training videos for all teaching staff. This was maintained by a complete MIS synchronisation tool so all students were automatically enrolled into their digital classes and groups.

Fiona went on. *"The systems were had in place before Computeam were involved were working, but lacked simplicity, reliability and consistency across the site. Our emails system was unreliable and constantly failing with disk space issues."*

This in turn led to the school being approved for Microsoft's funded Office 365 Refresh Programme. This initiative engages the school with 3rd party providers to help inform institutions of the possibilities of a cloud first approach to a digital strategy. This

information fed into the working group and a Trust wide digital strategy was produced. This 3 year strategy is teaching and learning focused, and has resulted in significant improvements and cost saving already in its first year. It includes annual costings and mothballing strategies as the college moves from older premises into new builds.

A working group was setup, with a member of the Trust coming on-board, to initiate Trust wide strategies and cost savings that could be made with centralising services.

Matt Amos, The Trusts' Estates and ICT Lead said *"It's great to have this strategy in place, so I can now plan to move other services from older blocks into the new buildings. There have been savings made by not renewing old and redundant services, but we are also investing in new services that we can roll out across the Trust for the benefit of all."*

Fiona continued, *"These times are an opportunity for innovation, for using technology to remodel our resourcing and delivery strategies, which is tied in very closely to using the digital platform to support the change in methods. We saw the opportunity for using Microsoft Class Teams as a remote platform, which is central to our core values and our approach towards Teaching & Learning."*

All on site hardware systems were fully reviewed and all local servers have been replaced with new hardware utilising Microsoft's Storage Spaces Direct (S2D) technology.

Ricky Phillips-Price, Computeams' Lead Technical Architect said, *"We wanted to plan for a 5 year plus hardware implementation that fits into our and the college's cloud first principals. The S2D platform is a fantastic replacement of the current infrastructure platform with an up-to-date, scalable, resilient and cost effective hyper-converged S2D platform that delivers reliable systems and services to end users across the college, yet be a solution that is fully aligned to a cloud-first strategy. The S2D technology platform utilises local disks within standard server hosts to create an aggregated storage pool that any server in the pool can access. This solution provides a number of benefits over and above a traditional server and SAN solution,"*

The Result

An easy to use but feature rich digital cloud platform.

Fiona, *“There has been a lot of change in such a short time, but it needed to happen. Computeam were very clear from the beginning, of the changes we needed to make and were confident of the outcomes. They had a vision of moving as much of our on site services to the cloud using Microsoft 365 and Teams. We have started to migrate our planning and resources to Teams, it’s so much easier for both staff and students to access. This relieved a lot of pressure on our on-site resources and once the teaching staff had new laptops, it all worked reliably and consistently, wherever we are.*

With the new build in place and operational, the transformation in learning and teaching has been great. Staff no longer see technology as a barrier, but have the confidence now to use it effectively to support our curriculum.”

Our Statement

“It was clear that the incumbent support provider had become complacent in the school and whilst they were able to keep things running, they were not providing strategic advice or planning meaning the technicians on site spent most of their time fixing outdated hardware.

By using Computeam’s strategic approach to technology in education we were able to help the school transform the use of technology around the classrooms. It is incredibly fulfilling to see the difference it makes to the staff and pupils and we are now embarking on similar projects with the other trust schools. The work we completed and the ongoing relationship relates very closely to Computeam’s passion for improving educational outcomes using technology and our cloud-first approach were perfect for this project.”

Chris Chaffey, Education Director

Key Lessons

This project showed us that:

- A long-term digital strategy is vital to drive technological change for the benefit to all
- Engage with multiple parties and vendors to ensure you use the most up to date, reliable and fit for purpose technologies
- Detailed project planning and identification of solution champions within the school was critical to a successful deployment and adoption by all users.