

Corporate ICT win new business based on glowing recommendation from other schools in the area

"What really swung it was the recommendations from the other local schools. Once you get reassurance from another Head Teacher that's all you need. Corporate set up everything exactly as we wanted it and did not leave until we were happy."

Michael Curtin – Head Teacher, Weald Middle School

Weald Middle School in Harrow looks after the education of 8 to 12 year olds and currently has 340 pupils, all of whom are educated in a caring, yet challenging environment which encourages them to achieve their full potential. The school ethos is one in which children feel valued, individuality is respected and self awareness encouraged.

The teaching staff at Weald Middle School know that the success of a child's education owes much to the effective partnership that exists between children, parents, teachers and governors and they aim to develop this even further over the coming years. The curriculum is broadly based and promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, aiming to prepare children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. A key part of this is communication, and the staff know that Information and Communications Technology is a very important part of both the curriculum and of the administration of the school.

Looking for recommendations

From an admin and management perspective, telecommunications is a particularly vital aspect of the ability to run the school effectively. Being able to keep staff informed of day to day matters such as pupil absence and so on even when they are working at different locations around the school is especially important, as Head Teacher Michael Curtin explains:

"Our previous telecoms system was a BT Meridian and was at least 15 years old and we'd been looking to upgrade it for some time. We had not actually started the process due to the fact that our Local Education Authority had suggested we wait, as they were implementing some new systems themselves which might have a bearing on what we were doing. But this did not transpire and so in late 2006 I decided that we should just crack on. At that time, we were keen to find a system which would give us all of the current communications technologies such as voicemail, plus some extra extensions as until then we only had six."

To ensure best value Michael needed to get three detailed quotations for the new system. Based on some information which had been sent to him in the past, he discovered that North London based Corporate ICT had also carried out work for other schools in the area, and so contacted the relevant Head Teachers for more information, as he continues:

"Everyone I called was very pleased with the work that they had done and recommended that I spoke to them. I did gather the three quotes in total, but it was Corporate who impressed me the most and who I eventually selected. I was not as familiar with the other two suppliers, and I trusted Corporate to provide what we needed, based on the recommendations."

Corporate proposed the Samsung OfficeServ 7200 IP based communications platform as the ideal solution for Weald Middle School. Before installation, they brought the handsets in and went through all the features with the staff, to make sure that everyone understood everything that it could do. It was then installed in February 2007 during half term so that there was no disruption, and everything was up and running again by the time the pupils and staff returned.

Keeping teachers informed

Weald Middle School has a number of different buildings dotted around its site and it was important that these all functioned as one from a communications perspective. The Samsung system currently has 12 digital handsets which span all areas of the school, so now all

classrooms and offices have a phone and everyone has their own voicemail facility. This was something which was particularly important for Michael, as until then there has been some difficulty in communicating with teachers and other staff members who were constantly mobile around the school. He explains further:

“When calls come in for teachers, or we need to pass on internal information, it was always a bit of a nightmare to get messages to people in a timely fashion. When I first spoke to Corporate they explained that they could set up a single handset in the staff room with multiple voicemail accounts, which could all be accessed from the one phone. It was something that they had done before and I really liked the sound of it, so I spoke to the Head teacher of the other school and discovered that their needs had been very similar to our own in this respect.”

Staff now each have their own individual DDIs and voicemail boxes, meaning that messages can be left whenever necessary and all they have to do is dial in to pick up their messages using the staffroom phone and an individual entry code. This allows information can be communicated throughout the school quickly, efficiently and securely, with no concern about handwritten notes being lost or verbal messages not being passed on. In addition, calls can be recorded on any handset at the press of a single button, giving staff peace of mind that any potentially contentious discussions can be saved for future reference.

Planning for the future

There are already some building development plan in the pipeline and Michael is keen for the system to expand with the school, as he concludes:

“We have plenty of capacity with the Samsung 7200 and we want the system to adapt to the new school buildings. I also see the IP capability of the system being of benefit in the future, but for now, we are very happy with what we have. As always with these things, there were a few minor issues to start with but the response was very quick when it came to solving them. They set up everything exactly as we needed it and did not leave until we were happy.”

Corporate really seem to know what they are doing and the price was good in comparison to the other quotes,. Having said that, it wasn't really a price-based decision for me, what really swung it was the recommendations from the other schools in the area. Once you get reassurance from another Head Teacher that's all you need.”