

Thomas Deacon Academy

Novus provides new academy with the IT infrastructure to deliver personalised learning

A major emphasis is now being placed on IT to transform the shape of teaching and learning across all subjects and ages. Not only will it allow children to be taught in new and exciting ways, it will also provide them with valuable skills that will enable them to participate in our changing society and economy.

Significant funds are now being released to enable new schools to be built that will have integrated IT facilities capable of delivering the individualised learning required to achieve these aims. Thomas Deacon Academy, based in Peterborough, is a good example of this new investment.

Significant investment in IT

Due to open in 2007, the academy replaces 3 existing schools and is committed to provide an outstanding learning environment that ensures the potential of all its pupils is fully nurtured whatever their background or ability.

To achieve this goal, the most up-to-date IT solutions are being implemented to support teaching and provide new opportunities for learning. With a strong "University Style" approach to learning, this will require significant investment in: resource rich classrooms, a multi-media research centre, computer rich support for learning and a virtual learning environment (VLE).

The funding arrangements required the academy to appoint an independent IT consultant to help them develop their ideas and bring them to fruition and accordingly Cybercom were chosen for this role in 2005.

Testimonial

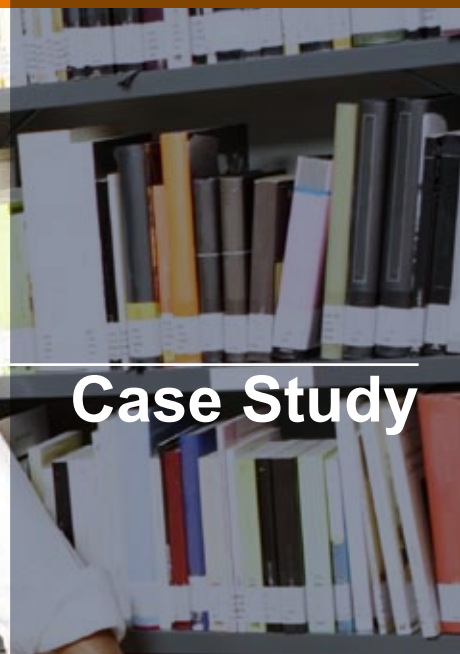
"Since we first engaged Novus they have been able to advise us every step of the way. Their understanding of delivering thin client solutions in schools has proved beneficial and has enabled us to avoid making costly mistakes.

Their problem solving skills and flexibility both in the design and implementation of the overall infrastructure ensures that we will have a scalable solution that will be able to adapt to our changing circumstances over the coming years and allow us to provide an outstanding learning environment for our students."

Steve Warburton
Education Director of
Thomas Deacon Academy



Case Study



Thin client infrastructure

Working closely with the academy's sponsors, Cybercom recommended the implementation of a thin client infrastructure to provide the IT platform. As well as offering significant cost savings on hardware and software, this solution also delivers a number of other significant benefits, including:

- Session portability – this enables a pupil to disconnect their device at the end of a lesson, while leaving their session open. Allowing them to quickly reconnect at their next lesson or at home
- Accelerated graphics delivery
- The ability to deliver all applications into a Web browser

Having decided on their outline requirements, the academy then put the design and delivery of the thin client solution out to tender.

Fast, simple and secure access to computing resources

The tender was eventually won by Pinacl Solutions working in partnership with Cheshire based Novus Networks. Novus have many years experience of delivering application delivery solutions, based on thin-client computing, that provide real benefits. In particular, they have an unrivalled experience of implementing thin client solutions in schools and colleges.

Initially, Novus consultants worked closely with Cybercom, Pinacl and the academy to understand the exact requirements and were able to design a flexible solution that would evolve with the changing requirements of the academy.

The Novus solution was based on award winning Citrix Presentation Server technology and thin client hardware. Citrix Presentation Server makes it easy to give all users across the school, including those based locally and remotely, fast, simple and secure access to all the applications and data they require.

With its centralised management model, Citrix Presentation Server enables the implementation and deployment of applications much more quickly than if they had to be installed and configured on each computer.

The overall solution also included:

- 46 HP Blade servers
- HP Storage Area Network (SAN)
- Automated tape backup library

It was decided that the first stage of the project would be the installation of a pilot in one classroom in each of the 3 existing schools. This involved implementing Presentation Server on thin clients within the classroom and proved to be very successful.

Flexible solution

The next phase will see Novus implement the entire IT infrastructure across the new academy building. This will involve the installation of the 46 blade servers, 24 of which will be dedicated as a Citrix server farm. The remainder will deliver the academy's other IT requirements such as: Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft SharePoint (for the VLE), MIS server and the CMIS school administration system.

One particular problem that Novus helped to solve was with regard to Apple Mac's. The academy wanted to use a number of these devices for certain lessons. Normally, this would have meant them being unavailable for wider use on the IT network. But Novus have been able to integrate them into the thin client infrastructure and allow them to receive Citrix deployed applications via a Web browser.

This will enable the academy to maximise the return on what is normally a very specialised and costly investment.



About Novus

Novus was formed in 1999 from an experienced team of technical consultants who also understand the challenges of implementing IT solutions in an academic environment. Our ethos has always been to utilise new technology in solving problems in order to provide efficiency improvements and cost savings.

This has led us to close working relationships with many of the leading education technology vendors such as Microsoft, HP and Citrix which, has enabled us to deliver new integrated solutions based upon our learning platform technology.