

CISCO ENHANCES EDUCATION AT SHEFFIELD SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Longley Park Sixth Form College aims to provide North East Sheffield with the best possible further education. The College found that its Cisco IT infrastructure was proving fundamental to supporting learning and improving education delivery for students and teachers.



21st century technology-enabled learning

Longley Park Sixth Form College is one of a handful of new sixth form colleges set up by the government to help promote and achieve higher levels of education among 16-18 year olds. The college is especially important in NE Sheffield because the area has a low number of people entering post-16 education and it is one of the few institutions of its kind in the area. Longley Park SFC offers a range of courses and specialist services such as Performing Arts, Public Services and courses that combine study with part-time work.

The College has been built on a greenfield site and therefore had the chance from the start to develop modern building and educational facilities. The aim of the College is to provide a 21st century learning environment for its students. The College believes that central to delivering this is the quality of the IT and network infrastructure.

Longley Park SFC’s vice principal, Trevor Wray, says, “We have a long-standing commitment to using technology to support and enhance education. In its broadest sense, IT is fundamental to learning because it provides the building blocks of our teaching and learning strategy – we couldn’t do much without it.

“What’s important is how you deploy the technology and we wanted a strong and robust network because it’s at the core of our IT infrastructure. There’s not much point having excellent hardware, software and education applications if you can’t get the level of connectivity needed to bring it to the desktop or, in our case, to the teaching front line.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER NAME

- Longley Park Sixth Form College

INDUSTRY

- Education

ORGANISATION SIZE

- SMB

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Encourage more young people in NE Sheffield to move into further education
- Become a leading provider of post-16 education
- Support education delivery with relevant high-quality technology

NETWORK SOLUTION

- Cisco IP foundation and wireless network

BUSINESS VALUE

- Improves ability to deliver high-standards of education
- Helps students invest in personal achievement and development
- Relieves burden of administration from teachers
- Delivers a high value-versus-cost ratio

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Cisco – technologically superior to competitors

Wray says, “When we researched the various different vendors, we found that for a relatively modest premium, Cisco was able to provide a very robust solution, technologically superior to any of its nearest competitors.” The college also found that Cisco provided the best solution for supporting multi-user, high-bandwidth applications such as multi-media or video-on-demand.

Longley Park SFC has deployed a Cisco IP Local Area Network (LAN) around the college building. It supports around 600 PCs and notebooks used by over 100 teaching and administration staff, and over 1000 students. It also supports wireless connections in public areas such as the College café with more secure wireless connection in all classrooms.

As well as using Cisco technology for education activities such as producing coursework and creating spreadsheets and presentations, Longley Park SFC also uses technology in more innovative ways. For example, there is a learning resource centre at the College which provides e-learning facilities for much of the college’s education activity. Both students and teachers use this to access learning information such as curriculum subjects and programmes, annual work plans or individual lesson notes and presentations. This environment provides a forum for sharing best practices so that teachers and students from the same class, subject or across different subjects can share experiences.

There is also a learning database available to students comprising information from within the College and information from external education agencies such as the Further Education Resources for Learning (FERL) and the British Educational Communications and Technology agency (BECTa). The College uses the Cisco solution for important messages, such as urgent announcement or information about college events which are delivered to classrooms via networked data projectors; to large displays in the central atrium or to PCs when students log onto their personal profiles.

Cisco worked together with European Electronique, a Cisco Premier Certified Partner, to implement the solution at Longley Park SFC.

Cisco enhances understanding of educational needs

The Cisco solution has had an immediate impact on helping Longley Park SFC improve learning, teaching and administration.

Wray says, “As a result of the Cisco solution, we have a very enhanced understanding of what our students are doing, what their needs are and how they are using and applying teaching resources. This makes it much easier for us to improve the delivery and level of post-16 education we can provide to the community.”

The College uses an on-line system for monitoring student progress. For example, the Cisco technology helps with sharing information for morning registration, which is performed electronically and communicating the information to a central database. It also enables course work and exam results to be stored centrally. Having this on the Cisco network and making it available to all teaching staff wherever they are located makes the systems much more effective.

Data about each student is available centrally so that teachers have information about a student at their finger tips – via a PC or laptop – and can respond to student needs faster and more efficiently. Students can also access certain information in the system so that they can review their own performance via their own computers or college PCs.

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Trevor Wray
Vice Principal
Longley Park SFC

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“One of the key things about working with Cisco is that it has enabled the College to share information in an open way and in my experience that leads to a significant improvement in learning,” says Wray. “Our students are able to see how their performance is being monitored and managed and they realise how important it is. This helps them focus on improving and gives them a sense ownership and responsibility for their own development.”

The Cisco network is also helping to make administrative work easier for teachers. Longley Park SFC has invested in administration support applications such as on-line templates for lesson planning. The burden of producing regular reports on every student is significantly lifted by using the Cisco network to gather information from several different sources and create many routine elements of the reports automatically.

Wray says, “I believe we’re getting excellent value for money with Cisco and I certainly wouldn’t hesitate buying Cisco solutions again. But importantly, the Cisco technology is used to improve teaching and learning and therefore the prospects for students that come to Longley Park SFC.”



I certainly wouldn't hesitate buying Cisco technology again.



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