



School focuses on student safety with first-rate video surveillance

“With the cameras in place ... we will see a significant improvement in school safety and reduction in cases of bullying and anti-social behaviour.”

– Alan Marr, Principal, Dromana Secondary College

Dromana Secondary College provides a broad curriculum and flexible learning environment to nearly 1,000 secondary-school students from across Victoria’s Mornington Peninsula. Located about 60km from Melbourne, the school is set on about 36 hectares and surrounded by farmland.

Critical issue

With its limited and outdated closed-circuit surveillance system, Dromana Secondary College struggled to monitor student movement around the campus buildings and wide-open grounds. The school relied on a decade-old surveillance system that only provided three-hour blocks of grainy, VHS footage and the school used dummy cameras to deter students from behaving inappropriately, all of which created challenges for both students and staff.

The main issue facing the school was a high incidence of bullying and intimidation, which left a significant proportion of the school student population feeling threatened and unsafe. The lack of student security was reflected in school surveys, most notably the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s annual *Attitudes to School Survey*.

“Student safety at Dromana Secondary College was rated in the bottom 25th percentile,” says Alan Marr, Principal of Dromana Secondary College. “It was a cause for concern because it told us that many students believed they could feel much safer.

“With upwards of 200 students converging on small spaces around lockers and in corridors at any one time, it was extremely difficult to see what was happening.

“In particular, we couldn’t monitor students in the yard, where bullying typically took place, or around the canteen, where students might stand over other kids for money.”

Truancy and loitering were also significant problems. Staff couldn’t keep an eye on students once they left the classroom.

“From time to time, students leave the classroom to go to the toilet, for example, but use this as an opportunity to break into another child’s locker or head out of bounds to smoke,” explains Marr.

In addition, the lack of proper surveillance made it more difficult to address incidences of theft and vandalism. Although less frequent, random acts of vandalism on weekends – including graffiti, vandalism to school property and motor vehicles damaging the oval – proved a costly drain on the school’s resources.

“It costs the school upwards of \$20,000 each year for repairs and the removal of graffiti,” says Marr.

What the school required

Dromana Secondary College needed an affordable camera surveillance system that provided broad coverage of the school buildings and grounds. In particular, it needed to monitor student movement in and around high-traffic areas and other hot spots, such as corridors, locker areas, the canteen and the car park.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
Cisco 2500 Series IP cameras
Cisco 2811 Integrated Services Router
Cisco Catalyst 3750 Series Switches (Layer 3)
Cisco 2900 Series Switches (2950, 2960) (Layer 2)
Cisco Aironet 1231 and 1252 Access Points (Wireless Layer 2)

What they implemented

With the help of Cisco and its business partner SolutionOne, Dromana Secondary College initially assessed various video surveillance systems to replace its closed-circuit TV security. About the same time, Cisco launched an IP-based video surveillance system for smaller organisations. The school saw an opportunity to leverage its existing Cisco network infrastructure.

In December 2010, the school deployed 16 Cisco 2500 series IP cameras in school corridors and locker areas as well as around the canteen and portable classrooms. The school currently archives up to three days' worth of footage and plans to increase this to seven days.

"The Cisco cameras have an enhanced, progressive scan imager for superb video and colour, which is especially suited to difficult lighting conditions," says James Pettigrove, Dromana Secondary College's IT manager. "The cameras produce DVD-quality video with bidirectional audio and motion detection."

Each camera was fitted with a Cisco varifocal lens, which provided wide-angled and long-distance views. "We were able to maximise surveillance with a minimum number of cameras," explains Pettigrove. "With the 16 cameras installed, we have about 60 percent coverage of our grounds and as much as 80 percent of our internal student travel areas."

The outcome for the school

1. Improved student safety

Dromana Secondary College staff can now monitor a majority of internal areas and the canteen, where most of the bullying occurs and students feel least safe. The school also hopes to improve student perceptions of safety and wellbeing.

"With the IP Surveillance system, we aim at least to meet the state average in terms of student safety as measured in the *Attitudes to School Survey*," says Marr. "If that happens, we will see a significant improvement in school safety and a reduction in cases of bullying and anti-social behaviour."

2. Greater accountability and wellbeing

Dromana Secondary College sees the IP Surveillance system as a way of encouraging students to be more responsible for their actions, as well as reducing the incidence of bullying.

"Students want to see more accountability from their own peers and to know they are doing the right thing," explains Marr. "If students say they're going to the toilet or seeing a welfare officer, other students want to know that is the case and the student isn't meeting up with his mates to cause damage or leave a nasty note in someone's locker."

Teachers can use their laptops to monitor students who leave the classroom, to ensure they are where they're meant to be.

"It's all about building a stronger, more harmonious school community long term," Marr says.

3. Increased staff productivity

The school believes the presence of high-quality video surveillance will save staff time and boost their productivity.

"Staff feel more supported with the cameras in place and can quickly and efficiently identify issues that students bring to their attention," says Marr.

"For example, the *Attitudes to School Survey* asks students whether they have been deliberately hit, kicked or threatened by another student.



“When kids answer ‘yes’, staff can quickly refer to video shot by the cameras,” says Marr. “They can see clearly what has happened, identify the perpetrator and quickly deal with them, rather than get bogged down in the usual merry-go-round of denials and arguments, which arise when students disavow any knowledge and claim they weren’t to blame. This will cut down the workload for staff significantly.”

In the same way, if lockers are broken into or students’ property stolen, teachers can immediately check video footage to identify students who may be responsible.

4. Reduced truancy, theft and vandalism

Since installing the IP Surveillance system, Dromana Secondary College has already experienced a drop in students cutting class, theft and damage to school property. In particular, the school has seen a decrease in the theft of and damage to computer equipment.

“In one lab with about 30 machines we were experiencing computer screens punched in, paperclips shoved into USB ports, as well as RAM, keyboards and mice being stolen,” says Pettigrove. “Since we set up cameras in the corridor outside the computer lab, we have had zero damage. It has gone from being one of the worst areas to one of the best.”

5. Cost savings

Using an IP video surveillance system is delivering a range of cost savings. Installing a Cisco IP Surveillance system allowed the school to leverage its existing Cisco network infrastructure, which was a more cost-effective option than choosing a solution from another vendor which might require new hardware.

“Instead of investing in new infrastructure, we can tip the money into other IT projects,” explains Pettigrove. “In addition, if we need to expand the surveillance system, we can do this both easily and cost effectively.”

Reductions in theft and damage will also save the school money. Marr estimates that maintenance staff spend up to 15 hours fortnightly attending to the damage and destruction of school property.

“We expect to see a dramatic improvement,” says Marr.

For more information

For more information on Cisco physical security and video systems visit:
<http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps6712/index.html>

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