450-year Old School Becomes State-Of-The-Art in Just 5 Years

The Bedford School has in recent years implemented an ambitious IT plan to install a high speed 1500-user network to satisfy the growth in demand for electronic communications. With an infrastructure that would rival many corporate installations, the network runs over optical fibre laid underground with some recently upgraded gigabit links that provide a high speed infrastructure throughout the school. Most remote buildings are connected to the main building with a fast fibre link. The school has also invested in a wireless network where accessing some remote buildings with cable would have been difficult and not cost-effective. They also use wireless connectivity for other remote buildings where a single computer in the structure could not justify the expense of cabling.

The school employs full-time IT staff in-house to help control costs, when compared to using outside contractors.

> ## "Email is a fundamental part of the school communication system"

"The school buildings were networked as we saw it as critical to get all 100-plus staff and 1100 pupils working on the network," says Bob Eadie, computer system manager at Bedford School. "Now most buildings are on at least 100Mbit links, and even the wireless connected buildings are on 11Mbit and we are considering increasing this to 54Mbits."

Paper memos are becoming a thing of the past as electronic communication within the school takes off. To take control of their email, the school installed the MDaemon email server software. "Email is a fundamental part of the school communication system," says Mr. Eadie. "All staff now use emails as a standard, in some instances even primary, means of internal communication within the school and it is now school policy to check emails at least twice per day. We are working towards the same for the boys, where we can expect them to read emails at least once per day."

Customer Profile

Bedford School is a public school for boys. It is located fifty miles north of London, England in Bedford.

The school is split in an Upper School for ages 13 to 18 and a Preparatory School for 7 to 13. It has approximately 1,200 boys, some for daytime only others as boarders in both the Supper and Preparator schools.

Bedford School was founded in 1552.

Challenge

Required cost-effective, robust and scalable email software solution with anti-virus and anti-spam capability for 1,500, including students, staff and room for expansion.

Solution

MDaemon Email Server

alt-n technologies

Trusted Messaging Solutions

Overcoming Viruses and Spam

Spam has become a big problem for the school, taking over from the threat posed by viruses. "The new MDaemon anti-spam is very good, and getting better," says Mr. Eadie. "Spam is the main problem we encounter and anything a mailserver can do to help is invaluable. Also we are starting to use MDaemon's Bayesian learning to maximise its anti-spam potential. Two years ago the main problem was viruses but MDaemon has largely solved this. I now take it for granted that the anti-virus just works. It updates itself every two hours if necessary, so we are as well protected as I think we can be."

The school has a significant volume of emails going in and out of around 30,000 each month, excluding internal emails. "Scalability of an email server is important and MDaemon is fine," Mr. Eadie says. "For the quantity of emails we generate and store, it seems limitless. We have had no performance issues at all."

"I now take it for granted that the anti-virus just works"

The school has a user base of around 2000 mail boxes as they tend to keep all boys on email for a year after they leave. Mr. Eadie is focused on the future to ensure the school is adequately prepared for external changes in the technology environment and their internal systems are up to date, such as disaster recovery and back-up.

Network reliability and disaster recovery are critical areas for the school and they are considering installing an off-site gateway server on a different ADSL line that backs up the MDaemon server every night. Additionally, if their server or ADSL goes down, it automatically switches on to the secondary server and the gateway server without interruption to the network.

MDaemon as Alternative to Microsoft Exchange

Choosing an email server to effectively manage electronic communications is an important decision for any school. Bedford used Netscape Messenger until about five years ago when they had to upgrade to a new version, to avoid it acting as an open relay, and then costs escalated.

"Email servers tend to be very expensive for schools, particularly as we needed 1,500 mailboxes," says Mr. Eadie. "To a software supplier this looks like a big firm with 1,500 employees, whereas we have only about 100 or so employees. So, the main reasons we went with MDaemon were low cost of ownership and the ease with which we could set it up. It is also both powerful and flexible."

The school looked at Microsoft Exchange but found it to be prohibitively expensive, particularly as they charged per mail box, i.e. per pupil. "We find MDaemon particularly easy to manage, while Exchange was difficult to use even with our inhouse technical knowledge," says Mr. Eadie.

"With MDaemon if something goes wrong, such as emails going astray, they are easy to find. However, with Exchange that is more difficult."

Additionally, as MDaemon offers a web mail application, WorldClient, it removed the need for the school to set up client software for a very rapidly changing user-base. "We see around 150 pupils (users) come and go each year, again not typical for a firm. MDaemon also allowed easy access from multiple client PCs, unlike most firms where one person uses one PC, our pupils and staff move about," Mr. Eadie says.

Ease of use and back-up on an ongoing basis is a key consideration for network staff. MDaemon is arranged in easy to read files and back-up is designed to be a straightforward operation. "I like the transparency of MDaemon," explains Mr. Eadie. "When compared to Exchange, I can clearly see the files I need to back up or which need restoring if, for example, I blunder with some setup, and need to replace some settings. With MDaemon if something goes wrong, such as emails going astray, they are easy to find. However, with Exchange that is more difficult. Additionally, Exchange is not straightforward to back-up and restore. Exchange took a week to do a complete restore after a disastrous server failure."

When server hardware was recently upgraded, Mr. Eadie found moving MDaemon across to the new platform very simple and painless.