

St Joseph's Catholic High School

St Joseph's: Raising educational standards with IT

St Joseph's Catholic High School is using HP Notebook and Workstation PCs to raise standards of education for children from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and with mixed abilities.



Based in Slough, Berkshire, St Joseph's Catholic High School is a secondary modern school within a selective system. It has 620 pupils aged between 11 and 16, most of whom are Catholic, although the school welcomes children from other faiths.

Like many schools, St Joseph's faces the challenge of addressing the needs of children from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and with mixed abilities. Its pupils speak thirty-one different languages, with the most common being Polish, Urdu and Shona, apart from English.

St Joseph's is a popular school, with applications being consistently higher than the places available, and is constantly striving to increase standards. The Arts Department holds a gold award and St Joseph's has recently applied for specialist school status in the performing arts.

Part of school life

In 2004, in response to a new National Curriculum requirement to provide years 7 to 9 with one hour of ICT a week, St Joseph's had extended its two Information and Communications Technology (ICT) rooms. However, instead of simply adding another room, the school deployed a wireless network and forty notebook computers. There were two reasons for this, according to Claire Rowley, Head of ICT and Business Studies. *"We didn't have enough space for another facility,"* explains Claire. *"However, even if space had been available, I would still have wanted to adopt a wireless solution. My vision was that pupils should be able to open a notebook anywhere in the school, at any time, and work. That way ICT would become an integral part of school life, rather than something separate."*

Expansion

By April 2005 it was clear that St Joseph's network needed to be expanded even further to meet the growing demand within the school. In line with education best practices, three suppliers were asked to tender for 27 PC workstations, for a new computer suite, and 60 notebooks, 40 for use by pupils and 20 by teachers.

Claire had already visited European Electronique's stand at BETT 2006, the UK's leading educational information and communications technology event. *"I had been impressed with the range of portable, but durable, equipment European Electronique were exhibiting at BETT,"* says Claire. *"So we asked them to tender for the new equipment we needed."*

European Electronique recommended HP Notebook and Workstation PCs. *"As an independent IT services company, we are not bound to sell any particular products,"* says Mark Holton, Corporate and Public Sector Sales Manager, European Electronique. *"However, based on the specifications, price and availability, we felt HP's products were the best solution for St Joseph's requirements."*

European Electronique also proposed the PARADIDACT® mobile IT transport system. Essentially this allows up to 24 notebooks to be docked in a single, lockable trolley system. Consequently, the equipment can be easily and securely moved to wherever it is required. When the notebooks are docked they are automatically charged and networked, ensuring they are always ready for use.

Value for money

"European Electronique were extremely responsive," says Claire. *"Within 24 hours of giving them our requirements we had a comprehensive quote. We knew the HP equipment they were proposing was sturdy and would be reliable. We could also see it represented good value for money. In addition, the PARADIDACT system gave us added flexibility."*

European Electronique also helped St Joseph's fund the purchase through a leasing company. *"School budgets are always tight,"* explains Claire, *"and it can be difficult to find the cash for new equipment. Plus managing old equipment can be costly and time consuming. With the leasing contract European Electronique proposed, it was easier to fund and manage the equipment."* For all these reasons European Electronique were selected from the three companies who had been invited to tender and the equipment was delivered in July 2005.

Excellent support

European Electronique provided engineers to configure the IT trolleys, while St Joseph's Network Manager configured the HP Notebook and Workstation PCs. The mobile IT transport system made the job easier. *"As soon as notebooks are docked into the trolley they are connected to our network,"* explains Claire. *"They can then be updated and maintained centrally, individually or all at once, which makes administration much quicker and easier."* By the start of the 2006 academic year the new equipment was installed and ready for use.

Throughout the implementation period, European Electronique were there to provide support. *"The after-sales service we received from European Electronique was extremely valuable,"* says Claire. *"Their telephone support was excellent. They worked closely with us to*

ensure the leasing agreement was right for us. They also conducted a post implementation review, so that we could give them our feedback on the way the whole process was conducted. It was very impressive."

Huge benefits

According to Claire the benefits of having the new equipment have been huge. *"Having high quality, reliable equipment motivates our pupils to use it more often and means there is a seamless transition between school and home use. Projects can be started at school and finished at home, or vice versa. Because of the amount of equipment we have, pupils have access to a computer more frequently. That means pupils can learn independently and undertake more research on the Internet. The result is that the standard of work has improved significantly. It's no accident that the number of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C rose from 23% in 2005 to 51% in 2006."*

Importantly for Claire, the foundation the school now has will enable it to gain even more benefits in the future. *"We are looking at how we can introduce more sophisticated learning platforms and give teachers access to better quality resources,"* she says. *"We are also looking at putting our Key Stage Testing online. To do all those things we need reliable, future-proof equipment, which we now have. In fact, an independent charity, that works with challenging children in many schools, has told us that ours is the best ICT set up they have seen."*

In conclusion Claire says: *"We have been impressed with the mobile solution that European Electronique provided. They were very professional to deal with and they provide great support."*

Challenge

- Extend ICT to a greater number of pupils and teachers
- Provide ICT anytime, anywhere within the school
- Integrate ICT into school activities

Solution

- 40 HP Compaq nx6325 Notebook PCs
- 20 HP Compaq nx6125 Notebooks PCs
- 27 HP dc7600 Ultra-slim Desktop PCs
- 27 17" HP TFT flat screens
- 3 PARADIDACT mobile IT transport systems
- Leasing

Results

- Pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs at A* to C raised from 23% to 51%
- More frequent access to computers
- Greater self-learning
- Improved home/school integration
- Greater consistency of work

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