

Internet connectivity can be a complicated business, but, sometimes, the simplest solutions are by far the best



These days, a school can't function without good connectivity; administration staff, teachers and pupils rely on it every day. Needing to link their two new schools, Skinners' Kent Academy shopped around for the most effective and affordable solution. We won on both counts.

Challenges

Opened in 2011, Skinners' Kent Academy is a fantastic £21m education facility, now benefiting from the addition of a brand new primary level school, located two miles away. Providing efficient connectivity between the two buildings was a high priority, but finding the right solution wasn't straight forward, as the School's IT Manager, Dennis Negus, explains: "We spoke to several providers, but most were clearly trying to sell us their own product – smart VPNs and the like. They just weren't thinking about the best interests of the school." Another challenge Dennis faced was that the primary school was on a brand new site, with zero infrastructure. But more on that later.

Company Background

Rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in 2016, Skinners Kent Academy in Royal Tunbridge Wells is a new £21m independent education facility and together with the Skinners' Kent Primary School forms the Skinners' Kent Academy Trust.

Challenges

- The need to connect the main academy with a new-build primary school two miles away
- The complete lack of infrastructure on the new site
- A limited budget with invaluable student equipment a priority

Solutions

- Installation of a 1Gb Short Haul Data Circuit between the schools
- A more efficient and cost-effective system than that proposed by other providers
- Organising the installation of the necessary infrastructure

Results

- Strong connectivity between the schools
- No interruptions to service to date
- Peace of mind knowing that Beaming will pull out the stops to get things done on time

Solutions

After an initial site visit and discussions with the school, Beaming proposed a direct 1Gb fibre connection, a relatively simple solution, formally named a 'Short Haul Data Circuit'. For Dennis, it was the obvious choice, and he explains why, "Being a dedicated line, it avoids the internet completely, which means we're not competing with other traffic. And the satellite primary school is able to use the academy's infrastructure; file servers, web filtering and email server etc."

But it wasn't all plain sailing. Having allowed a generous nine months for the installation, we then discovered the impact of that lack of infrastructure. It meant that BT Openreach, for its own monitoring purposes, needed to run in new lines especially for the school. The necessary logistical problems attached to this, such as organising road closures, caused a delay. They say it's not the problem but how you deal with it that matters. We immediately made sure that the necessary arrangements were made between BT Openreach and Kent County Council, keeping the Academy up to date on progress. And, when things appeared to be slowing down, we stepped in again and BT Openreach got to understand, in no uncertain terms, that the school had to open on time. A week later, the lines were installed, and our service was brought on line, ready for academic action.

Results

For his peace of mind, Dennis, as part of the process, had obtained some comparative quotes. These revealed that by choosing Beaming he was making a 50% saving against other suppliers. "With very few students initially, we had a fairly small budget. So, where we saved money with Beaming, we were able to kit out a library suite with PCs, which wasn't meant to be in the plan until the following year." So, ultimately, it was the students that felt the benefit. Plus, since opening day, there hasn't been a single issue with the service.



We've been really happy with Beaming. And were especially impressed with how ferociously they chased BT Openreach on our behalf when nothing seemed to be happening and got it going again."

Dennis Negus,
IT Manager,
Skinners' Kent Academy

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