



Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust

ICT that ensures equality of access, because 'every child has only one chance at a good education'

Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) recognised that investing in ICT was key to providing children with equality of access to learning and wider life opportunities. Working with Our Learning Cloud (OLC), BDAT has implemented a reliable, shared ICT platform, based on Microsoft technologies, across all its schools. This provides many exciting benefits to staff and enables children to have an improved learning experience.

The client

Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) is a family of schools within Bradford: one of the youngest cities in Europe with a quarter of the population aged under 18. BDAT's 19 schools are a mixture of primary and secondary schools, with around 10,000 pupils and 1,500 members of staff.

Driver for change

As with many Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), BDAT inherited a varied ICT provision across its schools.

"Schools had joined BDAT at different points, and we were really aware that some had better IT than others," explains Carol Dewhurst OBE, Chief Executive of BDAT. She continues, "This was about levelling up, so regardless of which school children went to they had the same access to IT and therefore the same access to a great education."

"A key aim was achieving a shared platform and service that was reliable. Reliability was really key to us," remarks Carol.

"We wanted to have a reliable, good quality service that teachers can have confidence in, so they're able to get on with the teaching and learning," adds Mark Dowson, Head of Corporate Projects at BDAT.



One of the things that really motivated us, was about staying ahead of the game," states Carol. "As they get older the majority of our children will have jobs linked to computers and new digital technologies, so we wanted to give them access to the best possible IT in their schools and prepare them for life beyond."

Solution

"We usually advise Trusts to move ICT into the cloud and to use Microsoft software and services," explains Stephen Sanderson, Managing Director, Our Learning Cloud (OLC). He continues, "Cloud typically provides increased reliability, greater security, and much less management, which also

reduces costs. Microsoft's software contains some incredible features for teaching, it is adding to them all the time, it's the desktop software most will need to know when they leave school, and cost-wise it compares very favourably with Google."

"OLC has an education background and were recommended to us by another Trust CEO," comments Carol. "He was very positive about how IT was being used to improve education, so we went and had a look, and the staff there spoke really highly of it and how it made a difference in the school."

BDAT utilised the Government's G-Cloud framework to award a contract to OLC to transform and manage its schools' ICT.

The digital transformation created a shared networked infrastructure, delivered from the Microsoft Azure Cloud. It also provided each school with new and upgraded devices, equipped with Microsoft software and services at preferential education pricing. Many of the schools were successfully moved to the new infrastructure during the challenging COVID period.





OLC also provides proactive management of the infrastructure and reactive support, based on ITIL best practice, with existing IT staff joining OLC under TUPE (Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment)). As part of its managed service OLC provides regular skills training, so each Head can ensure that their staff are able to get the most out of the technology available to them.

Benefits

"OLC has provided us with a platform that's in line with Government security and data protection expectations, and it's also a solution to a lot of the challenges we see coming down the line," declares Carol.

And as Mark notes, "It's assurance for trustees too, as there are now quite hefty fines attached to compliance issues."

Having a single, shared infrastructure has been highly beneficial for staff that work across multiple sites. "That's a massive benefit," notes Carol. "It's helped workload, saved time, and improved collaboration. Teachers can share resources safely across schools, and some of our schools deliver collective worship together. Practically, we can share our teaching and learning practice more consistently and work together better."

ICT that can be accessed from anywhere proved particularly helpful, to both staff and students, during the pandemic. Although schools were closed for face-to-face learning, students could engage with their teachers and continue their education.

"What is really helpful with OLC's service is the training they've built into it, and we continue to benefit from their ongoing training and learning how we can make better use of ICT," enthuses Carol.

OLC also provides regular advice and guidance to Carol. She notes, "They just say how things are and don't sugarcoat it. We've addressed any challenges in an open and transparent way, they are very easy to work with, responsive, and talk us through our options."



We wholeheartedly recommend that any Academy trust invests in a comprehensive ICT solution that improves their equity, compliance, reliability, and makes the teaching and learning experience better for their children, such as OLC's," advises Carol.

By investing in ICT, we now have a better service for our staff and students, and it's enabling us to deliver a great education," states Carol.

"Children have access to a decent ICT system that they can log in to reliably day in day out, accessing the latest Microsoft programmes, whether they're at home or at school," says Carol.



Having this solution has made the learning experience of our children much better and will continue to do so into the future," concludes Carol.



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