

Case Study



NORTON HILL SCHOOL

South West Communications Group provides Norton Hill School with a flexible and cost-effective IP telephony solution using its existing data network ensuring it remains at the forefront of communications technology.

Norton Hill School, in Midsomer Norton, Somerset, is one of the country's highest achieving secondary schools with an OFSTED inspection in 2007 judging it to be "outstanding" (the highest possible grade) in every single one of the 38 categories. It serves 1,400 pupils from Midsomer Norton and surrounding villages in north east Somerset.

The challenge

Norton Hill's existing Samsung telephone system had become outdated and was full to capacity. The addition of new classroom blocks being built on site prompted the school to upgrade the entire system. As a school with a reputation for excellence in all areas, it wanted a telephone system that would take it into the future and not only be at the forefront of communications technology but also have the flexibility to facilitate future growth and changing requirements.

The school wanted to reduce costs where possible and also to have the ability to handle a high level of calls, especially in the early mornings when the reception staff were contacted regarding student absenteeism.

Norton Hill School was keen to minimize disruption for their staff and students, so any work undertaken would need to be carried out in the six-week summer break.

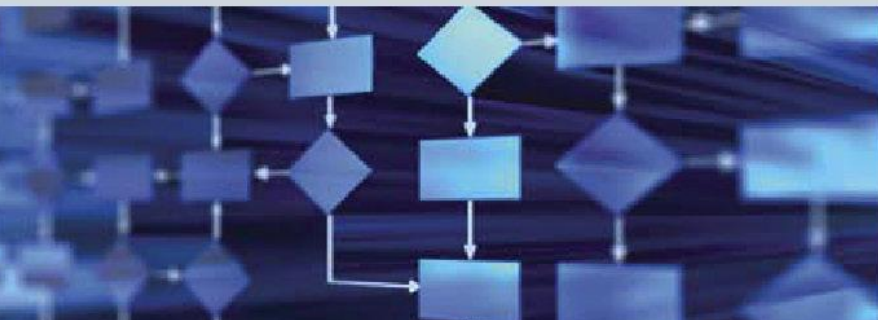
The solution

South West Communications Group made the School immediate savings by using its existing data network to support an Alcatel-Lucent IP telephony system as part of a flexible solution that included the following:

IP telephony - was swiftly installed at Norton Hill care of the Cisco and HP data infrastructure that already existed on the site including within the newly-built classrooms. This meant there was no need to lay additional cabling for the new telephone system and that the Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX Office system could be installed without too much disruption.

A converged cabling infrastructure cuts out the need to contact a third party should any extensions need to be moved or changed - handsets can be simply unplugged and plugged in elsewhere on the system.

South West Communications Group's skilled engineers worked with the schools network manager to ensure that the data infrastructure was configured correctly to enable quality of service for all calls made over the network.



Automated attendant – provided a crucial aid to the reception staff whereby an initial greeting directed parents to a specific mailbox set up to handle all pupil absenteeism information therefore freeing staff to take other calls that may come in during the busy morning period.

This automated attendant function is also used to relay messages that need to be given out to incoming callers, such as school closures due to winter weather and updates on school trip return timings. The automated attendant ensures messages can be given out without the reception staff having to repeat themselves over and over again to individual callers.

In addition, it is used as an automatic operator out of hours and to broadcast information out of term time, such as term and teacher training dates. This service is very flexible though and Norton Hill opts to turn it on during busy periods only to retain the personal service at less frantic times of the day. This process can be easily carried out by the school's staff.

Virtual pigeon holes – were created so that voice messages can be left in staff email Inboxes to prevent any accidental loss of messages on phones shared by a number of people. This ensures messages constantly flow throughout the school and are directed to the individuals they are aimed at rather than to the handset they may or may not be using on any particular day.

Direct dial-in (DDI) numbers – were provided to give callers direct access to key members of staff therefore further alleviating the stress put on the school's reception staff and leaving the main line free for other queries.

Call barring – was utilised to ensure there were no unwanted expensive international calls made by any members of staff or errant pupils.

Tannoy facility – means that messages can be broadcast to all users or specific groups of users on the system via speakers built into all of the handsets. This feature can be used in emergency situations or to contact a specific member of staff, such as a first aider.

System management – is provided via the Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX Office management console – the OMC. This enables the school's IT staff to use this Windows-based administration tool to manage any extension, voicemail and automated attendant changes, plus speed dial and external DDI programming.

Call routing – via the South West Communications Group Lines & Minutes service provides the school with a single itemised bill for all call and line rental costs which can be viewed via South West Communications Group's online call analysis programme, NetView. As well as providing competitive rates, this service also provides fraud and unusual call activity reporting as standard.

Training – was provided to all users and specialised OMC training was given to the school's IT staff. South West Communications Group's training is held at its clients' convenience with their systems and processes in mind. The end user training was carried out using demonstration system equipment prior to their own system going live so that the school's reception staff were familiar with the systems functionality and their skills practiced – the results of this were clearly evident.

On-going support – the bronze service level agreement that Norton Hill has opted to take out with South West Communications Group ensures the school can call on on-site support between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday and if an engineer is unable to rectify a fault remotely, a field engineer will attend the site within four hours for a major fault

The result

The installation of an IP telephony system meant that Norton Hill enjoyed financial benefit from the investment already made in its own data infrastructure. The fact that there was no need to install elaborate cabling for a new telephone system meant installation was relatively easy and could be completed within the summer break.

The Alcatel-Lucent OmniPCX Office management console gave the school the cost-effective flexibility it needed to carry out moves and changes 'in house' without the need for costly third party involvement. The addition of the automated attendant has meant the reception staff have more freedom to deal with other pressing duties in the busy morning period and the voicemail-to-email feature ensured staff never missed any messages.

South West Communications Group's experience in the public sector, in education in particular, ensured it could assist Norton Hill School in making the ideal choice of system and functions to suit its needs. A project manager guided the IT department and network manager through the entire process and installation. Now, a dedicated account manager is the school's single point of contact for any ongoing queries, support and advice.

Andy Webber, network manager for Norton Hill School, said: "The fact that IP telephony could be implemented across the existing data infrastructure was a godsend. We went for it because we knew it would save us so much time".

"This system also allows us to move handsets to a different location with ease and the automated attendant is great. On the last day of term, we put a message on for the holiday period and then just switch it back when school starts again.

"We also know that if there are any problems, we can just ring the guys at South West Communications Group."