UNITY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Making systems uniform to improve collaboration.

breakwater IT

UNITY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Industry: Education

Location: Suffolk, Essex, and Cambridgeshire

Unity Schools Partnership is a family of secondary, primary, and special schools located mainly in Suffolk, and on the Essex and Cambridgeshire borders as well as Romford in East London.

They are committed to a partnership that respects, sustains, and supports. They encourage cultural diversity, celebrate the special qualities of each of their schools and recognise that communities must develop and grow to become sustainable.

Their model is about creating interdependence – schools that are more self-sustaining than stand-alone academies, less dependent than local authority schools and more independent than schools in corporate chains.

www.unitysp.co.uk

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CHALLENGE

Unity Schools Partnership (USP) has secondary, primary, and special schools spread across the East. This includes over 5,000 students and 700 staff.

However, each school, including new ones being taken on by USP, runs different IT systems and software. Additionally, staff members within the schools were also using different programmes. For example, some schools were working on Office 365, and others using Gmail. This meant simple tasks such as finding contacts in address books or viewing calendars was not possible.

USP felt it would be best to unify the schools by bringing all the systems together. This would allow them to collaborate better. However, there were complications. Many schools had invested time in programmes such as Google Classrooms, of which Office 365 doesn't have an equivalent software to migrate to.
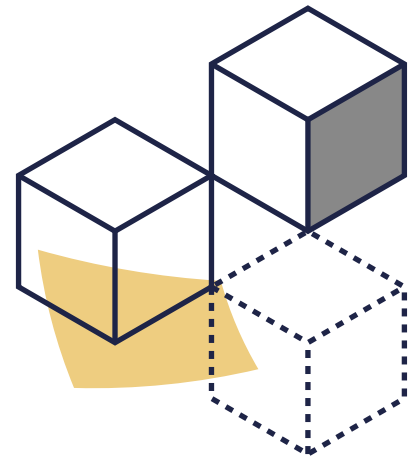
SOLUTION

The solution was migrating all schools to one Office 365 tenant, whilst keeping some aspects of their previous models. This whilst ensuring all schools could collaborate and work efficiently and effectively.

We began by identifying the different schools and their individual challenges. This included each staff member and their software needs. From this, a migration plan was made. We started by selecting a pilot school to migrate their senior leadership team first. And allowed them to test the systems for a few weeks.

We enabled a single sign-on, meaning users could sign on with one identity to access Microsoft and Google, which were linked.

During the testing phase, our project team provided training through our YouTube Channel, PDF guides and a live Q&A session. We then worked with their in-house IT team to automate the rollout process, providing out of hours support to ensure the work was delivered on time.

Overall, the migration went smoothly, and all schools were able to continue working throughout the project with little interruption.

RESULTS

Following the successful migration, USP can now work more efficiently and collaboratively. All schools were able to continue working throughout the project with little interruption.

All employees were given the relevant training allowing them to transition smoothly if needed. And those who continue to use their existing systems can do simple tasks such as viewing someone else's calendar.

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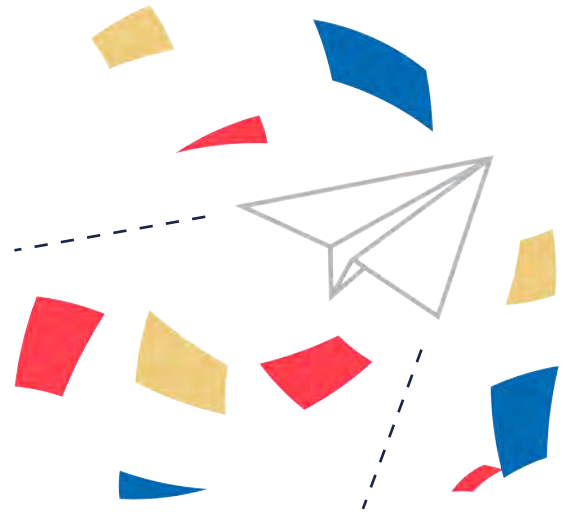
The Trust required a partner that we could have complete confidence in, to deliver a very high-profile project across multiple schools, impacting over 5,000 students and 700 staff. The partner had to be able to demonstrate excellence in their approach and delivery, with a proven track record of similar projects. They had to be flexible, adaptable and able to minimise the impact on teaching and learning.

Breakwater IT not only met the brief but exceeded expectations across all phases of the project from planning, through delivery and beyond into operations and ongoing support.

The positive impact for the Trust and our Schools in the successful delivery of this project; on-time, in-budget and to-plan has been massive. It's resolved a critical strategic issue, thus enabling the Trust to be more effective and efficient in the use of technology to deliver the Trusts strategic goals. I can't speak more highly of Breakwater IT and their staff and would highly recommend them."

- **Michael Vaughan, Head of IT, Unity Schools Partnership**

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SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

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