



Trinity School turned to Virtue Technologies when they were looking for someone to support and manage their wireless network.

## Background

Trinity School is a large 11-18 school in Carlisle, Cumbria. Since September 2011, it has been an academy. The School started working with Virtue Technologies just over two years ago.

## The Challenge

Trinity School was looking for someone to support and manage their wireless network, which was then five years old, and Virtue Technologies was recommended to them. The school's Network Manager, Sutherland Smith, remembers, "We were impressed with Virtue from the start. They heat-mapped the school accurately, identified what issues needed to be addressed and provided us with a plan for support and for the future refresh and replacement of the network."

The next stage of work which was required, was to begin the refresh and replacement of IT kit. It was creaking and the school knew that investment was needed. The school's plan was developed based on what staff and students had told them about what they experienced when using IT in the school and what improvements they felt were needed. The school went out to tender to find a company which would undertake this work and Virtue Technologies were one of the three providers who responded.

Phil Lawson (Managing Director), Philip McNair, (Sales Manager) and Simon Steele (Technical Director) from Virtue Technologies attended the supplier interviews the school held. Recalling this interview, Derek Kay, Head Teacher at Trinity School, said, "What we liked about Virtue Technologies was that they were human beings: they were people who listened to what we wanted. We are a school that listens to our students, our staff and our parents and we wanted to work with a company that listens

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**Derek Kay, Head Teacher, Trinity School**

to us. Virtue didn't come in and try and give us a solution. They asked us, listened to us. They understand schools. Virtue won the bid based on what they could offer as people. We knew the technology was sound and we knew that we wanted to work with them."

When Virtue Technologies won the bid, Sutherland admits he had some reservations about the kit they were proposing to use. "Initially we were concerned as they were proposing to out Fujitsu kit in. As a school, we are used to working with Dell and with HP. We had concerns about Fujitsu. Phil Lawson reassured us, telling us 'I stamp my reputation on this equipment.' So, we took a leap of faith on the kit. And it has been bomb-proof since we've had it, I was nervous, but I have to say. It's been brilliant."

Office 365 was installed in the school over a weekend and Derek says "Virtue understand how schools have to operate. They work around us"

Sutherland has a lot of good thing to say about the support Virtue offers "Virtue's support desk is brilliant. The people on the support desk are the same Engineers who come on site. Chris Abrams (Senior Engineer at Virtue Technologies) knows more about Microsoft than anyone I've encountered and he's on the support desk. It's incredibly helpful when you contact support as the people you are talking to know the background to the school. Issues are resolved quickly and well."

## Disaster Strikes

In December 2015, a flood came on a wild Sunday morning during the Christmas holidays. Water was

pouring into the school. The back-up server was directly in the line of the coming water. Sutherland carried the server to his car and it was in there for two days. The school was very badly damaged: there was no power in any of the school buildings or across much of the city. The senior team had to go to Starbucks to get connectivity to enable them to communicate with their students and parents. Because the school operate Office365, it meant that email was live and they could communicate. Nobody in the city could communicate, but they could: They published newsletters to their community through their phones! Sutherland said that during the flood, *"Philip McNair (Sales Manager, Virtue) arrived. We loaded the backup server into his car, along with the SAN, the other servers and the switches and drove back with it all to Virtue's head offices in Skelmersdale so that they could be mounted in their data centre there. Just as he arrived back there, our power came back on, meaning that we could*



*rebuild the network here, onsite. I called Philip and, without any hesitation, he got back in his car and drove the kit back up. We had a temporary network up and running quickly and we were back online. We were the first network to be up in the city!"* Adding to this, Derek said *"Virtue just appeared and helped us out".* The neighbouring school, Newman School, was even more affected by the floods than Trinity School were. They were under 5-6ft of water. The saving grace for them was that their server was, at least, upstairs. With help of Virtue Technologies, the school dismantled their server room and brought it into Trinity. Virtue worked to ensure that Newman were provided with connectivity and also helped the school in their move to temporary accommodation.

Derek says *"As a result of the floods, the EFA has embarked on a schedule of betterment to ensure that IT services are more effectively protected from*

*any future flooding events. Virtue Technologies have been engaged in this process this: they have been delivering at the highest level, offering common sense, effective solutions. They have taken a really sensible, staged approach to improvements. We now have an ambitious programme of work scheduled for the Summer holidays. I would be nervous about this with anyone else, but I have no worries at all that it will be delivered on time. We trust them. They have delivered complex IT programmes on time and on budget and we know that we can park IT projects with Virtue and not worry about them. Virtue always have a Plan B and we know they won't fail to deliver."*

Virtue Technologies have also replaced the switching infrastructure in the Sixth Form Centre. Dan Massey (Engineer at Virtue Technologies) came in to do a survey prior to this work starting. Sutherland commented *"I am amazed at what Dan can pull out of a network."* Once this survey had been completed, Virtue prepared a modular proposal, which meant that Trinity could approach the work in a staged way should they wish. Derek says *"Virtue understand that schools have funding pockets and may have to approach projects in a piecemeal way"*

To compliment this upgrade, Virtue implemented a full monitoring and analysis platform which now, in conjunction with Virtue's internet service, gives both Trinity School and Virtue Technologies a complete view of their IT systems from the desktop to the internet.

## The Outcome

Derek Kay, Head Teacher at Trinity School summaries *"We have a very secure, reliable environment which is what our users now expect. We live and work in a 24/7 environment where people expect to be able to get access at any time. And Virtue provide users with that. From an innovation point of view, Virtue help us to answer the question 'Can we...?' We can discuss innovation and we know that they will offer sensible advice about what is possible."*

Sutherland adds, *"Our devices and our network just work. We have the support of a company behind us. I have peace of mind. I know that Philip McNair and other Virtue staff will roll their sleeves up and help us out"*



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