

Independent Schools Group Lifts Standards on School Safety



With responsibility for more than 2,000 pupils, across four Independent Schools, the Loughborough Schools Foundation takes safety extremely seriously. It has become the first school group in the UK to introduce Avaya's Smart Campus solution, enabling instant communication to every classroom and providing rapid lockdown in the event of emergency. Thankfully, there hasn't been a critical incident, but the Schools are reaping the benefits of enhanced communications and value delivered by the solution.

While school lockdown solutions are becoming commonplace in the US, and European countries including Germany have mandated them, they are still unusual in the UK. One of the reasons is a prevailing view amongst many education professionals that phones don't belong in classrooms.

The management team at Loughborough Schools Foundation thought differently. Even before a UK government consultation on school safety, the Foundation was exploring systems that would allow classroom lockdown, as well as lockout, to give it greater control of its large campuses in an emergency.

School safety: the urgent priority

Every available solution however appeared to be a mix of components that would need to be brought together by the Foundation. That was until it came across the Avaya Smart Campus solution.



Challenges

- Provide a lockdown capability to protect pupils and staff
- Replace two phone systems with a single platform covering four schools
- Install a handset in every classroom
- Enable future expansion to new sites from the same platform

“We were discussing, separately, the need to replace two end of life communications systems,” says Richard Smeeton, Director of IT “and Avaya IP Office was on our radar. But when we discovered that Avaya also offered an integrated package that supported our school safety goals, the discussions moved from a business risk to an urgent priority.”

Proven, integrated solution

The Avaya solution is an IP telephony platform, connected to over 600 Avaya handsets in classrooms and offices. When the Foundation needs to broadcast messages, it can do so instantly—all managed by the Avaya platform.

Best of all, it was a proven solution.

“Avaya’s experience in schools really sold it to us,” Smeeton confirms. “We were able to speak to experts in the US and Europe and understand the full capability of the solution.”

Thankfully, there has been no requirement to use the lockdown features – though the Foundation has carried out a series of robust tests in multiple scenarios. But the new communications platform has already proved its value in many other ways too.

For Network Manager James Leeson, the immediate change was in the simplicity of communications across the Foundation’s estate. “We had two different phone systems operating across four Schools, plus a mix of handsets. It was increasingly hard to manage and the experience of using the phone was never the same.”

Transforming teaching

Admin staff at all four Schools report how much easier it is to find pupils who missed registration while IT support for teaching has been transformed.

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– Richard Smeeton, Director of IT, Loughborough Schools Foundation

Value Created

- Proven package of integrated safety solutions
- Increased security and child safety for all four schools
- Faster resolution of IT issues that disrupt teaching
- Enhanced collaboration between teachers, schools and parents
- Culture change—encouraging smarter use of communications

“Previously, teachers found it hard to request IT support in a lesson,” Leeson recalls. “With a phone in every classroom any issues that directly affect teaching can be given an immediate response. This improves the classroom experience for teachers and pupils and helps to avoid wasted lessons.”

To address concerns about handsets disrupting teaching, the system was configured so that pupils can’t use it for external calls—or as Smeeton puts it “Avaya IP technology helps us overcome the distraction of having phones in classrooms.” Additionally, the technology is easy to use: Leeson was delighted that “our 19-year-old apprentices can program phones and manage changes to the platform.”

Expert input

But Avaya support has been available whenever the Foundation needs it. “We raised the issue that the simultaneous paging capability was limited to 256 phones, and we have over 600. Avaya is now working on a software release that extends the capability to 1024.”

Smeeton recognises the pivotal role Avaya business partner Evoke Telecom has played in connecting the Foundation to Avaya. “The Evoke team have been great to work with; they are completely transparent and reliable, and they really know the solutions in detail. They contact us proactively, not just for sales but to help us make the most of every feature in the Avaya platform.”

Setting the standard for school safety

That is exactly what he intends to do: the Foundation is now seeking to make Avaya Smart Campus the centerpiece of its omnichannel approach to campus communications and school safety. “We want to be able to send simultaneous SMS messages to mobile users and screen pops on computer terminals and broadcast messages over tannoy and digital radio—all controlled by the Avaya solution,” he concludes. “We think it will even be able to control the electronic door locks.”

While school safety is moving up the agenda in the UK—especially following the recent [Government consultation](#)—Loughborough Schools Foundation is helping to set new standards.

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- James Leeson, Network Manager, Loughborough Schools Foundation

Solutions & Products

- Avaya Smart Campus Solution
- Avaya IP Office™ Server Edition
- Avaya J139 handsets

About Loughborough Schools Foundation

Loughborough Schools Foundation is a charitable foundation of four Independent Schools and a successful Nursery, operating under a single Board of Trustees/Directors. The Foundation comprises Loughborough Nursery (6 wks-4), Fairfield Prep School (co-educational, 3-11), Loughborough Grammar School (boys, 10-18, day and boarding), Loughborough High School (girls, 11-18) and Loughborough Amherst School (co-educational, 4-18). The Schools are situated on two neighbouring campuses in Loughborough in the East Midlands. See www.lsf.org

About Avaya

Businesses are built on the experiences they provide and every day millions of those experiences are built by Avaya (NYSE:AVYA). For over one hundred years, we've enabled organizations around the globe to win—by creating intelligent communications experiences for customers and employees. Avaya builds open, converged and innovative solutions to enhance and simplify communications and collaboration—in the cloud, on premise, or a hybrid of both. To grow your business, we're committed to innovation, partnership, and a relentless focus on what's next. We're the technology company you trust to help you deliver Experiences that Matter. Visit us at www.avaya.com.