A case study about how ACS implemented IT infrastructure for Hawthorn Primary School

*What ACS have done will definitely improve teaching and children’s learning. At the end of the day this is what we are here for as teachers.We want children to be able to learn to the highest standard and I have no doubt that the children will benefit. It’s the continuous proactive relationship that ACS has created, which puts them head and shoulders above anyone else.****Sharon Faulkner - Head Teacher of Hawthorn Primary***

The Situation

It was towards the latter part of 2012 when the Cantley-based school, Hawthorn Primary approached ACS. For many years Hawthorn Primary School has not delivered ICT effectively due to the poor infrastructure and lack of hardware.

ACS was brought into provide a step by step plan and implement the facilities they required to deliver consistent high quality ICT immediately, and for years to come. There was no mobile hardware around the school and no real ICT provision within the classroom. Hawthorn had a limited wireless network in place and the entire infrastructure needed a complete overhaul.

The Solution

The first thing that ACS commenced with was a full audit to access and evaluate the existing set up. The audit was then sent across to the senior management of the school. Together ACS and the school formulated a plan, which was shown to the school governors to decide which projects are within the budget and what is going to be most effective for the school. The original meeting took place in October and by December, ACS were given the green light to commence with the installation of a sound infrastructure.

At the start of January, ACS delivered a new backbone to the schools ICT which included a Wireless network ‘Netgear wc7520’ which is a managed wireless system that has been tried and tested within schools in Doncaster. The managed wireless network is the main starting point for a solid network infrastructure. You can have as much hardware as you like but if you don’t have the wireless signal strength and capacity within the school, it just won’t work.

ACS then introduced the latest Windows 2012 server platform and for staff, new HP Pro books 4540s. A powerful specification that will last between 4-5 years before renewals should be considered. 16 curriculum HP 650 laptops with a suitable charging trolley were also implemented into the classrooms.

The most recent hardware delivered was the Apple 16GB iPad2’s and 10 Fizzbook Spins. There are many educational applications on an iPad that children can engage with. Even though laptops are always going to be primarily how ICT is delivered within a school environment. iPad’s can also be a great asset for ICT learning in schools.

Built on the Intel’s fourth-generation Classmate PC with its latest Intel® Atom™ processor; the new Fizzbook comes with a 32GB SSD, this provides shock resistance and allows pupils to access data faster and uses less power than traditional hard drives.

The Benefits

* An ongoing strategic plan, to ensure effective delivery of future projects
* Proactive relationship between ACS and Hawthorn
* High powered, fast and reliable infrastructure
* Teachers can now plan lessons at home
* Effective delivery of school curriculum
* Increased uptime from a Managed Wireless Network
* Free updates secured with Microsoft
* Enhanced hardware for 2nd language students
* Improved interactive teaching and children’s learning
* Improvement in both teacher and pupil moral

Children want to use the equipment; they want to learn and are excited about using the new technology. Previously pupils were not engaging with the technology and they didn’t receive the same opportunities they have now.

There is now a ‘wow’ factor within the school and because they are having fun with the new technology. It is now easier for them to interact and acquire new skills.

Full training has been delivered to the teachers, so they can in turn pass on those skills to the pupils. ACS believes it’s a combination of training and building the confidence of the product will allow the teachers to pass on their skills effectively.

There is now a uniformed approach around school. Everyone has the same version of Microsoft Office and everyone has the same version of windows.

So, if people want to share resources this can be done easily. The new ‘Fizz Book Spins’ make the children’s ICT skills much sturdier for year 1 and further into their school life. They are very durable and they improve handwriting, because the children can use the attached pens.

Pupils who struggle with communication and language get so much out of them with the interactive applications. They are also a great tool for teachers, especially for effective phonics teaching. It all contributes to improving the pupil’s over all development.