



Microsoft Office 365 Case study



St. Ignatius Catholic School
Primary and Secondary School

Summary

Country: Cayman Islands

Industry: Education

Customer profile

St. Ignatius Catholic School, founded in 1971, is a K-12 school for 4 -18 year olds based in the Cayman Islands in the Caribbean.

Situation

Linux-based email platform requiring specialized personnel and providing limited functionality. The complexity and dynamic nature of the tasks which needed to be performed in the IT area raised the need to find another range of solutions to speed up operations while keeping costs down.

Solution

Office 365 adoption for pupils, teachers and staff, integrated with Windows Server, SQL Server and a .net based Student Information System.

Benefits

- More value for users.
- Freedom to choose devices.
- IT costs reduction.
- Integration with SIS to automate service provisioning.
- Collaboration to improve school activities.

Integration of Office 365 with Student information Systems to automate processes and enhance the end user experience.

“From our user’s point of view, Office 365 offers a range of highly valuable features: it’s a facility that enables you to use familiar Microsoft Office applications from any internet connected device. Our staff wanted access to the rich feature set of Microsoft Exchange and we needed to dynamically populate email distribution groups and calendars with current information from our SIS to fully realize its potential for service improvements.” Mick Whyte, MSc., Director of Technology at St. Ignatius Catholic School.

St. Ignatius Catholic School adopted Office 365 combined with Windows Server, SQL Server and a .net based School Information System (SIS) to enhance and speed up IT management at the same time as providing students, teachers and admin staff with a set of communications tools commensurate with the institution’s own standards of excellence.

“Ensuring that each member of staff, each teacher and each student is automatically provisioned their own e-mail address and appropriate rights to school IT services is a major step towards integration and collaboration which enhances each individual’s experience of the institution.”

Mick Whyte, MSc. Director of Technology at St. Ignatius Catholic School.

Situation

St. Ignatius Catholic School is a school for 4-18 year-olds on the Cayman Island in the Caribbean. In existence since 1971, the school offers a broad and engaging curriculum guided by the values and principles of the Catholic Church.

The numbers of students, teachers and personnel who interact with each other on a daily basis imply an intensive use of information and communications technologies as the organization is highly sophisticated in terms of its projects, the resources available, how it monitors each child and evaluates ongoing development. St Ignatius also uses an e-learning platform to integrate pupils and their families, and provides all children with a laptop to use in an environment of ubiquitous connectivity; more recently, they have begun deploying educationally appropriate tablet devices. This not only requires a complex systems environment but also reinforces the general demand for the most up-to-date IT tools.

At one stage, the school made use of a Linux-based platform requiring specialized personnel and lacking many of the rich collaboration features Microsoft Exchange provides. The complexity of the tasks that needed to be performed in the IT area raised the need to find another range of solutions to speed operations up while keeping costs down.

Solution

Microsoft Partners EDU365 have supported St Ignatius School for more than 8 years, working closely with Mick Whyte, the schools Technology Director, to manage all aspects of the school software systems and IT infrastructure. EDU365 is an educational technology solutions & service provider with more than 15 years of experience in

improving schools globally, including installing, implementing and supporting teaching and learning technologies in over 600 schools worldwide. As a result EDU365 have an intimate understanding of schools, not only in relation to their systems but also, and perhaps more importantly, their goals and aspirations.

In common with most modern schools, St Ignatius relies on its electronic communications to drive the 'business of the school'. EDU365 were already aware of the burden placed on the schools IT function in administering staff and student accounts for 'joiners and leavers' particularly at the start and end of the school year. When Mr. Whyte sought a long-term answer to this problem, the EDU365 team saw the opportunity of integrating the schools information management system, Capita SIMS, with Active Directory and Office365 to provide an automated solution.

“We decided to assemble an architecture based on the integration of Windows Server and SQL Server with Office 365 using the schools SIS as an engine. It just made sense to use a single database to drive all school functions. Doing this significantly upgraded our IT capabilities which meant we were able to offer our community better services”, says Whyte.

From the moment a child joins the institution and throughout his or her school career, there are countless opportunities for interaction between administrative staff, teachers and families. *“E-mail is extremely important as it is the main way for delivering and requesting information (in conjunction with our Learning Platform), sending pupils supporting material for their various study subjects and coordinating activities. It is also vital to have shared calendars showing classes, lunch, and break times to achieve better internal organization so that everybody can manage their day in an orderly fashion”,*

More information

About Microsoft products and services:

www.microsoft.com

More information about St. Ignatius

Catholic School, visit: www.st-ignatius.com

More information about EDU365, visit

www.edu365group.com

explains the executive, adding that “we chose Office 365 because the suite was familiar for our users, which made it easier to adopt and use on a daily basis.”

Furthermore, says Mick Whyte, “ we greatly simplified and improved user administration across the network thru a common command language PowerShell which the integration tool utilizes to considerably simplify the basic repetitive tasks performed each day in dynamic school environments: the integration and automation of processes increases productivity especially at the beginning of the academic year when we need to register all the new students joining us create new login accounts, and assign Office 365 licenses. When a student or staff member is enrolled the whole process happens in the background without having to involve the IT department.” EDU365 implemented an integration tool that leverages PowerShell commands to insert attributes from the SIS (Grade level, ID, Class Schedule, Parents Name, Office 365 license type and more) into AD. This automates the user creation, assigns Windows groups and even moves users into the correct OU’s.

Remote Desktop Server (RDS) services are used to provide the staff 24/7 access to Capita SIMS, the schools SIS program. By using RDS St. Ignatius can offer a solution that works both inside and outside the school and on either a personal laptop, tablet, or a school device.

Benefits

“From the user ’ s point of view, Office 365 offers some highly valuable features: a facility that enables you to use familiar Microsoft office tools and up-to-date files on any computer connected to Internet means both pupils and teachers can choose when and where they work and from which device. At the same time, it means St. Ignatius is in a

position to make state- of-the-art resources available to its educational community while achieving substantial reductions in costs, from licensing to implementation and maintenance”, states the Director of Technology.

E-mail is relevant for communication between all the members of the school community, as it is used to inform people about exam dates, special activities, ceremonies, the availability of new teaching materials, quotas and subscription rates, sports contests, new teaching apps to be downloaded, and so on. “Ensuring that each member of staff, each teacher and each student is automatically provisioned their own e-mail address and appropriate rights to school IT services is a major step towards integration and collaboration which enhances each individual’s experience of the institution”, adds Whyte.

Having an open system, which can be modified with PowerShell, allows the school to glue together multiple pieces of software. The staff’s daily timetables are overlaid as Calendar events and provides a single location for both personal and work related tasks.

The different elements which make up Office 365 create a climate of improved collaboration between teachers and pupils, speeding up communications and the way in which materials are distributed and school activities organized, as well as facilitating personalized monitoring and promoting the integration of families into the educational process. “This has made a significant contribution to the fulfillment of our objectives concerning quality”, summarizes the executive.