



CASE STUDY

Chase High School

Skype for Business in the Education Sector by GCI and Microsoft, delivering a collaborative learning environment and enabling savings via migration to SIP.

THE OVERVIEW

Chase High is a secondary school and sixth form college in Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex that provides academic studies and extracurricular activities to almost 1,200 students aged between 11 and 18 years.

Established over 100 years ago, the school has a long history and continues to develop today, with the recent addition of the Sixth Form in 2011. The school has students from 44 different countries and prides itself on its international contingent. Focused on cementing relationships on a global scale, Chase High has existing partnerships with schools as far reaching as Ghana, San Francisco and Australia.

THE CHALLENGE

Chase High wanted to provide a modern learning environment for its students, one that allowed for collaboration and flexibility. Its existing out-dated legacy PBX system, for which the lease had expired, was ill equipped for this:

- Its features were significantly limited.
- It was inflexible in terms of ability to integrate features, and to move or change the system in any way.
- The PBX was a considerable expense to maintain and operate.

Another ambition of the school's was for external and inter-school communications, and its existing system was not set up for this capability:

- It was unsupportive of efficient communications with a network, be that with partner schools in Ghana, Australia and San Francisco or other educational institutions in UK.
- It also did not allow students to benefit from a collaborative learning environment enabled through technologies such as remote learning or smart boards.
- In order to adopt new, collaborative teaching and learning techniques, Chase High School needed to transition to an integrated Unified Communications platform.



THE SOLUTION

Working with GCI, initially an upgrade to a new PBX system was considered. However this solution was not deemed suitable from both a cost and capability perspective.

Instead, as a partner of numerous global communications technology providers, GCI reviewed its extensive portfolio with Chase High School's requirements in mind. Microsoft's Skype for Business was identified as the solution that supported Chase High's needs best, and was particularly cost effective with Microsoft's licensing discounts for educational organisations.

Microsoft Skype for Business, formerly known as Lync, is a Unified Communications (UC) platform that delivers streamlined communications for users. It combines instant messaging, voice over IP, video conferencing and other collaborative features like desktop sharing, all integrated with the Microsoft suite of apps including Office and Outlook for email. Through this integration its presence feature allows users to see when other users are busy or available to answer an instant message, voice or video call.

With its ability to deliver audio and video conferencing, enterprise VoIP services and Skype for Business mobility, all with the capability of these communications services with

external organisations, Skype for Business represented a scalable solution that mirrored Chase High's future goals.

The transition to Skype for Business enabled a migration from Chase High's traditional ISDN phone line set up to a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) system. SIP is a communications protocol that allows for IP telephony for voice and video calls, as well as instant messaging. The transition to SIP further allowed for potential integrations and expansion, future-proofing Chase High's communications system as well as bringing the benefits of lower call and maintenance costs.

GCI provided a dedicated project manager to oversee the migration project, ensuring delivery against schedule and specifications as well as handling all communications with Chase High. In addition, project management involved a comprehensive approach to user adoption, ensuring correct training was in place for users to move across to the new system seamlessly.

Post installation, full testing and verification throughout the school was carried out to ensure that all handsets and features were working correctly. This was combined with full training and documentation for Chase High's IT team.

THE BENEFITS

Skype for Business has numerous benefits for educational organisations, with its focus on streamlined communications enabling new kinds of learning experiences with emphasis on collaboration, extending the education environment beyond the school walls with remote learning.

In practical terms, this means:

- Better internal collaboration between faculty, students and staff through presence, desktop sharing and video conferencing.
- External collaboration through the federation with other services such as Skype and Google Chat.
- Improved flexibility, allowing communications from any location or device.

- The ability to tailor equipment dependant on its use with custom set ups for classrooms, conference rooms, reception and common areas.

In addition, Chase High's new UC platform enabled a number of cost benefits, including:

- Reduced call costs using SIP compared to ISDN.
- Migration from disparate legacy systems reduced maintenance costs, due to adoption of one integrated platform for voice, video and other collaborative communications features.
- An improved economies of scale as a result of using one end to end communications partner in GCI.
- Utilisation of Chase High's 10Mbps connection.

"As we were moving from predominantly out-dated legacy hardware to a fully fledged unified communications system, we knew that the transition would be complex. So we knew we needed a partner that had expertise in that kind of migration, and the team at GCI with their heritage in voice and expertise in Skype for Business fitted that bill perfectly. They were there not simply as a solution provider but to manage the entire process and hold our hands through the changeover."

Jeremy Vince, Network Manager
Chase High School

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