NEW COLLEGE SWINDON

New College is a Further and Higher Education college based in Swindon. Founded in 1984, it has grown quickly to become one of the UK's most exciting and modern learning facilities, providing state-of-the-art education services in modern surroundings.

CHALLENGE

Having been made aware of Microsoft's attractive licensing terms for Office 365 for educational institutions – whereby every student is granted access to the full Office 365 suite without charge – New College was keen to take advantage of the offer as quickly as possible. It, therefore, went out to find an accredited Microsoft partner that could deliver the solution. With its strong track record for delivering Microsoft licensing to the educational sector, combined with its extensive experience of sizeable Office 365 deployments, it did not take long for Phoenix Software's name to be put forward. In fact, it was

AT-A-GLANCE

Challenge
New College was keen to take advantage of Microsoft's new educational licensing schemes that would grant every student access to Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus without charge. It was also reaching the limits of its onsite storage capacity due to the increased use of video in its multimedia courses.

Solution
Phoenix Software supplied New College with the campus-wide Microsoft Office 365 Student Advantage licence, which provided every student a subscription to Office 365 ProPlus and 1TB of personal cloud storage at no extra charge.

Benefits
Microsoft Office for all students at no extra charge, the elimination of software compatibility issues, the reduction in its onsite Exchange Server capacity for student email, eradicating the immediate need to upgrade its on-premise storage capacity and underpinning its burgeoning BYOD policy.

Microsoft themselves who personally recommended Phoenix Software to New College as the best partner for the job.

In addition to wishing to provide every student with the very latest versions of the world's most popular office productivity suite without charge, New College had a growing IT challenge that it was hoping Office 365 and Phoenix Software could overcome. With the College's extensive array of multimedia courses it was facing a significant storage challenge, with many students required to store a significant number of video files in full HD and a future need to include 4K video files. Combined with the national trend for video to be used more widely as a teaching aid in almost all courses, the College's onsite storage capacity was quickly coming under strain.

The College simply could not afford to expand the quantity of onsite storage at the rate that was being demanded, so by taking advantage of the additional cloud storage available with every Office 365 licence, New College hoped this strain could be alleviated without any additional costs.

SOLUTION

Phoenix Software was able to provide New College with the campus-wide Microsoft Office 365 Student Advantage licence, which provides every student with a subscription to Office 365 ProPlus for no extra charge. ProPlus includes the latest versions of all of the desktop Office applications including Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, Access, Publisher, Outlook, Lync and InfoPath, in addition to web applications of Word, Excel and PowerPoint, plus Android/iPhone apps and Office for Mac. Of particular value to students who often have more than one device – namely, a smartphone and/or tablet – Office 365 ProPlus can be installed on up to five devices at any one time.

In addition to the complete Office desktop and mobile suite, each student is provided with Office 365 cloud-based email and calendar delivered via Outlook online, providing students with the most reliable email and calendar service available with a 99.9% uptime guarantee. Adding to the cloud services, every student has also been granted a sizeable 1TB of cloud storage, meaning they will never run out of space to store their work.

"We felt very confident in Phoenix Software's ability to deliver the solution that we needed," said Ian Hole, Head of ICT at New College Swindon. "From the very first conversation I was confident that they understood implicitly both the needs of our sector and the capabilities of Office 365. Their professional services approach and deployment methodology showed that they would do more than simply sell us a licence, but would work with us to ensure we got the maximum value from it. The consultants at Phoenix Software really took the time to understand our network before proposing the solution and methodology to install Office 365 into our environment. There were clear lines of communication backed up by a clear scope of the works, which gave us the transparency and confidence that they knew exactly what they were doing."

BENEFITS

"Being able to offer every one of our students the global standard in office productivity software at no extra charge is a significant benefit all by itself," commented Ian Hole, "but the College has benefitted in many other ways too, particularly when it comes to staff and student productivity and long-term cost savings on hardware."

On the productivity side, now that everyone has access to the same version of software, the College no longer has to worry about software compatibility issues between staff and students. Students are also assured that they will never fall behind as the licence always grants them the latest version of Office. This means they can take full advantage of the latest features of the software and are already familiar with the de facto office productivity software running in practically every office around the world when they eventually enter the workplace.

On the communications front, with student email now being hosted in the Office 365 cloud, the College has been able to decommission the students' on-premise email server, saving itself on all future costs for maintenance, support and upgrades. However, while email is primarily used for staff-to-student communication, the students can now gravitate towards Lync, Microsoft's instant messaging, voice and video-calling service which is also hosted in the Office 365 cloud.

"We felt very confident in Phoenix Software's ability to deliver the solution that we needed … their professional services approach and deployment methodology showed that they would do more than simply sell us a licence, but would work with us to ensure we got the maximum value from it."

Ian Hole
Head of ICT
New College Swindon

For the staff's email, the College has been able to adopt a hybrid solution whereby its on-premise Exchange Server is now entirely replicated in the cloud, providing the staff with an extra layer of failover support should the onsite server ever fail, combined with the ability to host local apps.

While the College still provides some local storage to its students for faster local access, by leveraging Office 365's free storage it has been able to meet its growing onsite storage demands without the need to purchase additional storage capacity.

In addition to the many benefits already mentioned, the Student Advantage licence has been a cornerstone of the College's burgeoning Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy, "We have been very keen to support our students' demands for BYOD, which started with the deployment of our Wi-Fi network in 2011. Our network now covers the entire campus and we have upwards of 1,400 devices connected to the network at any one time. With every student now able to use Microsoft Office on all of their devices, in addition to leveraging the hosted email and Lync services, we now feel that the BYOD policy is really helping our students to be as productive as possible on whichever device they bring on campus," comments Ian Hole.

Reflecting on the deployment, Hole said, "While at the College, Phoenix Software's consultants were very personable, getting the project underway quickly and taking the time to understand how we worked as well as training us on the platform. We were very impressed with the professionalism of their staff and look forward to working with them again in the future."

New College is now working with Phoenix Software to find additional ways to take full advantage of the capabilities of Office 365. Specific projects currently undergoing consideration include the potential for Lync to be rolled out to the staff so that they can communicate with students in real-time over IM and video, and potentially even to deliver entire classes over interactive webinars. The College is also keen to leverage the capabilities of Microsoft SharePoint (also included within the Student Advantage licence) for document sharing and to power the College's intranet.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

To find out how we can help you transform any aspect of your IT estate, contact the Phoenix Team now on:

01904 562200
hello@phoenixs.co.uk