

Ivanti Software Helps Royal Grammar School Achieve Its IT Ambition



Location: UK

Industry: Education

Website: rgs.newcastle.sch.uk/

Solutions:

- Ivanti Identity Director
- Ivanti Automation
- Ivanti Workspace Control

Benefits:

- Control, standardization, portability, and automation solved the fundamental IT issues which were holding staff and students back from getting the most out of IT
- Login times reduced from up to 15 minutes to under one minute
- Improved user experience
- Comprehensive diagnostic capabilities

Overview

The Newcastle upon Tyne Royal Grammar School (RGS) in the UK has a long and rich history. It is the city's oldest institution of learning and received its Royal Charter from Queen Elizabeth I.

As a leading independent day school for 7-18 year-olds, RGS has 1,272 students currently on its rolls, as well as more than 200 members of staff. The school places excellence at the heart of its ethos and vision. It has high aspirations for its students and seeks to provide them with a learning environment that offers endless opportunities.

The Challenge

With dynamic IT now such a cornerstone of education, RGS wanted to create an IT environment that was more proactive and better supported the school in its goal of education excellence. However, the IT team was hampered by a network solution that was resulting in slow login times, login failures, corruption of profiles, and an inconsistent view of the services available to staff. For example, a teacher would log in and be able to access a range of printers one day, and the next day those choices would have vanished.

"A school operates very differently than an enterprise, where a user logs on to one machine and typically uses it for the rest of the day," says Paul Miller, Director of IT Services, RGS. "Students are constantly moving between classrooms and computers; if they take 15 minutes to log in, that is a quarter of their lesson wasted."

According to Miller, a key issue with the previous system was that it introduced a significant element of unpredictability into the IT services that users were trying to access. "When the IT team investigated a problem,

there would appear to me no logical reason behind it. And because there was no diagnostics information readily available, resolving performance issues was a lengthy and frustrating process.”

For the school’s IT team, the issues with the legacy system also meant having to adapt their approach to the system, rather than the system working with them. For example, booting up the 650 computers within RGS’ IT estate would need to be staggered in the morning. “The network was simply unable to cope if too many computers were booted up all at once,” Miller says.

In addition, the system would often allow IT staff to assign a software installation for a computer, but not control the time at which the installation should begin. Or it simply wouldn’t install the software at all. Other times, the installation would complete successfully. Software updates were also prone to the same inconsistency, sometimes completing without a hitch and other times resulting in system failure or worse, fatally crashing another piece of software.

The limitations of the system didn’t end there. User controls were based on the individual machine, meaning that there were extremely limited roaming profile settings and thus no dynamic desktop provisioning for staff.

Project Highlights

- Login times reduced from up to 15 minutes to under one minute
- Improved user experience
- A more forensic approach to problem resolution
- Creation of a more collaborative and proactive IT environment
- Foundations laid for a virtual environment
- Ability to move towards a self-service environment that staff and students prefer

“In many ways the IT system’s behavior was akin to that of an eccentric,” Miller says. “Obviously this created consistency issues, but a larger concern for us was that people became so accustomed to its changeable nature that they just stopped reporting any faults and found their own way of circumnavigating problems. They had just

come to expect that IT wouldn’t work. It was clear that something had to change, and fast.”

The Solution

In order to assist in creating a consistent and reliable IT infrastructure, RGS turned to IT solutions partner OISG. OISG recommended implementing Ivanti® Identity Director in order to allow for the seamless resolution of IT problems as well as ensuring a responsive experience for end users. In addition, Ivanti would provide a solution that would enable RGS to future-proof its IT infrastructure, such as offering a migration path to virtualization, for example.

Ivanti Workspace Control: A lightweight solution allowing IT to manage every student’s and staff member’s workspace from a single console. This technology dynamically configures and secures applications, printers, and personal settings, and handles data access in a centrally managed workspace—independently of user profiles.

Ivanti Automation: Provides a scalable architecture to automate IT, enabling the IT team to move from manual and repetitive—even risky—IT changes to an automatic, secure, and reliable solution.

Ivanti Identity Director: Lets organizations deliver a self-service interface where staff and students can connect with IT and consume services quickly and easily. This ensures that services can be delivered when needed and with minimal manual intervention.

The Benefits For RGS

Implementing a new system was never about delivering a big “whiz bang” project. Rather, the aim was to address the fundamental problems that were holding back staff and students from being able to get the most out of IT.

“Ivanti delivered everything we needed to do just that; control, standardization, portability, and automation,” states Miller. “And let’s not forget, a comprehensive diagnostics capability. Not everything can be perfect 100% of the time, but we now have the right tools to troubleshoot effectively rather than working in the dark.”

Not only has the IT service been able to reduce login times dramatically, it has also been able to configure individual profiles to ensure desktops are delivered as they should be. IT can now log student data with Active Directory and be confident that the right usernames, passwords, year group, and software access are assigned to the right individual. This goes a long way towards helping the team manage each user's profile proactively.

RGS has also taken its first steps towards a self-service model," Miller says. "Currently, staff members make requests and they can click to access services on demand. That stream of events is still triggered by a manual process that requires authorization by the IT team, but the aim is to move towards a truly automated model. Staff and students consume technology seamlessly via a vast array of devices in their personal lives and we aim to replicate that experience within the school."

The implementation of Ivanti Workspace Control also means that when the school is ready to migrate to a virtual environment, it will be able to do so with ease.

"After introducing Ivanti, we actually saw an increase in calls to the helpdesk—but the big difference is that staff recognize the potential of the new system and are keen to personalize their desktop experience. We have the responsive, proactive, and collaborative IT environment we were seeking and the best bit is that the users trust IT once again. There is no bigger endorsement than that," Miller concludes.

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