

# CASE STUDY

## ACADEMY FOR CHARACTER AND EXCELLENCE

**swcomms links four multi-academy trust (MAT) school sites with a hosted telephony solution.**

The Academy for Character and Excellence (ACE) was set up in South Devon in June 2016 and is now made up of Shaldon, Redhills, Collaton St Mary and Galmpton C of E Primary Schools.

All four schools were existing **swcomms** customers with separate telephone systems at each site. The MAT wanted to update their systems and link them together to improve productivity, generate cost-savings and to take advantage of the disaster recovery benefits a unified solution would offer.

The MAT's director of finance & operations (DFO) visited our headquarters to view a demonstration of the Gamma Horizon cloud-hosted solution and to reacquaint himself with our team and meet the project manager who would lead the deployment if we were selected.

**swcomms** differs from other suppliers in that we do not simply send the hardware out and expect our customers to install it. We test, configure and install all our hosted solutions and provide end user training either by webinar or on site as needed.

While ACE went to market to obtain several quotes, they selected **swcomms** as the preferred supplier of a new hosted telephony solution to replace their four separate on-site systems. The new solution gave ACE the following benefits:



### Simple to use

The Horizon solution is renowned for being easy to use and manage. A web-based portal that can be accessed from any location 24/7 allows the MAT to manage all moves, adds and changes in house to largely eliminate third party engineering costs.

The same portal provides real-time and historical statistics to help ACE manage staffing levels when incoming call traffic is at its highest.

### Flexible call handling

Calls can be seamlessly transferred between sites. Incoming calls can also overflow or be diverted to other sites if they go unanswered or there is a staff shortage. The four schools are connected as one, so they can share staff resources with ease.

### Automated attendant

Every school has its own automated attendant to offer callers a full range of options to direct them to the best person to speak to or, in the case of the absence lines, to voicemail to leave a message. This significantly relieves the pressure put on receptionists, especially at the busiest times of the day.

### Individual messaging

While all the schools were seamlessly linked, each one retains its own identity. Callers are greeted with a message particular to the school they are contacting. These messages are managed centrally via the management portal and can be altered to suit any event, e.g. to report the school closed due to snow, updates on sports days, return times from trips, etc.



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## Disaster recovery

One of the benefits of linking multiple sites is that there will always be members of staff to handle calls if one or more of the other schools are closed due to snow, flooding, illness, etc. In the rare event all four schools are closed, calls can be diverted to a mobile or other landline using the portal. The MAT will always remain contactable.

## Voice quality

We used assured internet connections, also from Gamma, that would give ACE the voice quality they needed. These lines are not used for data at all, so do not have to compete for bandwidth with other applications.

## Free calls

ACE now enjoys free calls to UK landlines and mobiles. This cost saving helped offset the investment in new technology to make the solution financially viable when budgets are so restricted.

## Inclusive monthly payments

There was no upfront capital payment required for this project. The MAT pays on a per user per month basis safe in the knowledge that these payments include all their ongoing support and line costs, plus technology upgrades. All of the MAT's telephony costs are fixed for the duration of their contract.

## Future growth

ACE had considered linking four on-site systems with SIP but choose a cloud-hosted solution to give them the flexibility to very simply add new schools as and when the MAT expands.

ACE wanted to update all four schools at the same time so they were ready for the new academic year. This solution encompassed 37 users within a 30-mile radius and a tight timeframe of the summer holidays, so project management was crucial.

Deployment included extensive CAT5 cabling work and a point-to-point link was needed between two buildings. In-depth programming work was also required, involving regular meetings with the customer.

Once the solution was in place, our trainer travelled to all the schools within one day to deliver end user training.

ACE now has a telephony solution that is fit for a modern-day MAT creating an impression of a professional unified organisation with shared resources and future-proofing itself for growth and technological advancement. It can also rely on the support of a trusted supplier through a service desk, customer service team and dedicated account manager.

“As a trust, we not only wanted to have a better communication link between the schools but also a future-proofed system which would cope with our growth plans.

“We approached the market and decided that the functionality, quality, security and support offered by **swcomms** was definitely the best solution for us.

“The project timetable for setting up all four schools and the central team was very tight but **swcomms** ensured that we met all of our deadlines.

“The service from **swcomms** was excellent from the initial meetings, through the specification and project stages finishing with a successful “live” rollout at all of our schools at the start of the new academic year.

“A big thank you to **swcomms** for ensuring a successful project and I look forward to working with Andrew, Daniel and the team again in the future.”

**Mark Cornfield, DFO**