

The Blandford School embraces Mitel IP telephony to enhance communications between staff, students and parents

CUSTOMER NEEDS

- Support the merger of two separate school sites with a single voice and data network
- Manage the school register by monitoring student absenteeism more effectively
- Facilitate improved communications between staff, students and parents

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

- Mitel 3300 Integrated Communications Platform (ICP)
- Mitel 5500 IP console
- Mitel IP Phones
- ProCurve Networking by HP Adaptive EDGE architecture
- Canon Canobeam DT-100 series, 1 Ghz laser link wireless connection

RESULTS

- A single reliable and secure IP telephony network merging the communications needs of two schools in different locations
- A fully automated registration system enabling staff, students and parents to report absences from school
- Creation of a more effective dialogue between staff, students and parents



Fostering better communications through technology

The Blandford School in Dorset is a specialist technology college. As a progressive teaching establishment, the school has fully embraced state-of-the-art technology to improve communications and enhance its services to students and the wider community.

The Blandford School has merged with Milldown Middle School, located just 500 yards away. The two sites, separated by playing fields, have combined to create one large secondary school with brand new buildings in a multi-million pound development. The new “super school” houses some 150 staff and 1,300 students.

The merger of the two schools’ communications networks required careful planning and research. Given The Blandford School’s reputation for system technology innovation and excellence, it was vital that the school explored ways in which new technologies could be deployed to create a flexible and reliable platform for all its communications requirements.

Handling student whereabouts

In the past, the school’s reception struggled with the sheer volume of calls between 8am and 10am from students and parents. Not only was this extremely labour intensive, but there was the difficulty of keeping track of everybody and getting the message to the appropriate members of staff affected by the absence.

→ The Blandford School

With the whole issue of student absenteeism and truancy levels the subject of much media attention in recent years, it was of paramount importance to have in place a watertight system for monitoring and reporting absences and communicating easily with all stakeholders. Having just a handful of digital telephones for reception and a relatively small number of standard analogue telephones for teaching staff, it was quite clear that the existing communications infrastructure was alarmingly inadequate – a situation that would only be exacerbated further with the school merger.

The school reviewed product offerings from different technology providers including: Alcatel, Mitel®, Nortel, Panasonic, Siemens and Toshiba. After a comprehensive review, the school decided upon a pure IP solution from Mitel.

“We based our decision on the fact that the Mitel solution is not only highly competitive on price, particularly in terms of ongoing maintenance costs, but its technology is robust, scalable and reliable – a must for the smooth running of a large, modern school well known for its superb systems technology. We were also impressed by Mitel’s strategic alliance with Hewlett Packard, having previously invested in HP hardware,” said Nathan Osbaldstone, ICT Manager, The Blandford School.

Swift and seamless implementation

Achieving an integrated voice and data communications system for the entire school involved networking each building and providing a highly resilient link between the two. Initially a ProCurve Networking by HP data network was installed at each site with a fibre channel connecting the two. For added resiliency ATC Sterry installed a Canobeam DT100 series laser link that will be used in the event of the fibre network going down. The Canobeam is an optical wireless transmitter that beams data through the air from the top of one building to another at speeds of up to 1 Gb per second.

The first part of the implementation, an advanced voicemail system, went live at the start of the school year and enables parents to phone in and leave an automated message when a child is off sick. This message is logged in a central database and the members of staff affected by the absence are informed via the e-register. The result is that at a glance, the school can effectively monitor student absentee levels while at the click of a mouse ensure all concerned parties are immediately fully informed.

To enable the more effective handling of calls, reception staff has access to the Mitel 5550 IP console, a PC-based administration platform that helps with the prioritisation and handling of incoming calls. At particularly busy times of the day, receptionists now benefit from call status and call handling prompts, real-time status monitoring of thousands of extensions, plus an onscreen scratch pad function for note and message taking and other functions to minimise call waiting times and increase their productivity.

Customer Experience

→ The Blandford School

ABOUT THE BLANDFORD SCHOOL

The Blandford School in Dorset employs 150 staff, has 1300 students and is one of the Government's specialist technology schools.

"The Mitel IP solution has enabled us to streamline the way we communicate with students, parents and staff. Parents can now just phone in and leave a message to report their child sick and all members of staff teaching the child that day are notified via the e-register, saving precious time and resources. Teachers also have personal voicemails for the first time, which can be configured through their PCs to notify students, parents and colleagues of their whereabouts. The entire solution gives us a robust, scalable and reliable communications network for monitoring student absenteeism levels as well as keeping all concerned parties fully informed at all times."

– Nathan Osbaldstone,
ICT Manager,
The Blandford School

The Blandford School's ICT Manager Nathan Osbaldstone said: "The Mitel IP solution has enabled us to streamline the way we communicate with students, parents and staff. Parents can now just phone in and leave a message to report their child sick and all members of staff teaching the child that day are notified via the e-register, saving precious time and resources. Teachers also have personal voicemails for the first time that can be configured through their PCs to notify students, parents and colleagues of their whereabouts. The entire solution gives us a robust, scalable and reliable communications network for monitoring student absenteeism levels as well as keeping all concerned parties fully informed at all times."

Looking to the future

The Blandford School has a five-year development plan that involves replacing the multiple surrounding school buildings with a single main site. The cost of networking has been dramatically reduced by the fact that no phone cables will be required. As the project evolves, the school's requirements may change, which is why the flexibility provided by the Mitel solution was essential.

"The scalability of the 3300 ICP provides us with the flexibility to add telephones and computers to the network as the school expands," explained Osbaldstone. "With the old analogue system, required changes involved extensive manual reconfiguration but now we can make changes quickly and easily ourselves, saving time and money and enabling the IT team to focus resources on more pressing, critical tasks."

The school also plans to take the Mitel technology a step further by configuring the automated system to leave messages for parents either at the start of each call or whilst they're on hold. This will work particularly well when it comes to making arrangements for school open evenings or special events such as school trips. A further initiative designed to reduce truancy and keep parents informed is the development of a portal through which parents can access their child's timetable.

The entire solution is designed to be flexible to deal with future requirements. The Canobeam laser link could eventually be used to segregate voice and data traffic, with the fibre channel used for voice and the laser for data. Video conferencing is also used and is indicative of The Blandford School's commitment to providing the latest technology to its students and staff.

"A group of sixth formers are currently taking part in a law course over video conferencing, which they wouldn't have had access to without the IP technology," explained Osbaldstone. "Following the success of this, it's our intention to offer more courses using video over IP in addition to communicating with our feeder schools and overseas partner schools."

Customer Experience

→ The Blandford School

MITEL it's about YOU

Companies don't make decisions, people do. That is why Mitel is leading the way toward a new and more personalized approach to communications for enterprise and small business. Our innovative solutions, applications and desktop appliances enable you to access, process and control your communications and information naturally, simply and efficiently.

Our solutions allow you to collaborate over distance and time and to interact with your customers, colleagues and partners as never before. By combining the power of voice, data and video over converged high speed networks, Mitel provides you with flexible and personalized tools that let you leverage the latest advances for personal and organizational advantage.

North America

Tel: (613) 592 2122
Fax: 1 800 648 3579

Latin America

Tel: (613) 592 2122
Fax: 1 800 648 3579

UK

Tel: +44 (0)1291 430000
Fax: +44 (0)1291 430400

France

Tel: +33 (0)1 61 37 00 90
Fax: +33 (0)1 61 37 00 99

Benelux

Tel: +31 (0)30 85 00 030
Fax: +31 (0)30 85 00 031

Italy

Tel: +39 02 2130231
Fax: +39 02 21302333

Germany, Switzerland, Austria

Tel: +49 (0)211 5206480
Fax: +49 (0)211 52064899

Portugal and Spain

Tel: +34 91 490 5300
Fax: +34 91 490 5301

Middle East

Tel: +971 4 3916721
Fax: +971 4 3915288

South Africa

Tel: +27 82 559 8688
Fax: +27 11 784 6916

Asia-Pacific

Tel: +852 2508 9780
Fax: +852 2508 9232

South Pacific

Tel: +61 2 9023 9500
Fax: +61 2 9023 9501

www.mitel.com



THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED TO YOU FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. The information furnished in this document, believed by Mitel to be accurate as of the date of its publication, is subject to change without notice. Mitel assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions in this document and shall have no obligation to you as a result of having made this document available to you or based upon the information it contains.

M MITEL (design) is a registered trademark of Mitel Networks Corporation. All other products and services are the registered trademarks of their respective holders.

© Copyright 2006, Mitel Networks Corporation. All Rights Reserved.

GD 10922 PN 51010163RB-EN