



CASE STUDY

Providing Always-on Connectivity for Derby College's Growing Community



Colleges and universities play a vital role in local communities – so they need the right infrastructure in place to run smoothly and keep delivering their important services.

As one of the country's largest colleges, the Derby College Group supports thousands of students each year on the path to university or work. Offering a wide range of part- and full-time courses for school leavers and adult learners, the College works hard to improve the lives of local people and is constantly innovating and extending its course list. Whether broadening its syllabus, investing in new partnerships, taking on more students, or providing distance learning capabilities, staff at the College are always striving to deliver the best possible service.

Unfortunately, with more and more people (both staff and students) accessing services around the clock from a range of locations, the College's IT infrastructure was at breaking point – with serious implications for both user experience and network security.

The Battle to Protect Strained IT Services

The days of students learning solely in the classroom are long gone. So, whether for staff working remotely, students on campus, or those completing dedicated distance learning courses, Derby College increasingly needs to provide an anytime, anywhere service.

However, Derby College's previous IT infrastructure had reached full capacity. Not only was its old solution unwieldy and difficult to manage, it only had the ability to support a small branch office for its 30,000+ student community. The CPU of its firewall was constantly operating at 100%, while appliances were unable to cope with the load. This was leading to a hugely frustrating user experience for both students and staff. The IT department received regular complaints that the internet had dropped out and disrupted important work.

Its security capabilities were suffering, too. Like any large organisation, the College had to consider the inherent issues of access and email, ensuring it could stand up to threats and that confidential data was only sent over a secure connection. However, as a Further Education institution, it had some specific critical security needs – such as an advanced Web Filtering functionality to protect users (some of whom are under the age of eighteen) from accessing harmful or inappropriate content. It also needed to be able to prevent customers from accessing various non-productive applications like social media platforms.

“To keep delivering the highest quality services, we have to keep our connectivity up to date. Fortinet's product has transformed the day to day running and performance of our IT infrastructure. Our new solution has already proved its value, with complaints to IT about internet outages dropping to zero.”

– The Derby College Group

Complicating matters even further, the College faced time constraints for the new deployment. The licenses on its old product were due to expire, meaning it needed a quick turnaround to ensure services continued as necessary. So, it wasn't just searching for fast, stable internet connectivity: it wanted a straightforward, simple solution with robust security features and highly customisable web filtering alert capabilities.

Finding a Future-Thinking Solution

With so many requirements to juggle, the College knew it would need to research solutions carefully. After using webinars to consider a variety of manufacturers, it chose to work with Fortinet, which had been identified as an option through Infosecurity Europe. The College felt Fortinet offered excellent value for money, in addition to having strong reviews from similar organisations.

So, after careful consultation, the College purchased and installed a new solution from Fortinet. This sits at the edge of the College's infrastructure, providing port of entry for its internet connection. The College is now able to use Web Filtering to protect its users from harmful content, ISP for its external facing web servers, and Application Control to block non-productive applications.

Fortinet was able to complete the necessary installations within a day, migrating over from the old product in a matter of hours. This was an ideal solution for a network like the College's, minimising downtime and the disruption that could have been caused. Fortinet's solution also removed the need for a dedicated web filtering server in favour of an 'all-in-one' platform, helping the College to save on energy, hardware and licensing costs.

The Measure of Success

As a result of the implementation, Derby College is already benefitting in myriad ways. The new infrastructure is far simpler to manage, meaning there is less of a burden on IT, and less frustration caused trying to manage and troubleshoot the previously unfit-for-purpose solution. Meanwhile, the College has been able to place its logo and policy information on its Web Filtering alert page.

Derby College measures the success of its solution by the number of support calls raised with its infrastructure team – and in this regard, the results speak for themselves. With its new solution, the number of support calls has dropped to zero, highlighting that the College now has infrastructure in place that can handle the demands placed upon it by users.

The Freedom to Grow with the Times

Fortinet's solution has transformed the day to day running of the College's IT infrastructure. Educational institutions like the College must continually move with the times, and having the right connectivity products in place is essential to this. With its new solution, Derby College will be able to meet the demands placed upon its service by students and staff – both now and in the future.

Details

Customer: The Derby College Group

Industry: Education

Location: United Kingdom

Solutions

- FortiGate 800 Series with UTM licences

Business Impact

- Ability to offer always-on connectivity with minimal outages
- Improved security and web filtering capabilities
- Eliminated IT connectivity complaints