Sophos the "backbone" of IT infrastructure at **Washwood Heath Multi Academy Trust**

Washwood Heath Multi Academy Trust (WHMAT) is a successful partnership of schools in East Birmingham. The Trust includes seven schools – four primary, two secondary and one all-through school with students from primary through to sixth form. The Trust has over 4,500 students and employs more than 700 staff.

CUSTOMER-AT-A-GLANCE

Washwood Heath
Multi Academy Trust

Washwood Heath

Industry
Education

Number of users
7 sites
2,000 endpoints
4,500 students and 700 staff

Sophos customer
Since 2019

Sophos solutions
Sophos XG Firewalls
Sophos Central
Sophos Endpoint Protection

'*Previously the schools each had their own independent Active Directory networks. We have that centralised now with a single Active Directory network across the whole Trust. It's the Sophos XG Firewalls and the site-to-site VPN that really facilitate that for us via the Wave 9 internet connection.*'

James Wigley, Director of ICT and Communications, WHMAT

Washwood Heath Multi Academy Trust was looking for a web-filtering, firewall and internet connectivity service to support the strategic aims of their group of schools in Birmingham. Here we find out why they chose Sophos and how Sophos became the backbone of the Trust's IT infrastructure.

Intro

WHMAT has developed over time into a group of seven academies which were previously independent of each other. With different IT systems in place, and each school previously having received IT services from the local authority, WHMAT quickly established a centralised ICT team. It then began to procure a security solution to align its systems across the group of school sites.

Business challenges

When WHMAT became a group of seven schools, the IT team undertook an alignment exercise to implement the same IT systems and services across all schools. With different security solutions in place across the school sites, the Trust sought to find a product that could serve all sites and endpoints conveniently and consistently. This centralisation exercise was a big task, with seven sites to align and around 2,000 endpoints to secure. The team needed to protect the entire IT infrastructure and implement the right internet filtering and data protection solutions for the schools.

WHMAT carried out a tendering process via the Everything ICT Procurement Framework and went on to adopt Sophos solutions with managed services from Wave 9, a Sophos Gold Partner, in 2019.

The technical solution

WHMAT chose to implement a number of Sophos products including:

‣ **Sophos Central**
 The unified console for managing all Sophos products

‣ **Sophos XG Firewalls across all seven sites**
 Deep learning and intrusion prevention to keep the whole Trust secure

‣ **Sophos Endpoint Protection**
 An additional layer of security to protect all 2,000 endpoints within the schools

Installation of these solutions from Sophos, alongside implementing new internet connections across the schools, was all carefully handled by Wave 9 on a site-by-site basis. All solutions connect to the Sophos Central interface for ease of visibility and management.

Business benefits

WHMAT's Director of ICT and Communications, James Wigley, explains that there were numerous benefits to implementing the Sophos products, supported by Wave 9 services. The solutions have enabled WHMAT to link up its multiple school sites seamlessly, while achieving significant cost savings for the Trust. According to James: "Sophos really is the backbone of our infrastructure. The XG Firewalls and the site-to-site VPN provide the foundations upon which the rest of our infrastructure is built. When combined with the extremely reliable Wave 9 internet service and backed up by their knowledgeable and experienced support team, it really has been a great benefit to us."

Sophos solutions also enable James's team to effectively manage internet access across the whole Trust, and ensure it is appropriately filtered. "On Sophos Central we get the Sophos Firewall Manager, which allows us to set up white lists and black lists," says James. "So we can permit access or block websites centrally and replicate this across all sites."

James lists further benefits of installing Sophos solutions as being:

‣ **Time savings:** Sophos Central streamlines the whole firewall management process and the dashboard enables the team to see what's happening across all sites.

‣ **Remote working:** Staff have been able to access school management systems via the firewalls' remote VPN, which has been particularly beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic.

‣ **Alerts and monitoring:** The XG Firewalls send alerts on any issues that occur with the firewalls or the internet connection. These alerts are also visible in Sophos Central.

‣ **Complete endpoint protection:** WHMAT was able to quickly deploy endpoint protection to over 1,300 new devices for teaching and learning at home as a result of the pandemic.

‣ **Access to resources across multiple sites:** The team now has the ability to log on, print and access resources across the entire Trust.

Completely satisfied with the security and functionality he now has at the Trust, James regularly recommends the Wave 9 service and Sophos solutions to other organisations.

'With Sophos we've all got access to the same services at any site. It really does give free movement across sites, helping us to perform as a single organisation rather than the seven separate schools we were before. Sophos allows everything to work seamlessly.'

James Wigley, Director of ICT and Communications, WHMAT

To find out more about Sophos solutions, call (0)8447 671131 or email sales@sophos.com

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