Sophos delivers reliable and consistent cybersecurity to safeguard pupils, staff and parents at **Forfar Education**

Forfar Education is a fast-growing group of independent schools located around the UK. The group currently has nine schools in its portfolio, with around 1,500 pupils supported by 350 members of staff.

CUSTOMER-AT-A-GLANCE

Forfar Education

Industry
Education

Number of Users
1,500 pupils
350 members
of staff

Sophos Customer
Since 2022

Sophos Solutions
Endpoint – Sophos Intercept X Endpoint
Network – Sophos Firewall

> *"Sophos has an excellent track record in education and that is immensely reassuring."*
>
> John Forsyth, CEO and Founder, Forfar Education

Forfar Education is a group of independent schools around the UK with aspirations to achieve further growth, both in the UK and internationally. Having recently acquired and added new schools to its expanding portfolio, the team at Forfar found that each school had different IT and cybersecurity technology and varying levels of cyber protection. Some of the technology had become outdated and presented a potential risk to data security.

The leadership team therefore made cybersecurity a key priority in order to meet child safeguarding obligations and protect data. However, with budget constraints and only a small internal team to manage IT across the entire group, Forfar set out to find a solution that could serve all of its schools' security protection needs, while being easy to manage centrally.

Read on to find out why Forfar Education chose Sophos to provide market-leading cybersecurity for its schools.

Business challenges

As an independent education provider, with establishments ranging from nurseries to primary to secondary schools, Forfar Education is bound by a duty of care to its students and their parents, and the 350 staff who work there. With obligations around child safeguarding and data protection, together with combatting the increasing risk and complexity of cyber-attacks in education, Forfar Education identified cybersecurity and access control as a strategic priority.

As a group of nine schools across the UK, some of which were recently acquired, Forfar Education found the existing IT and cyber security technology to be of varying quality, so it needed a coherent,

consistent and comprehensive solution to improve and standardise the security posture of every school in the group. With budget constraints and a small IT team with limited capacity to manage cyber threats around the clock, Forfar required a solution that could be easily managed centrally and provide the peace of mind that students, staff and data were properly protected. Additionally, as Forfar has ambitions to expand further, both within the UK and internationally, the solution would need to be easily implemented across any new schools acquired by the group, either within the UK or abroad.

Al Butler, IT Director at Forfar Education, joined the group in 2021, and having extensive knowledge previously of running his own IT services business, knew that a substantial overhaul of the cybersecurity infrastructure was required. Forfar would have to completely upgrade and consolidate its firewalls across all sites and integrate solutions

"The whole process has gone really smoothly from start to finish. It's given us much greater visibility, it's been easy to manage and we can easily provide reports for the safeguarding leads at our schools."

Al Butler, IT Director, Forfar Education

that would enable the future expansion of the group. With his wealth of experience but with just a small team to support him, Al knew that the solution Forfar selected would have to be manageable with little manpower, yet give him, his team, and Forfar leadership, the peace of mind they needed to ensure the group was protected.

The Technical Solution

Al began to research solutions from a number of providers to help overcome the cybersecurity challenges Forfar faced. He took part in meetings and product demos with leading providers to get visibility of the solutions available on the market, and how they would be able to provide the high levels of security Forfar required.

Having evaluated a range of cybersecurity options, Al and the team at Forfar opted to install Sophos

Firewalls. They chose Sophos for its excellent reputation within education and beyond, and the ability to provide security, consistency and flexibility for further expansion.

With these new firewalls and the Sophos Central interface in place, the IT team would have easy access and visibility across every connected device and server, which would provide the reliability and peace of mind they needed.

The implementation went incredibly smoothly and the entire project was completed within just one week in school holidays, with downtime of just a few hours.

Business benefits

Al explains that the benefits of working with Sophos have been significant for Forfar, not only for consolidating firewalls and systems across all sites, providing peace of mind around security and easing the team's workload, but also making it easier to meet its legal and regulatory requirements. Al explains: "One of the key benefits of the filtering that's provided with the Sophos Firewalls is they enable us to comply with our obligations under the Prevent Duty and the Department for Education's statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'." Al listed further benefits as being:

- Minimum disruption to teaching, learning and operations

- Enhanced protection and safeguarding for pupils and staff

- Visibility across all devices and servers within the group

- Greater access control across devices

- Improved visibility and control through Sophos Central

- Peace of mind that legal and regulatory requirements are being met

- The knowledge that any transition to Sophos solutions in the future will be easy and achievable

- Time savings due to Sophos's simple reporting capabilities

- A standardized centrally managed firewall system across all sites, meaning technicians can focus on what really matters

Forfar Education has been so impressed that it is working to extend the Sophos solutions it procures. The team plan to do this by gradually rolling out Sophos Central Intercept X Endpoint at each of its schools as their licences come up for renewal.

"I would recommend Sophos for their ecosystem of products that can be managed under one interface, their proven track record, and they deliver."

Al Butler, IT Director, Forfar Education

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

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