



SWITCHSHOP AND ARUBA DELIVER WORLD-CLASS ENTERPRISE NETWORK AND WIFI TO MULTI-CAMPUS SOUTH COAST COLLEGE

As part of a campus refresh project, involving major new building work and refurbishment, Greater Brighton Metropolitan College took the opportunity to transform their ageing IT infrastructure. They recognised the need for robust WiFi and wired network capability was now more pressing than ever. Given the practical and financial challenges posed by the pandemic – and a need to harmonise different legacy networks across multiple campuses – this was no small task. They turned to Aruba Platinum Partner, Switchshop for help.

Introduction

Located on England's Sussex coast, Greater Brighton Metropolitan College (GBMC) came into being following the merger of Northbrook College and Worthing and City College Brighton & Hove. The merged college now has five campuses in total.

In 2020, its Brighton Central campus underwent major development work, including new buildings, significant refurbishment of existing buildings and vacation of some out-of-date facilities. As part of this, most Curriculum departments moved to either brand new or refurbished buildings.

Predictably, the existing IT infrastructure was also in need of transformation. It was both ageing and unfit to provide secure, reliable network access across numerous sites. Sensibly, GBMC took the opportunity to transform their IT network. To achieve this, they were able to leverage a trusted working relationship with Switchshop, a Platinum Partner of Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise Company.

Project challenges

There were several challenges to overcome:

A need for future-proofing

Firstly, both the wired and wireless networks in the new areas had to be fit for purpose and future-proofed, while remaining within a tight project budget. WiFi bottlenecks had to be consigned to history. The college main campus had an aged Nortel switch as the main core network switch, this was replaced with a HPE Aruba core switch to transform the network performance.

Increased network demands

Secondly, the solution had to account for newly-refurbished areas of the campus – where the WiFi network would be subject to increased user demands and expectations. As far as today's student sees it, new or refurbished college buildings count for little unless they provide fast, reliable network access.

A need for network harmonisation

Lastly, there was a clear need for long-term harmonisation

of the entire IT network, ideally with a central point of management for all access points. This was a genuine obstacle to overcome, given that different campuses had been using different legacy WiFi systems, such as Aerohive at one site and Ubiquiti at another.

Solution

GBMC's long-standing relationship with Switchshop meant they had an IT service provider they felt they could trust to design and deliver a fit-for-purpose solution, on time and on budget.

"We have been working with Switchshop for some time now and have undertaken several successful major networking projects with the help of their expert team".

Mark Howlin, Engineering Supervisor, Greater Brighton Metropolitan College

The choice of switch stacks up

After an initial planning phase, the College IT team trialled a small number of Aruba 2930f switches. After proving they were fit for purpose, the team ordered a number of additional switches to install in hub cabinets in the brand new buildings. The cost/performance benefits were particularly attractive, as was the ease with which this type of switch could be stacked to boost network resilience.

Creating high performance access points

To provide high performance WiFi throughout college buildings, the team chose Aruba AP515 devices, again after a successful trial phase. This enabled a network solution that met WiFi 6 standard, offering a seamless and reliable experience to both students and teaching staff alike as they moved around the campus. The improved network reliability brought another important benefit: fewer calls to the IT Service team helpdesk. Which in turn meant freeing up time to focus on value-added activities.

"We were impressed with cost/performance benefits for the Aruba switches plus the ease of creating switch stacks...something we'd been seeking to improve our network resilience."

Mark Howlin, Engineering Supervisor, Greater Brighton Metropolitan College

A cost-effective choice

Compared to hardware with similar spec from other vendors, the Aruba equipment has proved highly cost-effective – considering the network performance

gains it will deliver. Moreover, as a measure of the good relationship between Switchshop and GBMC, Switchshop's account manager upgraded a number of the access point devices to AP535s, strengthening further the college's ability to cope with high user demand.

The benefits and the future

The digital transformation Project at GBMC has delivered dramatic network performance increases, improved reliability and made it easier to manage IT across multiple campuses from a single location.

GBMC are already planning to deploy Aruba end-to-end across their multi-site environment and will be managing this via Aruba Central.

The new network infrastructure dovetails neatly with the College's overall digital strategy to provide more mobile teaching, flexible working spaces in classrooms and greater use of Chromebooks. The College is now well-placed to meet the high expectations of current and future students who need fast, reliable WiFi as part of their learning experience. The Aruba Support certified project implementation team at Switchshop are delivering a full end-to-end service desk offering as part of the project roll out.

For more information

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College
www.gbmc.ac.uk

Switchshop, Aruba Platinum Partner
www.switchshop.co.uk

Aruba – a Hewlett Packard Enterprise Company
www.arubanetworks.com

Switchshop

Headquarters: Switchshop House, Enterprise Park,
Kimpton, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 8HP

tel: +44 (0)1438 831870

email: sales@switchshop.co.uk

web: www.switchshop.co.uk

🐦 @switchshop

in Switchshop Limited