



Arthur Terry Learning Partnership turn to Securus Communications for faster and more resilient communications...



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Chris Butler
Arthur Terry Learning Partnership



Challenge

The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership had several drivers for wanting to upgrade their IT infrastructure. They needed to increase their internet connection speeds but also ensure that their network was fully resilient in the event of an outage. With so many day-to-day school functions now being dependent on internet connectivity, it has become a vital part of any school's infrastructure.

Solution

- 200MB link in the secondary school (with 100MB back up line)
- 50MB link in the primary schools (with FTTC back up line)
- Dual High Availability centralised, fully client controllable firewall

Benefits

- Much faster internet connectivity
- Flexible and scalable, to meet their changing requirements
- Excellent resilience, maximising uptime and scalability
- Advanced content filtering through the firewall
- A better, more cost-effective service

Background

The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) is a respected multi-academy trust of four primary schools, three secondary schools, five children's centres and one teaching school, based in the West Midlands. The ATLP's academies are home to 4,500 children and more than 700 staff.

The driver for change...

ATLP had been in a fixed contract with the Local Education Authority-run scheme for the secondary and primary schools' internet connectivity. The service they were receiving could be frustratingly slow, taking up to 20 days to implement even a simple change, such as opening a port or modifying a domain name. ATLP were looking into upgrading their servers and were also considering to continue cloud-based solutions with Azure and Office 365.

Reliability was also a major consideration and ATLP wanted to ensure that they had maximum resilience in the event of a failover. It's all very well having faster links, but they needed to know that they could make changes to the firewall in one day, not have to wait three weeks!

Choosing the optimal solution

Service delivery was key but there was the added challenge of working within the budget set by the group that was significantly lower than the pricing offered by the LEA.

Chris Butler, ATLP's Head of IT, had known Securus' MD, Brett Rowe, for some time, so he approached Securus to assist them with the upgrade as soon as they were out of contract with their previous provider. Chris knew that Securus had the experience and expertise to design and deploy the most appropriate solution, at a competitive rate. Securus was introduced to ATLP by their channel partner, Netmetix, a cloud network specialist.

The primary school had a 10MB internet connection and the secondary school had a 100MB link. The bandwidth needed to be much bigger and faster, with the ability to cope with more video streaming within the school curriculum. Securus suggested a 50MB internet connection for the primary school with a 100MB bearer, and a 200MB internet connection for the secondary school, with a 1GB bearer, so the speed could be increased by up to five times, when necessary.



Excellent results

Excellent results

ATLP placed the order with Securus for a bandwidth upgrade last December, to be ready for April 2017. They needed to allow three months for implementation once they'd left their previous provider. Although the time scales were tight, Securus and Netmetix made the upgrade without a hitch. Even if problems occurred within the infrastructure from the cable providers, Securus were on hand to support ATLP and help ensure a quick resolution.

Securus is a well-established business who can secure competitive pricing; ATLP are not paying any more for their faster internet connection, and they are receiving a much better service. ATLP have a good support contract with Securus, and they now have the right infrastructure in place which is flexible and scalable for at least the next five years, even if they decide to implement a cloud solution.

Securus also provide consultancy for ATLP within their support package.

If, for example, ATLP are consistently using more bandwidth than normal over a 4 -5 day period, Securus will suggest increasing it. There is always bandwidth capacity and it can be closely monitored, depending on usage.

Chris Butler commented:

"I am delighted with the results and can't fault the service from Securus. The whole process was just so easy, and they provide excellent value for money."

The biggest benefit is the speed and ease with which changes can now be made. We used to have to wait for weeks to make even the smallest change. Now I have more control to make changes internally, knowing that I always have the NOC team at Securus on hand in case I need additional IT support.

Securus have been brilliant throughout the upgrade and I would be very happy to recommend them. Brett was as good as his word and everything was delivered smoothly, on time and to budget."

Peace of mind

Application policies and web filters on the firewall are now in place and everything is working well. ATLP can carry out more analytical work and more changes can be made internally. Alongside protecting the schools' network infrastructure from intrusion, the firewall also allows them to manage advanced content filtering.

There are seven schools in the ATLP academy and five of them have full MPLS resilience. There was a large outage in Birmingham city centre a few months ago which caused the internet to go down at the LEA-run school in Birmingham. For the ATLP schools with redundant links and additional resilience, even if there is a major outage, it's just business as usual.

Brett Rowe, Managing Director at Securus, added:

"At Securus, we pride ourselves on being able to provide a fast and efficient service at highly competitive prices. We also understand that speed and resilience need to go hand in hand: a robust and efficient network infrastructure is critical to any business, but particularly so in the education sector."

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