

Lawrence Sheriff School, Rugby

School with best GCSE results in England - third time in four years



"There's a unique culture that underlies our school... Culture is defined as 'the way we do things around here' and much of that means keeping up technologically."

Headmaster Dr. Peter Kent.

Lawrence Sheriff, a boys' grammar school in Rugby, Warwickshire, was recently named the best GCSE school in England for the third time in four years after students achieved the top test results in the country. At Lawrence Sheriff, meeting academic excellence is key, but developing technologically plays no less an important role for this school's management, staff, and students (see <http://www.lawrencesheriffschool.net>).

So when it came time to expand their Wi-Fi network and shop around for a new Wi-Fi vendor, the school's IT administrator made some pretty firm demands. "We knew exactly what we needed," said Dr. Regan Costello, IT Systems Manager. "It was crucial that we upgrade network efficiency to support our staff, students and also visitor access to our IT infrastructure."

For years, students and teachers alike had depended on an XMA/DLink from the school's math department which resulted in serious problems with multiple access. The staff used an RM/DLink school-wide, but the network had major security issues. "We knew we needed a mix of dependable infrastructure and top-notch security" comments Dennis Barnett, Assistant Head Teacher.

After scanning the market in search of a suitable WLAN network solution, Daconi Wireless in Coventry, a high-performance quality wireless solution provider, recommended Extricom's Channel Blanket wireless technology. Founded in 2002, Daconi Wireless provides a range of wireless solutions to education, healthcare and industrial sectors (see <http://www.daconi.co.uk>).

Extricom were recognized for their uniquely easy system management and flexible scaling. Since the school was planning long term – with the intent to grow and expand the network – scalability was key.

What distinguishes Extricom from other WLAN solutions, said Keith Jones, CEO of Daconi, is its ability to enable multiple blankets from the same infrastructure, combining multi-channel capacity with channel blanket mobility and

robustness. For the team at Lawrence Sheriff School, this was a unique selling point, encouraging them to choose Extricom WLAN network - the most operationally flexible system in the market.

Extricom's unique architecture, the Channel Blanket™, was selected and deployed throughout the school. Designed from the outset to avoid the limitations of the microcells, the Channel Blanket is widely recognized for enabling denser access point placement, higher throughput and gapless coverage, industrial strength connectivity, and built-in redundancy that provides a wire-like user experience.

While adhering to 802.11 a/b/g/n standards, Extricom's patented, interference-free architecture takes a completely new approach to the way WLAN infrastructure is deployed, creating multiple overlapping "Channel Blankets" that leverage each of the radios in the multi-radio UltraThin AP. Each channel's bandwidth is delivered across the blanket's service area (i.e., the combined coverage of all APs connected to the switch), with interference-free operation and consistent capacity throughout.

The Channel Blanket was initially deployed as a pilot, covering 25% of the site, but 100% of the school is now complete and the entire school was up and running in less than one week. The Channel Blanket was deployed throughout the entire school comprised of several buildings of varying age, construction and sizes that required WLAN coverage. It was important to provide quality coverage throughout the campus, including enclosed classrooms and workspaces, large open spaces with cubicles, such as the library and labs, and offices and teacher's rooms. Initial deployment included 8 Extricom switches with 64 access points made up of a Extricom's multi-series 1000: 2 of 32-port; 3 of 8-port and a multi-series 500: 1 of 4-port, all with expr-30n access points.

Challenge

Popular school in Rugby with a growing student base, BYOD on the rise, increased multiple access and major security issues; required a new WLAN network to include strong and reliable infrastructure and top-level security

Solution

Extricom's Channel Blanket wireless technology was selected for its operational flexibility, easy management and scalability, crucial for the school's fast-expanding network, plus its multi-channel capacity, efficiency and mobility

Result

Extricom's network effectively supports hundreds with basic WiFi, encrypted communications (VPN), separate public/private networks, and a guest access portal; planned growth to 1000+ users will soon reduce the number of desktop computers/specialist computer room suites, and valuable school resources

Extricom's Channel Blanket LAN currently supports a few hundred users throughout the school with a plan to grow to 1000 users and in the future, reduce the number of desktop computers and specialist computer room suites. The network now supports basic WiFi services (data transfer), encrypted communications (VPN), separate public/private networks, and a guest access portal.

"What's more, Dr. Costello adds, is that we were keen on having staff and students use the school's facilities and their own devices on the grounds."

Of course, Dr. Costello is referring to the prevalent "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) now on the rise amongst students and teachers. "Now that students bring personally-owned devices, Extricom's WLAN has enabled us to best use these devices to access many of our resources, including email, Intranet, file servers, and databases."



Extricom also supports a range of educational applications, from generic packages to specific government-issued apps. "With these applications, the impact on downtime is critical," comments Dr. Costello. "When the old XMA/RM D-Link wireless network went down, as it frequently did, a work around was almost impossible – but with Extricom in place – we know we're safe and secure all day – every day."

About Extricom

Extricom is a manufacturer of 4th generation enterprise wireless LAN solutions, based on its Channel Blanket™ technology. Extricom solutions are used by customers in numerous industries worldwide, including Education, Healthcare, Warehousing, and a rapidly growing number of large entertainment and public venues.

While adhering to the 802.11n standard, Extricom's patented, topology provides wire-like reliability, high throughput, seamless mobility, unparalleled noise immunity, and is easy to install and maintain. In an era of intensive wireless usage powered by the market explosion of smart phones, iPads, iPods, tablets and other communication devices, voice, data, video, and location services are delivered with an always-on, robust and mobile Wi-Fi connection to any client, in any environment. Extricom Interference-Free™ WLAN is purpose-built to slash wireless complexity and future-proof your network for tomorrow's multi-service demands.

Extricom serves its growing global customer base through offices in the USA, Europe and Japan, and by working with a global network of distributors and partners.