

Over 70,000 pupils get a wider view of education thanks to ProCurve technology

The HP logo is displayed in white on a red background. It consists of a stylized 'h' and 'p' where the 'h' is formed by two vertical bars of different heights connected at the top, and the 'p' is a simple lowercase letter.

“Installing HP ProCurve switches has given us just what we wanted - a lifetime warranty combined with simplicity and reliability.”

Patrick Grange, project manager,
Cambridgeshire County Council Schools
Networking Project.





Three separate, but inter-related developments are taking place in Cambridgeshire to link all school computers into a high speed, high capacity network that will broaden educational horizons for thousands of pupils.

One regional scheme is part of the UK Government's, National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiative, to bring broadband Internet connections to all UK schools, and the second is the Cambridgeshire Community Network which will create a county-wide data network that will service all county council buildings from the Shire Hall campus to schools, libraries and out to provide Public Access Terminals in rural areas.

The result has been to bring an efficient Internet connection to all Cambridgeshire schools, and to enable each school to use this to its full advantage. The County Council has also provided funds to upgrade individual network infrastructures within schools.

A third initiative, the Schools Networking and Cabling Programme, will provide 45,000 primary and 30,000 secondary pupils at more than 250 educational establishments with a broadband-compatible network connecting them via a 2Mb link into the wider regional backbone. Previously some used ISDN, some ADSL and others telephone lines, but now they will all soon have the same future-proofed, reliable, secure and managed service, from the smallest nursery school to the largest secondary.

Lowering the cost

By standardising on one platform, no school is disadvantaged, the cost of ownership is lowered and they all have the same equipment - HP's ProCurve networking products are forming an important part of that equipment, provided by HP partner, Centerprise International of

Basingstoke, who have also installed CAT5e cabling in many of the schools.

"In the first phase of this project, the contractor provided switches for 50 schools from another leading supplier. Once these switches were installed we realised that they were complicated to configure, the warranty was limited and the total cost of ownership was extremely high," said the County Council's project manager, Patrick Grange.

"When we tried HP ProCurve switches alongside those from the leading supplier we realised that HPs were a lot easier to configure, had a lifetime warranty and therefore total cost of ownership was a lot less.

"We did not do a full cost analysis but on face value, the HP switches were about 25 per cent that of other leading suppliers' costs. We just looked at bottom line capital cost and the benefits of using HP, and in general terms it was considerably cheaper."

Countrywide links

The new links enable collaborative learning between schools. As they are connected into the East of England regional broadband consortium, one of a number of regional consortia set up by the UK Government, and then into the next level, the Super Janet network, pupils can now connect directly with other schools anywhere else in the country and share information. They also have access to many other teaching and learning resources with a high level of network security.

While the networks do not include direct links into their home, pupils can post data on an email and document hosting portal service from school and then download it at home.

As with all educational related projects in the UK, cost was of prime importance, therefore HP's lifetime warranty and the ease of configuration of ProCurve switches were important factors. To support the CAT5e cabling of schools additional HP switches were supplied. These switches became the property of the school and the County Council wanted to ensure that schools would not face unnecessary expense as a result of its project.

"We're all aware what school budgets are like so we didn't want to put pressure on them in the future but HP's lifetime warranty removed any potential budget pressure on our schools," added Patrick.

"In terms of support, it is very easy to configure HP ProCurve switches from a Web interface so we can configure a ProCurve switch in 10 to 15 minutes - this is certainly not possible with switches from other providers.

Flexible architecture

"The modular approach of ProCurve is also beneficial because we can mix and match to meet the design needs of particular schools. Each school is different so we have to build them the network that is most appropriate to their specific needs and the flexibility of HP concentrators has enabled us to do that."

One important feature of the HP ProCurve warranty is the replacement policy. This allows schools to keep using an existing switch that may be displaying problems while a new one is being dispatched - thus preserving the uptime of the network.

Customer at a glance:

Industry sector: Education
Name: Cambridgeshire County Council
Headquarters: Cambridge, UK
Telephone: +44 (0)1223 717111
Number of employees: 3,500
URL: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Partner at a glance:

Company: Centerprise International
Headquarters: Basingstoke, UK
Telephone: +44 (0)1256 378000
Number of employees: 200
URL: www.centerprise.co.uk
Business: Independent computer manufacturer
Products: Total IT solutions



Challenge

- In line with UK Government initiatives, Cambridgeshire County Council embarked on an ambitious project to link over 250 schools into the UK's broadband educational networks.
- With the 2Mb backbone delivered to each school, their internal networks also had to be replaced.
- Networking technology that was cost effective, simple and reliable was needed.

Solution

- Cambridgeshire's Schools Networking Programme engaged HP partner, Centerprise International, to flood cable each school with a Cat5e infrastructure.
- Internal networks were constructed using HP ProCurve switch technology.
- HP concentrators were used to provide the network solution that was the most appropriate for each individual school.

Results

- Pupils can now take part in collaborative learning with any other school in the country.
- They have access to many online teaching and learning aids both now and for the future.
- The County Council expect to complete the project two years ahead of the Government target.

Reliability is also important and out of the hundreds of ProCurve switches installed so far in Cambridgeshire schools, the 'dead on arrival rate' is less than one per cent. This is helping the authority achieve a forecasted project completion date that is one year ahead of the Government target.

"You just take ProCurve switches out of the box and they just keep on working. They have given us just what we wanted - a lifetime warranty combined with simplicity and reliability," concluded Patrick.



Why HP?

- ProCurve switches are very simple to configure and reliable.
- They come with a full lifetime warranty and total cost of ownership is less than with competing products.
- The modular construction enables flexibility in design of the networks.

Hardware

- HP ProCurve 4108 GL switch J4865A
- HP ProCurve Gigabit stacking kits J4116A
- HP ProCurve Gigabit SX transceivers J4131B
- HP ProCurve 2524 switch J4813A
- HP ProCurve 2324 switch J4818A
- HP ProCurve GL10/100 switch module J4862A
- HP ProCurve 100/1000 switch module J4863A
- HP GL transceiver module J4864A

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