



SMART Schools Trust

# Case Study

Bringing Schools Together on One Secure Platform



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# 01. about

**Client:**

South East Cornwall Multi-Academy Regional Trust  
(SMART Schools Trust)

**Sector:**

Primary and Secondary education, including post 16  
(3 primary schools and 3 secondary schools across  
Cornwall, including Saltash and Liskeard)

**Services Delivered:**

Trust migration consultancy, server replacement, Active Directory consolidation, Microsoft 365 tenancy creation and migration, backup and recovery, Nexus Cloud Connect, 3rd line server and infrastructure support, hardware upgrades



# 02. challenge

SMART Schools Trust supports around 3,000 managed devices across six sites. Historically, each site operated as its own standalone environment, with its own Windows Active Directory domain, internet connectivity and filtering, security controls, servers, wired and wireless networks and its own system management processes for backups, account management and access control.

As the schools came together through a series of collaborations to form SMART, this fragmented setup became a barrier. Different systems and ways of working made collaboration difficult, increased administrative overhead, and drove up long-term operational cost.

The Trust needed to streamline processes and communication, centralise key IT services, and create a more consistent and secure environment across all schools, without disrupting teaching and learning.



# 03. solution

Nexus was brought in to consult on and deliver the technical programme to bring the schools together under a more unified IT model.

The focus was to simplify and modernise where needed, centralise core services, and design an environment that would scale with the Trust as it grows.

## **Phase-Based Infrastructure Programme**

The first phase focused on deploying the new underlying virtual infrastructure at Saltash. Nexus installed and configured the core virtualisation platform, creating the foundation for future services. At the same time, a Veeam backup server was deployed at Liskeard so that backups could be configured for the new virtual environment at Saltash.

This phase relied on key pre-requisites being in place, including sufficient rack space at both sites, delivery of new hardware, available network ports, and MPLS connectivity between Saltash and Liskeard to support replication and backup traffic.

## **Relocation of Legacy Infrastructure to Liskeard**

To improve resilience, Nexus relocated legacy hardware from Saltash to the Liskeard data centre. The equipment was installed and configured as a secondary environment, with VMware vSphere deployed to support the existing VRTX hardware.

This gave the Trust a backup location that could be used if the primary Saltash site became unavailable.

## **Looe Server Migration**

At the Looe site, Nexus migrated existing virtual machines onto a new virtual server platform. Backups were configured, and a new domain controller was deployed as part of the wider Trust identity strategy. This phase also included a physical-to-virtual (P2V) migration of the existing file server.

This work was carried out only after earlier phases were complete, with downtime carefully planned and full backups taken before any migrations began.

# 03. solution

## **Identity, Domain and Communications Strategy**

A major part of the project was creating a new, self-managed Windows Active Directory domain to replace the multiple independent domains that existed across sites. This provided a single, consistent identity platform for the Trust.



Alongside this, Nexus designed and delivered:

- Cloud-based storage hosted in Microsoft 365
- Secure shared data areas with single sign-on for file sharing inside and outside the Trust
- Secure remote working, allowing external devices to safely access Trust systems
- A new Microsoft 365 tenant for SMART, hosting all staff and student mailboxes

Existing school email domains were migrated from their previous platforms into the new SMART Microsoft 365 tenant.

The solution was designed to be fully scalable, supporting:

- Staff working for the Trust Shared Services team at the Liskeard site
- SMART Trust Board members working remotely
- SMART members working remotely
- Around 50 local governors across the six academies

This created one joined-up digital workspace for the whole Trust.

# 03. solution

## Server and On-Premise Infrastructure

While communications and collaboration were being centralised, on-premise infrastructure at key sites also needed attention.

Nexus modernised server infrastructure at Saltash and Liskeard, replacing aging equipment with supported, reliable platforms. In addition, hardware at Saltash was refreshed, and existing Saltash equipment was moved to Liskeard to be configured as a backup environment. This provides resilience if the Saltash site were ever to go offline.

This approach kept core services on-premise where needed, while improving performance, stability and disaster recovery readiness.

## Backup, Recovery and Resilience

To protect both on-premise and cloud systems, Nexus implemented strong backup and recovery using their award-winning Nexus Cloud Connect solution.

This provides secure, off-site backups, regular testing of recovery processes, and confidence that critical systems and data can be restored quickly in the event of failure, cyber incident or site outage.

## Ongoing Support

Following delivery of the main project, Nexus continues to support SMART Schools Trust with:

- 3rd line server and infrastructure support
- Proactive monitoring and maintenance
- Hardware refresh planning and delivery
- Ongoing technical guidance as the Trust evolves






# 04.outcome

SMART Schools Trust now operates on a far more joined-up and resilient IT foundation. Around 3,000 devices across six sites are supported by modernised on-premise server infrastructure, a single Microsoft 365 tenant, a unified Active Directory domain, secure shared data areas, and safe remote access for staff and governors.

With strong backup and recovery through Nexus Cloud Connect and ongoing expert infrastructure support, the Trust has a secure, reliable IT platform that supports staff, students and future growth across Cornwall.



# client feedback

*“Moving all of our schools to one domain was never going to be simple, and having Nexus alongside us made a real difference. They took the time to understand our environments, worked with our team rather than around us, and were calm and practical whenever things got complex. It never felt like we were just a project to them – it felt like a real partnership. This project helped to strengthen our already excellent working relationship and Nexus continue to be a trusted part of how we plan and deliver future IT improvements across the Trust.”*

**Anton Steinhardt, Head of ICT Services**

