Case Study

Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Multi Academy Trust transforms IT Infrastructure and culture with Sharp's strategic Partnership

The Our Lady of Walsingham (OLOW) Catholic Multi Academy Trust, a growing trust of eight schools with plans for future expansion, faced challenges with its IT infrastructure, documentation, and support capacity.

With limited internal resources and a need for strategic direction, OLOW turned to Sharp following a rigorous tendering process. The result has been a transformative partnership that not only stabilised the Trust's IT operations but also laid the groundwork for long-term improvement and cultural change.

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The Challenge

- Fragmented IT infrastructure & lack of documentation
- Limited internal IT capacity and knowledge
- Need for cultural shift towards remote-first support
- Urgent requirement for strategic IT planning & resilience

Our Lady of Walsingham (OLOW) Catholic Multi Academy Trust needed to find an outsourced IT partner to support them with both day-to-day IT issues, and aiding their future growth. With a small operational team, growing demands and a need for solid foundations, the Trust required a reliable and responsive IT partner to fill critical gaps in expertise and capacity.

Richard Stevenson, Chief Operating Officer, said, "We had some issues with our IT infrastructure. Over a period of time we'd had a number of changes to our staff and support, which ultimately left us with a lack of documentation, and a lack of understanding of how our infrastructure and networks actually worked."

The Trust's absence of proper documentation and understanding across the team left them vulnerable to disruptions. A significant hardware failure early in the onboarding process underscored the importance of finding a dependable partner.

The Solution

- Full IT discovery and tender process
- On-site assessments by our technical team
- Responsive helpdesk with remote-first support
- On-site consultancy and engineering support
- Long-term IT strategy and infrastructure roadmap

The Trust was introduced to us via an independent procurement consultant initially, and after a rigorous initial tender phase, whittled their options down to Sharp and two other potential partners.

According to Richard, "Sharp stood out during the tender process for transparency, technical depth, and cultural alignment", Richard highlighted, "It was a very open conversation about what we as a client wanted. It was just transparent from the get-go."

Our approach included in-depth discovery sessions, site visits, and early strategic input. Our technical engineer assessed the infrastructure across several schools in the trust, providing a clear picture of the current state, assisting in the development of our suggested plan for improvement.

Richard mentioned, "Sharp have really helped by coming onboard and not only fixing the day-to-day but also launching a project to actually look at the mid to long-term strategy, providing a clear road map to get us to a better place for the future."

The Trust also appreciated our flexibility and the ability to escalate issues internally without relying on third parties. Richard carried on to say, "With Sharp, it's all there. If the guys onsite can't solve a problem, they can immediately call on technical expertise. You've got multiple layers of support, which is a huge strength because you've got the breadth and depth of skills on hand to get any issue sorted."

The Result

- Rapid resolution of outstanding support tickets
- Boosted staff engagement via responsive helpdesk
- Cultural shift towards remote-first support
- Increased resilience and strategic clarity

The impact of our support was immediate and widely recognised across the Trust, Richard mentioned, "The speed at which Sharp got through the outstanding tickets was really impressive, the helpdesk has really made a massive impact already."

A major hardware failure very early in the partnership could have been catastrophic, but Sharp's rapid response mitigated the impact, Richard continued, "We were back up and running way more quickly than we ever could have anticipated. Very, very impressive."

The Trust is confident in its ability to strengthen its network and IT resilience with Sharp's ongoing support, Richard highlighted, "Over the coming months the strength of the network will only get better as we start to get a better grip on how it's working, where the weak spots are and put the consolidated plan to improve things into action."

"Whilst we're using the first four schools as a test drive, the ultimate plan is to onboard the other schools in the Trust, supported by the team at Sharp.

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Richard Stevenson, Chief Operating Officer, OLOW

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