

Managed Services are a “win-win” for Tudor Grange.



We spoke with Steven Groutage, Chief Operating Officer at Tudor Grange Academies Trust about their experience of managed IT services and the role CSE play within the trust.

Background

Tudor Grange Academies Trust is a multi-academy trust of six schools: three secondary, one all through academy and two primary academies. CSE have been responsible for the entirety of the trust's IT for a number of years through a managed service agreement.

Steven recalls how it began: *“We started with one school where we wanted to provide a more professional IT service. Things were being done in the same way they always had and, like many schools, there was a lack of clarity; no formalised processes or quality assurance measures.”*

One of CSE's first priorities was to change this and implement written processes and procedures to give the academy a strong base to build from.

“It's mundane but important; the systems and processes are key for a reliable IT network. If you try and do it yourself you have to develop and monitor this yourself, by working with CSE they already have these in place – you're getting best practice and a different level of professionalism, that's what you want”.

The new processes helped to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the IT services.

“It's in a commercial provider's interest to make processes as efficient as possible, whereas an in-house team don't have the same drive for efficiency. That efficiency results in a better service.”

People are more important than technology

IT services in the trust are provided by a network manager – with responsibility for all academies – a team of on-site technicians and the back-up of CSE specialist central teams.

“To succeed it needs to be a long-term partnership with mutual interests, rather than a managed service that is being ‘given to you’. CSE are our most trusted partner; we've worked together for a number of years and our expectations and standards are known.”

Whilst CSE are responsible for Tudor Grange's IT support team, they put huge emphasis on integration with the trust's own staff at each academy.

“It's a people business, the technology is totally secondary. The CSE team understand the pressures of teaching and why getting the small details right matter. Our teaching and administration staff are incredibly positive about the relationship with the CSE team.”

As part of the service, and to help build the relationship between IT and staff, the on-site team do proactive weekly walk-rounds to each classroom.

“The proactive element of what CSE do is really important. An engineer will visit every room every week just to ask if everything is OK. It shows staff that IT are not just there when there is a problem, plus we can cut-off potential issues before they exist which really helps the reputation of IT within the trust”

Breadth and depth of expertise

As technology in schools becomes increasingly complex it is difficult, if not impossible, for in-house teams to be expert in all areas. Tudor Grange have benefited from the breadth and depth of expertise that CSE bring with the open link to their central team of specialist engineers and developers.

“There is so much trust now that we have a partner with infrastructure behind them that they use to sort problems quickly and can mobilise to research and resource projects.”

When we are looking at new technologies CSE bring with them their experience and learnings from other schools – they have already learnt what works well and what the pitfalls are. I know they will come back with the best solution.”

CSE's central team also use advanced remote monitoring and support on all the ICT assets to identify and fix issues, providing the trust with a weekly system status report including actions taken or required.

“The proactive reports are great. CSE publish them to our intranet every week for full transparency and visibility. But what's most telling is that I no longer feel like I need to review them all of the time, the fact that CSE are doing it gives me the reassurance of knowing they are there and that actions are being taken. This allows me to concentrate on the long term strategy. It just gives everyone the confidence that it's there when you need it.”

“It’s a win-win; you’re getting a better, more reliable service and it’s costing you less.”



Supporting teaching and learning

The trust understands what an important role a reliable IT system can play in improving the outcomes for their students.

“We aim to create the environment where our teachers can just get on with their job. Every lesson is like a performance and they’ve got to be on top of their game; enthusiastic, energetic, attentive, focused on the details. With IT playing an ever increasing role in lessons, teachers just need to know they can rely on it. The more we help them to be at their best, the more likely students are to succeed, the more likely we are to get good Ofsted ratings and the more likely we are to get good investment.”

The Future

With a stable and reliable IT infrastructure and support platform now in place, the trust is focusing increasingly on the future strategic direction of technology within its academies.

“We’ve now started having a monthly IT strategy meeting jointly with CSE. The purpose is to create and monitor a development roadmap for the future.

We used to be very ad-hoc in the way we developed our IT provision – we’d always be coming up with initiatives and ideas but it was never very well planned. For more successful outcomes there needs to be more long-term planning and strategy involved.

When we know what we want to achieve we can throw that at CSE and they look at the best way to achieve it.”

But what about cost?

Like many schools and trusts who have made the switch to managed services, Tudor Grange have found that outsourcing their IT to CSE brings financial benefits.

“There’s no doubt about it, outsourcing is significantly cheaper than having our own staff. It also helps with forecasting: we are now able to forecast IT costs across the trust much more accurately than ever before.”

Steven is resolute in his advice to other schools and MATs:

“It’s a win-win; you’re getting a better, more reliable service and it’s costing you less.”

To find out more about CSE Managed Services, call **01993 886688** or email **sales@cse-net.co.uk**

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