

# Case Study



## Syplex enables St. Edmund's Community Foundation School to meet NGfL targets

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Paul Shanks – Deputy Head

### Introduction

The National Grid for Learning initiatives were established by the Government in 1998 in order to promote the use of ICT for learning, not only in schools and colleges, but also in the home, community and workplace. Part of the NGfL strategy is to improve the ICT infrastructure in schools, colleges and community centres; another part is to develop online educational content and the final part is to train educators to use ICT in learning.

The Government's targets are to link every school to the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) during 2002; to ensure that all schools are connected to the Internet (with at least 20% of schools connected by Broadband); to have at least one networked computer with Internet access in each school for management and administrative purposes; to have all teachers and pupils with their own e-mail addresses; to have a computer: pupil ratio of at least 1:11 in each primary school and 1:7 in each secondary school. Further investment should see this ratio decrease to 1:8 in primary and 1:5 in secondary by 2004.

To enable schools to achieve these targets, a range of Standard Funds grants have been available each financial year. These funds allowed schools to purchase computer equipment, Internet access, training and technical support for a fixed price. St. Edmund's Community Foundation School in King's Lynn, Norfolk, applied to the LEA for capital funds and, with sponsorship support from Dow Chemicals, a major local employer, was able to commission an IT specification from Syplex Ltd. The school is a mixed-sex primary school with nursery/playgroup facilities and caters for approximately 200 pupils aged two to eleven. It was one of the first primary schools in the UK to achieve Foundation status.



### Key Features:

- Cost-effective complete IT service to meet National Grid for Learning (NGfL) targets
- Provision of professional specification without jargon for non-technical users
- Installation undertaken during vacation to ensure minimum disruption



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## The Challenge

Deputy Head and ICT Coordinator, Paul Shanks, recalled the school's requirements:

*"I was given responsibility for ICT at the school in January 2001 and knew that the NGfL grant was the first stage in implementing a system that would meet our immediate needs and also provide a platform for future growth. We were very fortunate to obtain additional sponsorship from Dow Chemicals to implement our Internet infrastructure, as that was a vital component in achieving our overall ICT strategy. We also knew that we needed a reputable supplier that would enable us to spend the budget wisely to benefit the maximum number of children, so we obtained specifications and quotes from three suppliers."*

## The Solution

Syplex Ltd were the clear front runners in the evaluation process, as Paul Shanks explains:

*"Their approach was totally different to the other potential suppliers. They gave us several different options rather than just imposing one solution on us, and then talked us through each option in a very straightforward, jargon-free way. They were also very upfront about our hardware options and advised us to buy direct from the suppliers – so we appreciated their honesty in not trying to make a margin on our purchases."*

St. Edmund's purchased fifty PCs, a Windows 2000 server with MS Exchange email software and a Fast Ethernet network. This provided two networked computers and one printer in each classroom and thirty networked PCs and five printers in the purpose-built, dedicated ICT room. They also installed classroom control software to enable teaching staff to control an individual pupil's PC or demonstrate a lesson to a classroom of pupils. Syplex arranged all the software licences for this package and for the Microsoft software purchased.

The purchase decision was made in July 2001, and implementation was scheduled for the summer vacation. Syplex undertook all the implementation and testing during the school closure, ensuring that the children returned in September to their fully functioning ICT infrastructure and a computer to pupil ratio of 1:5 (compared with a national average of 1:12).

## The Benefits

ICT plays a key role in supporting the curriculum at St. Edmund's, but it is also used to equip pupils with the basic computing skills they will require for life. The school runs a Homework Club three nights a week, at which the Juniors (Key Stage 2) can develop their computing expertise. Software includes programmes for word-processing, drawing and information, and there are also programmable robots called "Roamers" to assist the younger children. It is noticeable that the children are increasingly using the Internet to research their work, and a Website for the School is an ongoing project.

Paul Shanks is delighted with the entire installation:

*"Syplex handled everything with total professionalism, relieving us of the burden of managing the installation ourselves, and their after-sales service is unprecedented. We took up their Technical Support package, which covered us for 10 days in a year, but they have probably exceeded this as they continue to tweak the system and ensure it all runs smoothly."*

*Syplex always sort out any problems immediately and have been dealing on our behalf with additional suppliers to ensure we continue to get the best possible deal. This is very far from being a hard-nosed commercial relationship, and I cannot imagine many other ICT suppliers continuing to take such an interest in us once they had fulfilled their original remit."*

For further details on how Syplex Ltd can help you achieve your IT objectives:

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