Customer Story
Education Industry

The Perse School Delivers Flexible Access to Applications for Teachers and Pupils with Ericom's AccessNow

It won't be long before white boards are as outdated as black boards. More and more schools are investing in lightweight, tablet computers as a new means of inspiring pupils, diversifying teaching and improving learning right across the curriculum. Yet, to be most effective, tablet computers need to be able to access more than just web apps.

The Perse School invested in a set of 30 Google Chromebooks for its pupils to use in lessons across a variety of subject areas. To get the most value from these devices, this leading independent school also deployed Ericom's AccessNow solution. As a result, its pupils benefit from the use of a far wider range of web-based and server-based applications to support their learning in the classroom.

> *Use of Ericom's AccessNow solution enables us to broaden the learning opportunities for The Perse School using Chromebooks in lessons. At the same time, AccessNow also allows us to provide teachers and other staff with a more flexible and secure remote access system.*

Fraser Robertson
Director of IT, The Perse School

THE PERSE SCHOOL
CAMBRIDGE

CUSTOMER
The Perse School

INDUSTRY
Private Education

PRODUCT
PowerTerm™ WebConnect
RemoteView
Ericom® AccessNow™

CHALLENGES
- Permit members of staff to gain secure remote access to school files and applications from a wider range of devices
- Allow staff to use their own tablets and other devices while at school
- Enable pupils to access traditional desktop applications from new Google Chromebooks

SOLUTION
- Deploy Ericom's RemoteView and AccessNow

BENEFITS
- Allows teachers and support staff to work from home using any device with any operating system
- Increases IT security, while giving staff the flexibility to use their own devices at work
- Improves teaching and learning by allowing pupils to access both web-based and remote Windows applications from Chromebooks

"It is a very easy system for our staff to use"

The Perse School needed to update its remote access system for teachers and enhance the capabilities of Google Chromebooks for pupils. It achieved both these goals with a single solution from Ericom.

Secure BYOD for staff

For a number of years, The Perse School had used traditional terminal services technology to allow members of staff to work remotely. Teachers used Microsoft's Windows Remote Desktop functionality to connect to the school's central server and then check email, mark pupils' work or prepare lessons from home. This remote access capability was well used by teaching and support staff, and the school's IT team wanted to make two significant improvements to it.

Firstly, the IT team wanted to strengthen the security of its remote access system, to prevent unauthorised users from gaining access to school data. However, this wasn't at all straightforward. "When we tried to turn up the security up on our central terminal server, members of staff with computers running older operating systems were locked out," recalls the school's Network Manager John Herbert. "Members of staff using Windows XP or older and non-Microsoft operating systems couldn't connect at all."

Secondly, the IT team wanted to deliver improved flexibility for members of staff by making it possible for them to connect remotely using a wider array of devices. Many teachers had purchased Apple ipads or other Android-based tablet computers and wanted to be able to use these devices at home, as well as bring them into work.

Enhanced capabilities for Chromebooks

While the IT team pondered its remote access dilemma, a separate project was also underway to evaluate tablet computers for use in classrooms. The Perse School wanted to purchase a set of 30 tablet devices that could be moved easily around the upper school site, 'booked' by teachers for specific lessons and used by pupils to support their in-class learning.

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> Fraser Robertson
> Director of IT, The Perse School

The school was attracted to Google's Chromebook tablets, but was concerned at first that pupils would be limited to using only web apps. Then Google itself provided the answer. In a presentation at an education industry conference, a Google representative advised prospective customers that they could use either Ericom or Citrix technology to give users access to their full desktops, from a Chromebook.

Citrix was quickly ruled out on price, but Ericom more than met the school's requirements. Indeed, the IT team soon realised that Ericom could solve both its Chromebook and remote access challenges simultaneously. "Citrix was far too expensive for what we were looking for at that time," Herbert says. "Ericom offered not only more cost effective software, but required less hardware and was simpler to deploy."

Flexible access for teachers

The Perse School now uses Ericom's RemoteView solution and integrated AccessNow technology to provide a far more flexible and highly secure remote access service for its 300 employees. Teachers, support staff and school administrators can access centrally-held files and applications from a wide variety of devices, including Android-based tablets and Apple ipads, and they no longer have to have the latest operating system. "Everything that members of staff might normally do at their desks can now be done on any device, anywhere at all, securely," Herbert says. "Teachers have the flexibility to work anywhere with their ipads if they want."

The Ericom platform has been consistently reliable, creating a service that staff can truly depend upon, whether they are checking emails from home or using their tablet devices on a school trip. "The deployment of RemoteView went really smoothly," recalls Herbert. "The whole process, including building the servers, was completed in less than a week. Since then, the ongoing administration of RemoteView has been really straightforward, and the stability of the solution has been very good."

In the past, the IT team supplied members of staff with a printed sheet of instructions, explaining what they needed to do to set up a remote access connection from their home computers. Some users inevitably ran into problems and had to contact the

IT team for assistance in setting up the remote access. "Now users simply go to a web page and enter their login details," explains Herbert. "It is a very easy system for our staff to use and, in the IT team, we no longer have to spend time responding to users' connection issues."

Effective learning for pupils

Chromebooks are becoming increasingly popular in education as Google offers schools free (or reduced cost) access to a wide range of educational web-based applications. By combining Chromebooks with AccessNow, The Perse School can take advantage of all these valuable web resources, while still being able to give pupils access to the desktop applications that pupils and teachers are familiar with.

For example, if a maths teacher wants pupils to extract data from a scientific web site and enter it into a spread sheet, they can access and use Microsoft Excel via AccessNow. Likewise, in a history lesson, pupils can research information online

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about a specific period in time, then present their findings in a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. "AccessNow gives teachers and pupils the flexibility to be able to jump between a wide range of web apps and traditional

applications while using Chromebooks," says Herbert. "Pupils can develop a wider range of skills and become proficient in the applications that they are most likely to encounter in the workplace."

In the future, The Perse School may consider extending its remote access system to allow pupils to access centrally-held files and applications from home, in the same way that teachers have remote access. Then, pupils will be able to continue their learning outside of school hours and access all the applications they need to complete home work projects, from any device. AccessNow has already been trialled by a small group of pupils, and the plan is to eventually introduce remote access capabilities for up to 1,000 pupils in the Upper school.

Ericom – Access Done Right

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North America
Ericom Software Inc.
231 Herbert Avenue
Closter, NJ 07624 USA
T +1 (201) 767 2210
F +1 (201) 767 2205
Toll-free 1 (888) 767 7876
Email info@ericom.com

UK & Western Europe
Ericom Software (UK) Ltd.
11a Victoria Square
Droitwich, Worcestershire
WR9 8DE United Kingdom
T + 44 (0) 845 644 3597
F + 44 (0) 845 644 3598
Email info@ericom.co.uk

International
Ericom Software Ltd.
8 Hamarpeh Street
Har Hotzvim Technology Park
Jerusalem 91450 Israel
T + 972 (2) 591 1700
F + 972 (2) 571 4737
Email info@ericom.com

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