

## Customer Story

### Education Industry

# Sawston Village College implements 21st Century ICT and works towards vision of “anytime learning”



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Jenny Dibsdale  
ICT Manager  
Sawston Village College, Cambridgeshire



Sawston  
Village College

For secondary school pupils around the country, ICT is no longer restricted to a one-hour slot on the timetable, once a week. Instead, technology has become an integral part of the curriculum for all subjects from English and Geography to Maths and Physics. Sawston Village College formed a three-year strategic plan to radically improve and expand its use of ICT throughout all aspects of teaching and learning. However, it realised that it wouldn't be able to deliver its vision without a reliable and high performance IT infrastructure. It selected Ericom's PowerTerm WebConnect solution to deliver applications centrally and dramatically improved the performance and reliability of its existing PCs.

#### INDUSTRY

Education

#### CUSTOMER

Sawston Village College, a secondary school in Cambridgeshire with 1000 pupils, 60 teachers and 40 support staff

#### PRODUCT

Ericom® PowerTerm® WebConnect RemoteView

#### CHALLENGES

- Improve PC performance and reliability in ICT rooms
- Enable the introduction of mobile laptops and secure remote access, to improve the accessibility of ICT
- Achieve Government directives for extended learning
- Maximise value from IT expenditure

#### SOLUTIONS

- Deploy Ericom's PowerTerm WebConnect Remote View to centrally deliver applications to the school's existing PCs
- Ensure the compatibility and connectivity of PowerTerm WebConnect with Cambridgeshire LEA's remote access system using 3SP (now part of Barracuda Networks)

#### BENEFITS

- Old PCs perform like new PCs
- Infrastructure established to support mobile laptops and remote access
- Ericom solutions cost less than a third of the cost of Citrix and deliver year on year savings

# “I definitely recommend Ericom to other schools”

In 2007, Sawston Village College launched a three-year plan to transform its use of technology in teaching and learning. It recognised that the use of ICT was not as embedded in the curriculum as it could have been.

With the support of staff, Sawston Village College set out clear goals to maximise the potential of ICT for enhancing all aspects of the college's work. In particular, it wanted to make computer resources more accessible, by introducing more mobile laptops in the school and by establishing new remote access capabilities for pupils. Jenny Dibsdale was appointed as the school's new ICT manager and her remit was to build the infrastructure to deliver the school's 21st century ICT vision.

## **A HUGE STRAIN ON EXISTING PCs**

At the time, Sawston Village College had a traditional network, comprising around 200 personal computers, spread across four separate IT rooms. “The network was very, very slow,” recalls Dibsdale. “Students had to wait three, four or even five minutes for their profiles and applications to load. As a result, lessons took a long time to get going.”

Due to the range of subjects taught at Sawston Village College, each computer had to be loaded with as many as 60 different pieces of software. This large software portfolio inevitably placed a huge strain on the school's aging PCs. “Many of our computers were three to four years old, and they struggled to deliver the application performance and reliability we needed,” says Dibsdale. “The PCs were constantly failing.”

The school knew that it had to make the performance of its computers more dependable, to encourage teaching staff to make full use of them in their lessons. “We wanted to build staff confidence with ICT,” says Dibsdale. “When computers keep crashing or take ages to load, teachers understandably find it hard to deliver their lessons and become reluctant to make use of IT.”

## **A LESS EXPENSIVE ALTERNATIVE**

Dibsdale decided to evaluate solutions from both Citrix and Ericom. She was very thorough in her selection process and visited numerous reference sites at educational establishments and other organisations over a six month period before making a recommendation. In the end, she concluded that Ericom offered the greatest value for money. She explains: “I found that Ericom offered almost the same functionality as Citrix, but Citrix was considerably more expensive. There was no extra benefit from paying the extra money. Both products delivered shared applications across a server, and Ericom met all our requirements.”

Sawston Village College calculated that the licenses for the Citrix solution would cost around three times more than the licences for the Ericom solution, even when educational discounts were taken into account. “It was a big cost saving when viewed over a number of years,” says Dibsdale.

The school estimated that it would have cost £12,000–£14,000 per IT room to replace its old PCs with new PCs in the previous network environment. By selecting Ericom, the school avoided this huge expenditure and also extended the life of its existing equipment. “Our current PCs are around three years old, and I expect to be able to keep them for at least another two to three years,” predicts Dibsdale. “This means that we now have budget available to invest in other areas of IT. In the longer term, when our existing PCs do reach the end of their lives, we can replace them with cheaper, low specification computers, thin clients or old PCs donated by local businesses.”

## **A LOT MORE CONTROL**

Sawston Village College selected Ericom's PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView product. Using this solution, teachers and pupils can log into any PC, access applications and call up their own work folders in a matter of seconds. As the applications are all stored centrally, memory and processing power in each PC is freed up, which enables the computers to operate more quickly and reliably. The solution was implemented by Ericom and one of its recommended installation partners during the course of the six-week school summer holidays.

“I like the fact that Ericom took the time to train me on its software, ensuring we got the most out of it,” says Dibsdale. “Being significantly less complicated than Citrix, my team can manage the system on a day-to-day basis, making us less reliant on expensive outside consultants. The Ericom software sits on Microsoft technology, so I have a lot more control and understanding of the solution and my network.”



PowerTerm WebConnect is now running on over 130 PCs and provides secure access to more than 40 applications — numbers that are growing steadily every month. As all of the applications are stored and managed centrally on DELL terminal servers, IT technicians no longer have to visit every single PC and load software individually whenever the school introduces a new application. “I find it very easy to manage and as the PCs perform consistently well, less of my team’s time is spent on fire fighting,” admits Dibsdale. “We want to spend our time and money on new applications and services for staff and pupils, not on supporting the basic infrastructure.”

#### **AN ‘AMAZING’ IMPROVEMENT**

Both staff and pupils at Sawston Village College have been delighted with the improvements that have come about from the introduction of PowerTerm WebConnect. Dibsdale observes: “Students enjoy working on the PCs now, and the teachers can rely on the fact that they will have consistently good computer performance for their lessons.”

Right across the school, there have been significant improvements in application performance. Log-in times for pupils are very fast, and applications launch quickly every time, without freezing the computers. “PCs that were really struggling before are amazing now, enabling us to extend their life and make considerable savings,” says Dibsdale. “They are like new PCs!”

“Ericom is very reassuring and provides good support,” says Dibsdale. “If I have a problem, I know that I can just pick up the phone and Ericom will sort it out.”



#### **A MOBILE ICT CAPABILITY**

Sawston Village College intends to move towards more mobile use of ICT. It has already started to invest in a small number of laptops on trolleys equipped with a remote access connection point. Once set up, these laptops will provide users with access to applications via PowerTerm WebConnect in the same way as the PCs.

In addition, Sawston Village College is currently building a new science block and plans to equip this new teaching facility with wireless connectivity. This will make it even easier for pupils to use laptops to access their work and applications via PowerTerm WebConnect. “We are committed to improving flexibility and convenience for students,” says Dibsdale. “We want to be able to bring IT to classes, rather than taking classes to IT.”

#### **A STEP CLOSER TO THE VISION**

A key feature of Sawston Village College’s ICT vision is ‘anytime learning’. The school aspires to provide pupils, teachers and parents with home access to information, work and applications, in line with

recent government directives. To help local schools to achieve this goal, the Local Education Authority (LEA) in Cambridgeshire has already invested in setting up a secure, remote log-in system.

“Before we made the commitment to invest in Ericom solutions, we asked Ericom to work with the LEA to test PowerTerm WebConnect’s compatibility with the Cambridgeshire Council School Network,” explains Dibsdale. “This test went very smoothly and was completed in a really short time. The LEA actually told us afterwards that the connection with Ericom was much more intelligent and easier to establish than a connection with Citrix.”

The remote, home access services at Sawston Village College have not been launched yet. However, the school knows that, when it is ready to introduce this new service, its IT infrastructure is all set up and ready to go. With PowerTerm WebConnect, the school has a robust platform with which it can deliver its big vision for ICT in teaching and learning. Dibsdale concludes: “I definitely recommend Ericom to other schools.”

## ERICOM – ACCESS DONE RIGHT

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