

> Outwood Grange Academies Trust ensures teaching continuity with Arcserve UDP



CLIENT PROFILE

Industry: Education
Organisation: Outwood Grange Academies Trust
Employees: 2,500



ORGANISATION

The Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) consists of 19 academies in Northern England. It has approximately 10,000 students and a reputation for excellence.

CHALLENGE

To safeguard the continuity of its educational activity, Outwood needed a new standardised backup solution for all its schools. Its requirements included easy monitoring and replication to a central hub.

SOLUTION

Outwood deployed Arcserve UDP to 14 academies where it protects 195 servers and 90TB of data. The group also plans to extend the solution to its final five academies in early 2016.

BENEFIT

With shorter backup windows, better storage utilisation and simplified centralised monitoring Outwood now has a very effective, scalable data protection solution that ensures continuity and enables growth.



ORGANISATION

World-class education for 10,000 students in Northern England

The Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) is a multi-academy trust consisting of 19 academies in Northern England that together have a total of 10,000 students. It is recognised as one of the highest performing groups of schools in the UK. Over its six years it has enabled thousands of young people to start a successful career or get into the best universities.

OGAT's vision is to put students first and achieve a world-class status. Its priority is to ensure every student, irrespective of their starting point, achieves success.

OGAT was born out of the success of Outwood Grange Academy, which has achieved record exam results every year for the past 10 years and is recognised as an outstanding school by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills). This large school near Wakefield has 2,200 students.

CHALLENGE

Protecting data across a diverse environment

Modern schools rely heavily on IT for their daily operations. Just like any other organisation, schools need IT to operate their day-to-day administrative tasks. Mathew Lister, Assistant Director of ICT at OGAT adds: "We run all our own services including payroll so can't have a downtime window. Not being able to pay 2,500 members of staff on payday would be catastrophic."

IT is not only crucial to the administration departments but also to classes, with many tools used by teachers now based on IT. "A school cannot function if it can't take registers and not having access to student data, including medical information would have a massive impact on student safety," explains Stuart Jones, Director of ICT at OGAT. "We also rely on IT for lesson plans and all internal communications."



We found ourselves with an extremely diverse IT infrastructure.





Maintaining outstanding student performance means IT downtime is not an option. But ensuring effective data protection for all the Outwood schools has proved to be very challenging.

“Our trust has grown over the years as we’ve converted new academies,” explains Stuart. “In 2013 we found ourselves with an extremely diverse IT infrastructure: each academy had physical and virtual servers, multiple different backup tools, disparate data retention policies, mixed storage media (tapes and disks), and countless different approaches to disaster recovery.”

OGAT’s core team was unable to monitor the backup process for each individual academy due to differing connectivity solutions at each site. With this complex setup, it was hard to verify that all processes were successfully completed and that data retention times were correct. “There was no central reporting. The systems sent us success alerts, but the only way of verifying was to contact the sites and ask to see the backup log,” Stuart recalls.

OGAT had been juggling this system for some time when the growing number of academies and a near miss incident convinced the IT staff that the time had come for change. “We came very close to losing an email server in one of the schools,” Stuart reveals. “It became obvious that we needed to standardise to one single, effective solution for all schools across the trust to allow for easy monitoring from our central hub as well as staff training.”

SOLUTION

Standardised backup process across 14 schools with Arcserve UDP

In early 2015 OGAT set out a list of requirements for the new backup solution. “We needed a tool flexible enough to work with both physical and virtual servers,” Mathew recalls. “We needed retention granularity to accommodate our different retention periods and incremental backup with deduplication as some backup processes were taking the whole weekend. The tool also had to be capable of bare-metal recovery and restoring application servers such as email, offsite data replication for disaster recovery, and it needed to be scalable to allow for future growth.”

Backup windows reduced from
48 hours to 1



OGAT identified four possible solutions. Mathew explains why Outwood chose Arcserve UDP: "Arcserve UDP proved strongest because it had data deduplication of up to 85 per cent and was easy to use," Stuart points out. "And Arcserve UDP is very much what we'd term 'set it and forget it': you install it and that's it. The competing tools required more manual intervention."

Stuart continues, "The flexible licensing model for Arcserve UDP proved to be a perfect fit for us. By choosing Arcserve UDP we achieved a saving of approximately 70 per cent compared to other solutions."

OGAT deployed Arcserve UDP in 2015. "Arcserve UDP is very easy to install and set up. We'd planned this project to take upwards of 12-18 months, but we achieved it in just four," comments Mathew.

Arcserve UDP now protects 195 servers – 20 percent physical and 80 percent virtual – across 14 schools. The total volume of raw data protected is approximately 90TB, which is reduced to 28TB through deduplication and compression.

Each school performs its own backup process to a dedicated local server every night. Once complete, the data is automatically replicated to OGAT's separate datacenter – within just 30 minutes. A successful replication provides evidence of the success of each single local backup process.

Data replicated to the datacentre also serves as a disaster recovery solution, allowing the group to restore a typical server for any academy in 20 minutes and an entire school's IT infrastructure within 48 hours.

BENEFIT

Effective data protection with a streamlined backup process

Arcserve UDP has exceeded Outwood's expectations. Through standardising on a single backup solution across its entire organisation, Outwood now has a much leaner process that is easier to manage.

Outwood's backup windows are now dramatically shorter – down from a whole weekend to just an hour. The number of failed backup routines has also dramatically reduced, as well as the amount of storage the backup occupies. Stuart comments, "Previously a month's worth of backups would've taken up to 3TB of storage, but with Arcserve UDP it now fits into 900GB. This allows us to achieve longer retention periods."

The ease of use provided by Arcserve UDP is a major benefit, too. "We just set the tool and pressed 'go'," underlines Stuart. "We're so confident that Arcserve UDP will take care of everything that we only configured alerts to notify us if something is wrong."

Every morning IT just log into the central server and verify that two hundred backups have completed successfully or check if anything has failed in just a couple of seconds.



By implementing Arcserve UDP, Outwood Grange Academies Trust has been able to:

- Safeguard the continuity of its educational activity
- Optimise the use of IT resources
- Reduce backup windows and storage needs
- Achieve longer data retention times.

OGAT is planning to install Arcserve UDP at the remaining five schools within the next few months. Scalability of the solution ensures that Outwood will be able to add more schools without significantly increasing the IT workload. "Arcserve UDP enables us to grow. We've recently added three new schools and we deployed all three Arcserve UDP servers in just one day," concludes Mathew.

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