



Microsoft Customer Solution Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: Sawtry Community College

Web Site: www.sawtrycc.com

Country or Region: United Kingdom

Industry: Education

Number of Students: 1,400

Number of Staff: 167

Customer Profile

Sawtry Community College is a large secondary school in rural Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom, serving 1,400 students. It is involved with several DfES initiatives and has a reputation for enterprise and innovation.

Software and Services

- Microsoft IT Academy Program

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Innovative School Delivers IT Training to Staff, Students, and Local Businesses

“By integrating the Microsoft IT Academy Program into the curriculum, we can ensure the workforce of tomorrow is adequately prepared.”

Alan Stevens, Associate Principal, Sawtry Community College

Computer systems underpin daily life at school, in the workplace, and across the wider community. Sawtry Community College wanted to ensure its staff could effectively use its online learning portal and equip its students and the local community with relevant training to bridge the IT skills gap. It was one of the first schools to embed the Microsoft® IT Academy Program in its curriculum and offer training to staff, students, and small, local businesses.

Education Needs

Sawtry Community College is a foundation school in Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom. The most recent OfSTED inspection rated the school as “good” and praised its “emphasis on aiming for high standards and continuous improvement.”

The school excels in three areas:

- **Staff development**—Sawtry is accredited by the DfES as a Training School. It works in partnership with other schools and education bodies to improve professional development standards through teacher training and classroom-based research.
- **Using IT effectively**—Sawtry was one of the first schools to use portable computers to support teaching and learning as part of the “Anytime, Anywhere Learning” project in 1998. More recently, the college implemented the Microsoft Learning Gateway, a Web-based portal offering
- **Sharing best practices**—it supports schools in four counties as a member of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) “Leading Edge Partnership” initiative.

communication and collaboration tools.
This raised fresh staff development needs.

Alan Stevens, Associate Principal, Sawtry Community College, says: "It is essential that we improve staff IT skills. We wanted to take charge of maintaining our online curriculum and offer more information across the school using the portal. This reflects the Training Development Agency's change in emphasis from merely training teachers to school-wide staff development reforms."

What's more, the school wanted to extend its IT training plans to students. Alan Stevens says: "The Regional Development Agency, our partners in the business community, and the Learning and Skills Council encourage us to ensure all students have basic IT skills so they are prepared when they enter the workplace. We were also keen to offer similar training to local businesses to help stimulate innovation and increase competitiveness."

Solution

Alan Stevens wanted to adopt an IT training package that met staff and student needs, gave people industry-recognised accreditation, and could be offered to the wider community. He says: "We considered the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) for staff, but it felt like a 'stop-gap' measure and didn't meet our long-term needs. Similarly, the RSA CLAIT course was being completed by staff at evening classes and was not part of the official professional development programme."

The school decided to use its partnership with Microsoft through the Microsoft IT Academy Program, which is available to schools worldwide to bring IT training to the classroom. With Microsoft and its partners, it developed a two-year pilot programme to offer students Microsoft Office Specialist certification as part of the Key Stage 4 curriculum.

Microsoft training provider Certiport supplied teacher training, learning materials, and online assessment tools, which were delivered through the school's Microsoft Learning Gateway portal. Teachers trained to achieve their Microsoft Office Specialist certification in mid 2004, and the first group of students began in September 2004.

Students had three one-hour, timetabled sessions spread over three terms to complete Microsoft Office Word, Microsoft Office PowerPoint®, and Microsoft Office Excel® training. Staff received 10 one-hour sessions in groups of six, supplemented by one-to-one support operated on a drop-in or appointment basis. People used self-study resources to build on their existing knowledge of software packages and supplement group session activities. If employees were already competent in Microsoft Office applications, they could take the online examination without training.

Following this successful pilot programme, Sawtry began offering courses to the wider community through the Microsoft IT Academy Program. It advertised through the local Chamber of Commerce and approached businesses with links to the school.

Benefits

The school has used the Microsoft IT Academy Program to help individuals gain workplace skills and local businesses become more competitive. To date, more than 500 people have gained qualifications through the Microsoft Office Specialist pathway of the IT Academy Program. This includes all 150 school staff, more than 300 students, and 50 people from the wider community, including several small, local businesses.

Giving IT Teachers Specialist Accreditation

For the first time, specialist IT teachers have the opportunity to gain professional

qualifications in their subject area. Alan Stevens says: "All qualified teachers must have a degree and teaching certificate, but, previously, there was no specialist IT qualification they could easily obtain on the job. The Microsoft IT Academy Program gives us the ability to award IT teachers with a relevant, industry-recognised training qualification."

Ensuring School-Wide Participation

All staff use the Sawtry Microsoft Learning Gateway to play an active part in the school community. Alan Stevens says: "Our people now work in an online organisation. We're putting them in a situation where they need IT skills to work effectively. The Microsoft IT Academy Program is an essential part of our professional development programme."

Preparing Students for the Workplace

Sawtry can offer its students real-world experience and additional qualifications as part of daily lessons. Alan Stevens says: "By integrating the Microsoft IT Academy Program into the curriculum, we can ensure the workforce of tomorrow is adequately prepared."

Bridging the IT Skills Gap

The school also uses the programme to help small businesses ensure its employees are adequately trained, helping to improve local competitiveness. Alan Stevens says: "We can offer our services to the wider community to help address the current local skills gap and boost the regional economy."