



# Unified communications powers 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching

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Jonathan Coyles  
Project Manager  
Grace Academy

## Grace Academy selects BT supplied and managed converged networked IT services at its new campus

### Client

The Department for Children, Schools and Families academy programme brings a distinctive approach to education by drawing on the skills and resources of sponsors. Grace Academy is such a flagship learning institution for 11 to 18-year-olds. It has a Christian ethos and specialises in business and enterprise. Opened in September 2006 in a purpose built facility in Solihull, West Midlands, Grace Academy is sponsored by Robert Edmiston – Chairman of IM Group – through the Grace Foundation.

### Challenge

Grace Academy wanted to create an innovative educational environment using the best in information and communications technology (ICT). Jonathan Coyles, the Grace Academy Project Manager, recalls: “Our ICT budget was fixed and we did not want to waste money managing a complex tender process, so we decided to engage OGCBuying.solutions.” Grace Academy issued a statement of requirements using the OGCBuying.solutions process, which provides pre-negotiated framework contracts assuring value and simplifying supplier selection.

Jonathan Coyles continues: “We had a clear ICT vision. The solution would support a range of teaching and learning styles – and facilitate collaboration – thus freeing teachers to teach. BT not only demonstrated the best understanding of that vision but also gave us confidence in taking the lead role.”

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## The BT differentiators

- Understanding of Grace Academy’s ICT vision and the particular needs of the education sector
- Trust and confidence in BT’s ability to deliver against tight timescales
- A one-stop-shop solution provider registered under the OGCBuying.solutions framework
- Expertise and consultancy in networked IT services design and support

# Case study

## Grace Academy

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**“BT has equipped the Academy with leading edge technology to create a learning environment suited to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”**

David Wootton  
Principal  
Grace Academy

### Solution

From the outset BT formed a dedicated team led by a project director and including solution designers and deal architects to engage with associate organisations and deliver the solution in the required timescales.

The heart of the solution comprises a Cisco unified communications system, which is fully integrated with Microsoft Active Directory. That enables facilities to enhance ease of use such as ‘click to call’ from client PCs associated with a Cisco IP Phone. A Cisco-based LAN infrastructure supports converged voice and data and incorporates wireless technology to provide a fully flexible working environment across the campus. Voice connectivity to the public network is provided through BT digital lines with a BT Business Plan calling package, featuring discounted call charges.

BT also supplied a Microsoft Learning Gateway application for content management in a virtual learning environment. The portal provides access to learning material online – personalised for the individual – and enables collaboration between teaching staff and pupils. Devices provided by BT include 390 desktop PCs, 120 laptops, and 125 tablet PCs. This gives the Academy an impressive ratio of one PC for every two pupils, which substantially exceeds government guidelines.

### Offices worldwide

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Installation work was completed against a tight schedule in time for Grace Academy to open for business in September 2006. The project included provision of a BT-managed data centre to house file, print, mail, and application servers as well as storage devices. BT also managed the interface with other vendors, for example those providing services such as cashless catering, CCTV security systems, and building management systems.

Jonathan Coyles comments: “We had an immovable deadline; the beginning of the school term. BT was very flexible and helped us meet the timescales in difficult circumstances.”

### Value

BT has provided Grace Academy with a leading edge converged infrastructure that has transformed the traditional teaching and learning environment. The solution provides the opportunity for a high level of student teacher collaboration, plus the option to tailor learning programmes to suit the needs of individuals.

The wireless network enables students to work flexibly across the campus, and the fully managed BT service allows Grace Academy to concentrate its resources on the core business of teaching without distraction.

David Wootton, Principal of Grace Academy, observes: “BT has equipped the Academy with leading edge technology to create a learning environment suited to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”

BT provides an IT helpdesk together with an on-site technician to deal with configuration changes, security and access issues as well as hardware and network problems. In fact, the BT solution has proven to be very reliable in service, consistently exceeding 99.99 per cent availability.

Jonathan Coyles concludes: “Working with BT we have one primary point of contact and one place to go for service and support. This greatly simplifies administration and avoids the potential for the Academy needing to arbitrate between different service providers in the case of a complex problem.”

Work to open a second Grace Academy in Coventry in September 2008 has recently commenced. Following the success of the Solihull implementation, BT has again been selected as prime contractor for the delivery and support of the ICT environment.

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## Core BT Services

- BT supplied and managed Cisco LAN infrastructure incorporating the Unified Communications Manager Express (UCME) platform with Cisco IP Phones
- Networked IT services including PCs and servers as well as the Microsoft Learning Gateway and Microsoft Active Directory applications
- BT supplied and managed data centre facilities and BT ISDN30 digital lines with the BT Business Plan calling package
- BT Professional services including design consultancy, service management, and project management together with ongoing IT helpdesk services

