



**RM Education support  
Co-op Academy  
Stoke-on-Trent as they  
adopt cloud-based  
technology**

## The Background

Co-op Academy Stoke-on-Trent is part of the Manchester-based Co-operative Academies Trust. It is a secondary school with over 800 pupils, and is the highest rated non-selective school in Stoke-on-Trent (October 2019).

When it comes to technology the Academy is focussed on helping students do the best they can, enhancing what is being done in the classroom to support teaching and learning. When they implemented Google Classroom they wanted to make sure teachers saw it as a help not a hindrance.

## The Solution

When the Academy embarked on their Google journey over 3 years ago they did an initial trial with one department. They were able to build on this experience, sharing lessons learned, when they rolled it out across the wider school community. When Google was first widely implemented in the Academy all staff took part in training and support sessions. Over the first 3 months 1-2-1 sessions as well as ongoing training and support helped increase staff confidence.

Training and support were designed to help staff understand the possibilities of the new software, but they were empowered to use the Google solution in the way that suited them, their teaching and their class the best. As a result different faculties use the technology in different ways – with the ICT department now paperless, but in other areas, such as Engineering and Design & Technology, a mix of Google and Microsoft/paper-based systems are still used. This is determined in part by exam board requirements – in Engineering some work has to be submitted hand-drawn so the teachers need the flexibility to use the technology as they see fit.

**"We wanted the teachers to love using the Google tools but in order for that to happen we felt it was important to let them choose when and how they used the technology. That decision was a really powerful way of making the rollout successful."**

**Maria Price**, Head of Creative Technologies Faculty

There have also been differences in how Google is used outside the classroom, with some subjects having a requirement for all classwork to only be accessible within lesson times, while others encourage doing research work outside of class time, and doing work outside normal school hours. This flexible working has provided staff with more flexibility about how and when they work. This has also been a benefit for students, but the Academy were very aware they needed to ensure equality of access for all pupils and they regularly monitor what percentage of their student population have access to a computer and the internet at home. For those students who don't, the Academy provide lunchtime and after-school sessions to ensure those students have as much access as they need to online resources.

## The Benefits

Staff have found they are able to save time through collaboration using Google. One example is in the production of the Academy's weekly news bulletin. Before Google staff would submit their content to the Reception team via email, and then that would have to be collated. Now staff can submit their content directly to a single document without the duplication of effort.

As in many schools, the journey was not always easy and training and support was important in getting behaviour to change. Delivering on the promised benefits and having staff experience those benefits for themselves was a key part of the process. Letting teachers decide how best to use the technology in class was an important part of delivering that change, empowering them rather than mandating technology adoption.

The Academy have chosen a hybrid model for their infrastructure – mixing both cloud-based services and a server-based infrastructure in the school. This has given them flexibility and allows them to manage their rate of change – in terms of investment, and bringing staff with them on the journey to deliver their strategic vision for IT.

**"The support we get from RM Education means we can continue to run that hybrid model. The RM team help us with both fixing problems when they arise, and also problem solving to help us work out how we implement new ideas and continue to evolve and develop our IT in line with our strategy and vision."**

**Maria Price**, Head of Creative Technologies Faculty

The school now have a group of 'super users' working within each department. As the technology continues to become embedded this helps the school and its wider staff community to continue to develop and make the most of the potential offered by Google Classroom software.

## The Partnership with RM Education

RM Education provides a managed service to the Academy, with an engineer on-site full time. The engineer provides network, hardware and software support. The RM service also provides access to remote support and remote network management, so anyone in the school can get access to expert support and problem resolution whenever they need it.

There is a PC and Interactive Whiteboard in every classroom, for teachers to use, some with a CTouch interactive whiteboard, and also a number of ICT suites. PCs are being replaced by Chromebooks and the school now has 150 of these which they use as a floating resource in a lending library. Staff use a collaborative online Google sheet to book the Chromebooks out for specific lessons. Chromebooks are handed out in register order to monitor which students have which device which has helped to reduce damage and vandalism (an idea from the experienced RM on-site engineer).

RM completed a large infrastructure upgrade over the summer holidays to mitigate the risks of Microsoft Windows 7 and Server 2008 going out of support in January 2020. The Academy had an uneventful return to the new term which was a testament to the smooth running of the project.

**"Our RM engineers have been amazing, they've been really supportive of our journey. They've made sure security, software, everything behind the scenes gets set up and just works. Because they work so closely with us they understand how our staff work, and how the technology works – it's a real partnership"**

**Maria Price**, Head of Creative Technologies Faculty

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