

VOICE  
MOBILE  
DATA  
IT

VOICE

VOICE | MOBILE | DATA | IT

## Focus Group Scores Top Marks at Hurstpierpoint College



**Future-proofed to cope with any communications challenge, making the switch to a next generation phone system gives Hurstpierpoint the flexibility to cope with evolving user needs**

A thriving co-educational day and boarding school for over 1,100 pupils aged 3 to 18 years, Hurstpierpoint College (Hurst) first opened its doors in 1849. Having experienced a rapid expansion in student numbers over the past decade, the school's ageing telephony system was at break point. With the help of Focus Group, Hurst transformed operational communications across its 140-acre campus – achieving impressive line rental savings in the process.

### Challenge

When you operate a dynamic school campus catering to the diverse needs of pupils, parents, academic staff and administration teams, you need to be certain your telephony is slick, responsive and can be adapted fast to evolving requirements.

But as Dan Higgins, Director of Operational Technology explains, Hurst's ageing phone system was inhibiting the ability of his team to respond to the operational needs of a large number of support staff and teachers.

“The complexity of the incumbent system meant it was incredibly difficult to do even the most basic of things – add new staff members or phone extensions, create and amend hunt groups, and even transfer calls.”

“We needed to be able to provide a voicemail service for the teachers so they could return calls once they were out of the classroom, but without the ability to allocate personal extensions this was impossible. We also struggled to handle call peaks – at exam results time or during the admissions process – efficiently,” he says.

**“The complexity of the incumbent system meant it was incredibly difficult to do even the most basic of things – add new staff members or phone extensions, create and amend hunt groups, even transfer calls.”**

**Dan Higgins,**  
Director of Operational Technology  
Hurstpierpoint College



With service and support costs for the ageing system escalating and faults regularly taking down telephony at the site on an increasingly frequent basis, Dan wanted to reinvigorate telephony at the school. Introducing a more resilient solution that was easier to manage and future-proofed to cope with any challenge.

**“I can now make daily changes to our telephony without a problem. If I encounter a problem, Focus Group’s excellent engineering team is on hand to help. They know the system inside out and I’ve never had to wait longer than 30 minutes for a change to be implemented.”**

**Dan Higgins,**

Director of Operational Technology, Hurstpierpoint College

#### Why Focus Group

“What attracted us to Focus Group is that they were local – and were able to offer hardware, lines and Internet connectivity under one roof. That meant we could streamline our supplier base and deal with a single provider for all our communication needs,” says Dan.

Focus Group spearheaded an extensive site-wide survey to investigate the school’s existing infrastructure and discovered 15 redundant lines, which historically had been connected to fax machines, pay phones in dormitories and staff quarters that no longer existed.

Following the audit, Dan received a detailed list of recommendations and options to review, which included moving to a 1 GB fibre Internet connection to deliver the impressive data bandwidth across the site for smartphone and wireless device users.

“Eradicating redundant lines would generate immediate line rental savings and moving from ISDN30 to a SIP infrastructure would further cut costs and gives us impressive ‘wire free’ flexibility that allows us to place handsets wherever we need,” confirms Dan.

Over the school holidays, Focus Group went to work installing the new dedicated fibre line and the Ericsson-LG UCP-600 IP system, as well as programming and placing 155 handsets across the site. Alongside training the IT team, Focus Group’s specialists were on-hand to help staff get to grips with using the new telephony system.

#### The Results

The solution has greatly improved communications across the school. The new platform is easy for Dan and his team to programme and manage – taking just moments to set up hunt groups or add new extensions.

“We can plug in a new handset wherever there’s a PC – it’s literally ‘plug and play’. Every staff member has a personal extension that’s not related to a handset. If teachers are in-class, calls go to their voicemail and they automatically receive an email telling them there’s a message waiting,” continues Dan.

The new system places minimal demands on the WAN, so IT systems are performing faster than before, while delivering impressive feature rich and reliable telephone communications that can be tailored exactly to user needs.

The newly rationalised and streamlined solution has also delivered when it comes to providing more cost-effective VoIP channels.

“We estimate we’ve achieved a monthly saving of 40% on line and Internet rental costs alone,” confirms Dan. “What’s more, my support teams are no longer burdened with daily help-desk calls from frustrated users and we’re able to respond fast to change requests or initiate new functionality as required.”

The school now receives a single itemised bill for all its voice and data lines and can instantly see detailed usage information – including number of calls made, to which destinations, and from which extension.

“We now have the capacity and functionality we need to cope with future growth and changing demands – Focus Group enabled us to rationalise our communications and proved they could deliver on their promises,” concludes Dan.

