



The Royal Masonic School [RMS] is an independent day and boarding school for girls which for the last 76 years has been based in a 300 acre rural site in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire.

Catering for girls between the ages of 2-18, RMS includes a pre-school facility, a prep school, senior school and a sixth form. Originally a purpose built boarding school, nowadays the majority of the 800 pupils are non-boarders.



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The Royal Masonic School

Case Study

Organisation

RMS has an unusual and distinguished history. One of the oldest girls' schools in the country, RMS was founded in 1788 by Chevalier Ruspini to educate the daughters of Freemasons unable through death, illness or disability to support their families. The School started out with fifteen pupils and a matron in Somers Place in East London and moved twice within London and finally to Rickmansworth in 1934. In 1978 RMS became an open, fee-paying school accepting girls from all backgrounds and all faiths, the vast majority of whom have no links with Freemasonry.

The Challenge

Joy Heaven, Acting Bursar at the school said, "Our challenge was very simple, we had a Norstar Meridian, which was fine and which we liked very much, however, one day we received a letter from our telco to say that they would no longer be maintaining this system".

"At this time" explained Joy, "We had been having many calls from potential suppliers offering to assess our needs with a view to updating the system, improving the facilities and at the same time, saving us money. However, we were very fond of our existing supplier and did not want to change".

Driven by the need to maintain a reliable telephone system and in order to understand what was available in the market, the RMS invited four companies in, including their existing supplier, to assess its needs and identify where cost savings could be made.

"Excell were the only company to offer a cost effective fixed and mobile communications solution on a single bill..."

The Solution

Excell's solution based on the Avaya IP 500, was considered to be the most suitable and user friendly of the proposals presented to the school.

The system, consisting of 160 extensions, was configured to support both IP and analogue extensions. The School already had a fibre data network and therefore the IP element of the solution was converged onto the fibre network. In addition, the Avaya IP 500 system was configured to support a number of existing analogue extensions which RMS wished to maintain.

Following the school's decision that the Avaya IP500 solution was the best fit for its telephone and data requirements, Excell carried out a full audit including an assessment of all ongoing costs, for example, line costs, call costs, system support costs and mobile costs. This enabled Excell to demonstrate to the school the savings that would accrue once the Excell solution was implemented.

The school's new system was installed over a 2 week period during the summer holidays. Thinking back to the event, Joy recalled, "The installation engineers were very knowledgeable. They knew what they were doing, they were willing – even though they had all sorts of set-backs from us in terms of changing requirements, they just dealt with everything. I would certainly recommend Excell, they were brilliant".

In addition to the Avaya 500 IP system, another key feature of the Excell solution was their ability to bring structure to the schools mobile phones, enabling the school to have a single bill for all mobiles. This strategy has already provided the school with considerable cost savings. Joy explained, "Excell were the only company to offer a cost effective fixed and mobile communications solution on a single bill – which was another deciding factor for us".

Joy explained, "Our mobile phones had grown like topsy over the years. They were on different networks, had named persons who were no longer with the school which made it very difficult when talking to the suppliers as they refused to discuss any aspect of the bill unless they could speak to the named person. One amusing example of how frustrating this was, was that we had one bill addressed to a Mr A Department – and the supplier wouldn't speak to anyone who was not called Mr A Department".

System features

- **VoIP Functionality** – Enables the school to use the data network to carry voice traffic to remote areas of the site
- **Modular Design** – Allows the system to grow as required
- **Increased Functionality** – The enhanced auto attendant facilities on the Avaya IP 500 system will relieve pressure on the school's admin and reception team
- **Administration** – On-site system self administration features allow for additions, moves and changes to the system to be made as required, efficiently and with zero disruption.



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Benefits/Results

- **Account Management** – the easy availability of the Excell Account Manager made a distinct change from RMS's previous supplier
- **Voicemail** – although this is a very simple and common feature of modern telephones, the ease with which the voicemail can be programmed and messages retrieved is important to the school. As Joy pointed out, "This ease of use is an essential benefit for many of our staff"
- **Auto Answering** – the school is looking forward to the benefit of using the auto-answering facilities which will relieve the telephone answering load on their receptionists, enabling them to spend more time dealing with face to face enquiries from parents and other visitors
- **Cost Savings** – The school is on track to see major cost savings by the end of the first year of installation. Already it is clear that their bill for the combined fixed and mobile network is less than their previous supplier's bill for land lines only
- **Reduction in capital outlay** - Joy explained, "Whereas before we bought our equipment and then paid maintenance, we are now leasing from Excell on a 5 year period and at the end of that period we will own the equipment – and it is still working out cheaper, even with the leased payments"
- **One bill** – the ability of Excell to provide a single bill for fixed and mobile communications has made administration of the system both easier and cheaper

The Future

Looking to the future, Joy expects to continue to develop her relationship with Excell and her Account Manager, "We have a very good relationship – we can phone them at any time and they are responsive and very helpful" said Joy.

Following the system training given by Excell, the school expects to increasingly utilise many of the facilities of their new Avaya IP 500. For example, they will soon roll out email integration with voicemail which will enable staff to receive voicemail directly into their Outlook box.

Reflecting on the success of the project, Joy enthused, "We have no regrets. I would have no problem in recommending Excell. They found a solution for every problem we posed".

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