

**GDST**
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

Summary

The Girls' Day School Trust improves email security for pupils and staff and explores the potential of Microsoft Azure.

Benefits:

- End-to-end advanced threat protection
- Peace of mind for the organisation
- GDPR compliant
- Proof of Concept for Azure
- Live testing of workloads in Azure



The Challenge

The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), is the UK's leading network of independent girls' schools. Established in 1872, it is a charity, reinvesting any surplus it makes into girls' education. The GDST has approximately 19,000 pupils and 4,000 staff across its 23 schools and two academies in England and Wales. It has a centralised IT function that provides technical support for all the schools in its network.

The GDST wanted to explore two issues:

1. How could the email system be made more secure for pupils and staff?
2. What might a move to public cloud look like for the organisation?

Email Security

The IT team at the GDST manages 40,000 mailboxes with staff and students sending and receiving around 1,500,000 emails each month. The GDST uses Office 365 and, conscious of the growing number of cyberattacks that start with an email, wanted a security and archiving solution that would improve the protection offered to its users. The GDST wanted the new solution to:

- Protect users from spam, malware, phishing and zero-day attacks
- Be cloud-based
- Provide real-time monitoring and alerts as well as comprehensive reporting
- Be compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

iomart's consulting team, formerly known as SystemsUp, was invited to tender as it was already working with the GDST to create a roadmap for a potential move to the cloud. They recommended an integrated solution from security partner Barracuda which the GDST chose to implement after a successful Proof of Concept and comparison with a number of other products. The solution is based on:

- **Barracuda Essentials Email Security - a cloud-based email security service that protects both inbound and outbound email against the latest spam, viruses, worms, phishing, and denial-of-service attacks;**
- **Barracuda Sentinel – a comprehensive AI solution to protect against real-time spear phishing, domain spoofing and account takeover.**

With tech-savvy pupils and staff using school-owned devices to access a growing number of online resources, this complete solution provides the protection that the GDST was looking for.

Michael Coram, Implementation Manager ITS Department for the Girls' Day School Trust, says, "Since implementing the Barracuda solution, the process for identifying compromised accounts and remediation tasks has been simplified. Also, as a cloud solution, we are able to ensure all email accounts are protected and accessible from any device."

The setup was simple, allowing the GDST to on-board all of its domains in stages without impact to the service. A dedicated Barracuda contact supported them from start to finish, ensuring consistency and rapid response to any questions.

"Whilst iomart presented Barracuda as the solution, they were also representing us, the GDST, ensuring that Barracuda fully demonstrated that their product met our requirements," Michael Coram explains.

Public cloud roadmap

Prior to the implementation of the email security solution, iomart's consulting team had been helping the GDST look at the potential of moving to the cloud. With legacy infrastructure and hardware located in a number of third-party data centres, the GDST IT team wanted to create a detailed and commercially costed document for their executive board to consider.

As a result of its cloud enablement expertise and Gold Partner status with Microsoft, iomart was chosen to help create a roadmap and an infrastructure and services blueprint. First of all, SystemsUp carried out a Cloud Enablement Workshop – a 10 day exercise that gathered details about the GDST's business drivers, application dependencies, connectivity and IT resourcing. The resulting document looked at the potential of AWS, Microsoft Azure and consolidating the GDST's IT infrastructure using hybrid cloud. This resulted in the executive board giving the go-ahead for the second stage, a Proof of Concept (PoC) for Azure.

Michael Coram explains, "Following the engagements with iomart to establish a full understanding of our systems and requirements, their team provided the documentation to present to the board and secured funding from Microsoft, which resulted in the approval to proceed with a Proof of Concept in Azure."

High Level and Low Level designs were created, and several business-critical production services were tested in a live Azure environment. The consumption costs of the PoC were zero because of the CSP funding that iomart was able to secure from Microsoft.





"Securing the CSP funding from Microsoft for a Proof of Concept, allowed us to fully explore the features of Azure, which was sufficient for us to have a real-world comparison with our on-premises servers," says Michael Coram. "The performance of the servers in Azure exceeded our expectations and we assessed the actual burn rate to provide realistic estimates on future costs and compare this against online estimation tools."

Dan Hall, Director of ITS for the Girls' Day School Trust, says, "It has been a great pleasure working with iomart's consulting team. They are technically brilliant and have been completely focused on finding the right solution for us, at a cost we can afford. It feels like a genuine partnership."

Nick Martin, Consulting Director for iomart, concludes, "We've helped the GDST to see where they can get to in an open and transparent way. They now have a roadmap to the cloud which they can implement whenever they decide to make the move."

About the Girls' Day School Trust

The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) is a family of 25 leading girls' schools located across England and Wales. We foster academic excellence but also build character, helping girls to be confident, resilient and fearless. Whatever their disposition and direction in life, we enable her to learn without limits. Visit www.gdst.net

About iomart

iomart's consulting team delivers digital and technology transformation projects, helping organisations in the public and private sector with cloud strategy, user experience, application optimisation, security and cloud enablement. Their expert skill-set also includes post-project technical support. Find out more at: iomart.com/consultancy

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