



White Paper

Unified Communications for the Education Sector

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For more information, contact:

whatsup@telcoswitch.com
www.telcoswitch.com



A photograph of three young children in a classroom setting, focused on a computer screen. A girl in the foreground is typing on a keyboard, while two other children look on. The image is partially covered by a blue and teal circular graphic on the left and a teal banner at the bottom containing the section header.

01

Changing requirements for technology adoption

For educational institutions across the UK, 2020 marked a major shift in the adoption of technology for remote learning.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, and resulting lockdowns in the last 24 months, accelerated the uptake of technological solutions for education that would have been on the digital transformation roadmap for most schools over a longer-term. However, in many instances, decision making around which new tools to implement made the assumption that remote learning would only ever be a temporary circumstance.

Schools and colleges were forced to adapt practically overnight as almost every student across the UK began home-schooling. Across the entire education sector, there was a huge uptake in free, web-based services for remote learning.

What is left behind in many schools, colleges and academies now is often a patchwork of several non-integrated technologies that while suitable for short-term use, have not truly been designed for the longer term and the sometimes unique needs of modern educational institutions.

A school's phone system can be a crucial part of the day-to-day running, and a modern communications solution should allow them to benefit from features and functionality that enhances both teacher and student safety, that allows for more efficient communication parents or students (both inbound and outbound), and allows for effective collaboration between teaching staff.

02

Unique challenges for the education sector

Schools have a unique set of challenges to overcome when considering investment in technology.



Increased budgetary pressures, but an expectation to continue investing in ongoing digital transformation.



Demand for staff and department collaboration and teachers being able to 'work from anywhere.'



Parents and students expect more flexibility and instant communication from the teaching staff.



Seasonal fluctuations in the demand and communications traffic from term-time vs. holidays.



The ability to report on events, closures and allow parents to report non-attendance and sickness.



Increased scrutiny being placed upon safeguarding processes for both students and teachers.



03

What is a 'Unified Communications' strategy?

Recent challenges have led to the rapid growth of the Unified Communications market. But what exactly does this mean?

For most organisations, the ability to communicate effectively is central to their ability to perform effectively, and this is no different for schools.

In the past, this may have meant they required a basic phone system, and email. But over time we have seen the proliferation of channels or features required to stay up to date.

The expectation of parents for teachers to be immediately available, and more flexible, and of faculty members to be able to collaborate more easily colleagues has seen the rise of channels including voice and video meetings, instant messaging, and file sharing as a requirement to deliver on these expectations.

But actually, the very systems that are in theory designed to increase efficiency may add complexity, with time wasted switching between services, a lack of interoperability, and the added cost of running multiple solutions.

Unified Communications is the way in which organisations can overcome these issues, by utilising a single system for all of their channels.

These may include a mix of hardware and software, with the majority of leading services delivered as cloud-based applications that use internet connectivity to deliver voice, video, and messaging on computers, mobile devices, and desk phones.



04 Introducing CallSwitch

CallSwitch is our marketing-leading Unified Communications platform, delivering a powerful suite of tools, features, and integrations that enable teaching staff and administrators to work from anywhere, on any device.

Bespoke features for education

CallSwitch enables teaching staff to connect and collaborate in the ways that work best for them, through voice, video, instant messaging, call recording, online meetings, screen sharing, and much more.

School staff can access CallSwitch through our dedicated Communicator applications, available as a desktop client (macOS and Windows) and mobile app (iOS and Android).

We also supply and support a wide range of desk phones where required, and our buying power with leading handset manufacturers means we can pass savings on to you.

Take back control

Our secure, web-based portal enables administrators to perform a range of management duties from anywhere. Add extensions for new teaching staff and build call groups to ensure urgent calls from students or parents are never missed.

Make configuration changes to your call routing during term time or holiday periods. Control your end-user features depending on roles and responsibilities. Maintain contact directories for students and teachers.

Access all these benefits and much more, centrally configured, deployed, and managed instantly.

05

Maximising efficiency for teaching staff

Access from anywhere

With mobile and desktop applications included, teachers can now access the powerful features of CallSwitch, whether in the classroom, around campus, or even while supervising school trips or sporting events.

With support for Windows and Apple desktop or laptop computers, mobile applications for iOS and Android devices, and features including telephony, voice and video conferencing, instant messaging, and file sharing, the flexibility is limitless.

Collaboration tools

Instant messaging with direct and group options, file-sharing capabilities, and customisable presence settings allow for easy collaboration between teaching staff, while our integration with Microsoft Teams offers remote learning capabilities.



Emergency paging

Enhance both student and teacher safety by being able to alert teaching or senior leadership staff in case of either a classroom emergency or school lockdown situation by paging all extensions simultaneously.



Advanced productivity features allow teaching staff to securely undertake their administrative activities from anywhere.



Enhanced voicemail

Accessible from desk phones or mobile Communicator applications, with email transcription included, schools will never miss parent or student communications again.



Audio conferencing

Teaching staff can create unlimited private virtual conference rooms with pin protection and unique external dial-ins for parent-teacher or staff calls.



Unified call recording

In rare instances where conflicts between teachers and students or parents occurs, call recording via CallSwitch allows for easy resolution and for training purposes.

06

Simple, cost-effective administration

Hardware options

CallSwitch is compatible with a wide range of handsets and conference devices from all leading hardware manufacturers, so we can match devices to the requirements of the various teams within a school, and ensure you only pay for the devices you need.



Intelligent functionality

IVRs and Auto-attendant features allow for seamless call routing, while call groups can be setup to ensure no student or parent call ever goes missed. Schools can even customise their on-hold messages to report closures or status updates.

Delivering cost savings

Our subscription-based model means you pay for access for the number of users required, without the Capex spend associated with traditional on-premises solutions that required upfront purchase and costly maintenance contracts

We don't believe in charging extra for features that should come as standard, so all features are included with our standard licences, with no additional line rental, and free calls between users on your network – even across multi-academy trusts.

We understand how important it is for school administrators to have reliable, effective, and easy-to-use systems in place, so they can focus on providing the best experience for students



Carrier-Grade Reliability

Our cloud-based platform offers industry-leading security, while our robust, high-bandwidth infrastructure allows us to offer a 99.99% availability within our standard service level agreements.



Online Management

Our secure, web-based portal enables you to perform administrative duties from anywhere. Add new users instantly or change call routing between term times or holidays and much more., without special training



Comprehensive support

Benefit from our UK based team, with devices arriving pre-configured, provisioning and number porting managed as part of our implementation process, and 24x7x365 support, so you can focus on running your school



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TelcoSwitch is a leading SaaS provider of UCaaS, CCaaS, and Compliance solutions, delivered through award-winning software platforms that enable teams to connect and collaborate in the ways that work best for them, through voice, video, chat, call recording, file sharing, and more, including advanced omnichannel customer experience solutions for contact centres.