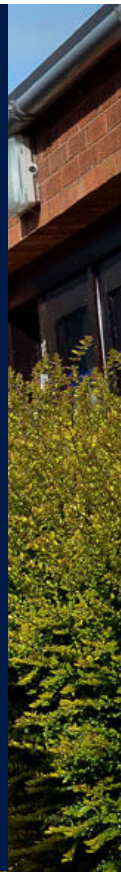
‘We couldn’t have done this without Sophos MDR’, says Bishop Heber High School

Bishop Heber High School is based in Malpas, Cheshire West. It is an 11-18 foundation school with around 1,300 students aged 11 to 18 years old, and a staff population of around 180. It has an enviable reputation for excellence both within its catchment area and far beyond, into East Cheshire, Shropshire, and North Wales.



CUSTOMER-AT-A-GLANCE

Bishop Heber High School

Industry
Education

Number of users
550 endpoints

Sophos Partner
Virtue Technologies

Managed Services
Sophos Managed Detection and Response (MDR)

Products
Network - Sophos Firewall
Endpoint - Sophos Intercept X

Sophos Customer
Since 2015

"The ransomware attack had a huge impact on our school across the board. Students and teachers couldn't access any work on their laptops or network. We had to take cash in the canteen, and had to communicate all of this with our email and phone system down. We needed support to get everything safely up and running again as soon as we possibly could. Sophos and our channel partner were fantastic in helping us achieve this."

Maura Nesbitt, Business Manager, Bishop Heber High School

In April 2023, Bishop Heber High School experienced a ransomware attack that caused severe disruption, impacting students, teachers, support staff and parents, and had a significant financial impact. The school's entire IT infrastructure was affected. Read on to find out how the school recovered, and how it is now protected 24/7/365 by Sophos MDR.

Business challenges

In April 2023, Bishop Heber High School faced an immense challenge following the discovery that a ransomware note had been placed on of the school's servers. The school was forced to shut down its entire IT infrastructure including 550 endpoints. This impacted IT services for staff, students, support staff and parents, in addition to the telephony, reprographics, printing, canteen payment systems, and access to all files and emails. While the school had been a Sophos customer for eight years, and prior to the ransomware attack had utilised some Sophos solutions, it had not implemented comprehensive security across some parts of its IT infrastructure.

Staff were forced to use alternative resources to be able to continue to teach students in school. The ransom attackers demanded a large sum, which doubled each day the school did not pay. Instead of paying the ransom, the school instead bore the cost of bringing in specialist engineers to get IT services safely and securely up and running again. They turned to Sophos partner Virtue Technologies for support with this.

The Technical Solution

The school made the decision to bring in Sophos partner Virtue Technologies' rapid response team to help restore the IT systems after the ransomware attack. The team carried out a 'Discovery' assessment to fully understand the size and scale of the attack. Based on these findings, the Virtue Technologies team took steps to isolate the threat, initiate the recovery process, and safeguard the school's IT infrastructure. The rapid response team provided a full recovery plan, including a

"After the ransomware attack, we really wanted the best protection we could find to prevent further attacks. The Sophos MDR service seemed like the obvious next-level solution for us. The support and protection the MDR team provide us is simply not something we could ever accomplish ourselves within both our budget and resource limitations."

David Curry, Headteacher, Bishop Heber High School

step-by-step recovery phase, which enabled the school's leaders to relay key information to staff and communicate with parents.

During this process, the school's leadership team took action to strengthen IT security to ensure this would not happen again. With the help of Virtue Technologies, they began looking for a solution to provide comprehensive monitoring of the school's IT systems around the clock. It was clear that the school's IT team of three staff would not have the capacity and expertise to monitor systems 24/7 or respond rapidly in the event of another threat. After considering various options with Virtue Technologies, they opted for Sophos Managed Detection and Response (MDR).

Sophos MDR was implemented at the school in September 2023. With Sophos MDR, the school's entire IT infrastructure is now monitored by Sophos' team of threat hunters and incident response experts, who take rapid action in the event of a threat. The school's IT team also now has access to the Sophos team of experts for guidance and support.

According to Paul Roby, Head of Projects at Virtue Technologies: "We had to interrogate and shut down the entire system to ensure the cyber criminals were locked out. We then introduced a 360 degree suite of solutions from Sophos, which was Intercept X on all endpoints and servers, and Sophos MDR. With these in place we could then enable IPS and ATP on firewalls, while data was put onto a separate network and tested to ensure it was safe before it was brought back onto the school's network."

Business Benefits

Since implementing Sophos MDR, the school experiences significant benefits from the service. Maura Nesbitt, Business Manager at the school, highlights three standout benefits. "We've benefitted in three key areas, since implementing Sophos MDR. Firstly, we have peace of mind that we're protected from another attack at any time. Secondly, it's the most cost-effective solution to meet our needs. And thirdly, it's noticeable that it's taken a lot of stress away from our IT team and they can now focus on their day-to-day tasks" stress x 2 here.

Maura and the team at Bishop Heber High School list additional key benefits from Sophos MDR and working with Virtue Technologies as being:

- 24/7 protection and round the clock monitoring, managed detection, and response
- Peace of mind that all people and systems are protected
- Confidence that the school will not encounter the disruption and expense of another cyberattack
- Excellent guidance and support from both Sophos and Virtue Technologies
- An easy transition into the service from the existing Sophos solutions the school was using
- Less stress for the IT team and more time available to carry out daily work

"I would highly recommend Sophos to any school looking to strengthen the security of their IT systems," says Maura. "Since the ransomware event we experienced, the Sophos team and Virtue Technologies have been on a journey with us, providing support and guidance the whole time. We know we've got 24/7 protection now across our entire IT system. We couldn't have done this without them."

To find out more about Sophos solutions, visit Sophos.com

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