



**Co-op Academy
Walkden's ambitious use
of technology to drive
teaching and learning
relies on robust and
reliable connectivity and
cloud-based services
from RM Education**

Background

Co-op Academy Walkden is part of the Co-op Academies Trust (CAT), situated in Worsley, Manchester. It's a mixed secondary school with over 1300 pupils. They are always looking at ways in which they can develop or improve how they are using technology and work more closely with teachers, students and parents. The school recognised their students are living in a 24 hour digital society and wanted to ensure the school's digital journey would engage and motivate them.

The Vision

Their goal was to use technology to enable the relationship between student and teacher to become stronger, and to engage children in their learning by connecting them to the outside world from the classroom. They also wanted to be more closely involved with parents, providing greater visibility of what was happening in school so they could better support the work of the school at home. The IT team wanted to move from simply looking after an IT system to developing technology in teaching and learning in the school.

The Challenge

Co-op Academy Walkden recognised that successful implementation of new technology had to be done with the right training to support teachers, and the right platforms, software and connectivity to enable them to access work and resources whenever and wherever they needed to in order to help them manage workloads. If done in the right way, it could reduce the need for expensive server and storage infrastructure, reduce the need for support and allow closer collaborative working between teacher and student. Robust and reliable internet connectivity would also open up new online resources to the school, such as digital books, which could save both time and money. They wanted to avoid having software on site and make use of the vast range of software and resources available online from third party providers quickly and easily.

The Solution

Co-op Academy Walkden implemented a new scheme for Year 7, 8 and 9 where every pupil has their own Chromebook in class, accessing a Google-based cloud system. It was important that every member of staff knew they could rely on solid, robust, Wi-Fi infrastructure. Co-op Academy Walkden chose to work with RM because they wanted to have access to RM's vast expertise. Having worked with RM on previous projects they knew they were a partner they could trust who would offer great support.

They make extensive use of cloud technology, RM Connectivity Services and also RM Unify Premium and RM SafeyNet User Based Filtering. Students have the same classroom set up and resources at home in the evenings as they have during lesson times. They use RM Buzz to offer school-based web filtering to all 1:1 Chromebook devices, so students have the same level of filtering and security no matter where they are using them.

The Results and Benefits

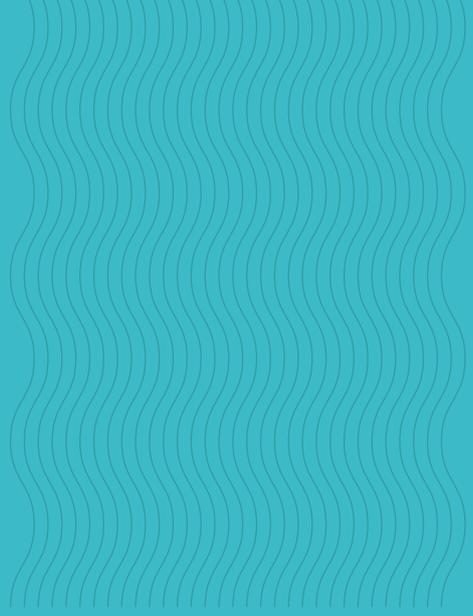
Zaheer Mirza, Strategic IT and Service Director at Co-op Academy Walkden, says 'We're already seeing remarkable improvements to teaching and learning in class, and to teacher well-being outside of class. This is the result of years of planning and strategic thinking and could only be achieved through the dramatically improved internet connectivity service we've achieved through RM.'

'Children are becoming more involved and more confident of their learning, because they are engaged with the real world outside, and have direct dialogue with their teachers who can provide personalised learning to their needs.'

There have also been benefits for teachers, who can better manage their time in and outside school, and for the IT team who can manage the system remotely.

The school have also seen a significant reduction in the amount they're printing, and the use of digital books has delivered financial savings. The amount of technical support the school needs has also been dramatically reduced, as has the need for expensive infrastructure due to the ongoing journey to implement cloud-based services.

It has taken time and planning, and Zaheer recognises that the journey doesn't happen overnight. But he believes everyone could and should be on that path. His advice for any school considering it – 'make sure you use a trusted partner like RM when you set off.'



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