

Wakefield Grammar School Foundation

Sector:



Education (Independent)

Products:



Meraki MR Wireless LAN



MS Centralised cloud Management

Services:

POC demo, WiFi survey, configuration, installation and support.

Highlights:

- Wakefield Grammar School Foundation is a family of independent day schools with 2,000 + students and 500 staff.
- The schools aging Aerohive WiFi had come to the end of its life and needed replacing.
- The Foundation chose Redway Networks for its new wireless solution as it wanted to work with a company who shared its similar drive and passion.
- Redway Networks recommended Cisco Meraki as it matched the Foundation's digital curriculum goals for supporting its 1:1 learning programme.
- Redway delivered a seamless migration from Aerohive to Meraki's future proofed network.
- The Foundation now has the model in place to enable every student to benefit from a personalised, digital learning experience.



Wakefield Grammar School Foundation

Wakefield Grammar School Foundation improves the student experience with high-performance WiFi from Redway Networks

Wakefield Grammar School Foundation has improved the student and staff experience across its family of schools with a new high-performance wireless solution from Redway Networks.

The Foundation's campus of three schools has over 2,000 students, multiple buildings, and hundreds of connecting devices, so this large IT network needs to be reliable, secure, and easy to manage. Whilst the Foundation's existing Aerohive wireless solution had served it well over many years, it had come to the end of its life and needed replacing. After a thorough evaluation of wireless vendors and products, the Foundation chose a new Cisco Meraki cloud-networking solution from Redway Networks to future proof the network and provide a robust, secure channel for accessing online educational information.

Wakefield Grammar School Foundation is a family of three independent day schools that include Wakefield Grammar Pre-Preparatory School, Wakefield Girls' High School, and Queen Elizabeth Grammar School for Boys. Its first-class academic results are testimony to the dedication of its excellent staff and enviable facilities.

To keep pace with ICT and facilitate the delivery of online educational content through the Foundation's 1:1 learning model, reliable wireless connectivity is essential.



Wakefield Grammar School Foundation selects Meraki

Redway Networks recommended Meraki as it would provide centralised, remote management capabilities as well as the robust technology required to support the Foundation's 1:1 programme. Redway Networks then conducted a proof-of-concept (POC) to demonstrate how Meraki would perform and show the simplicity of its browser-based interface. Simon says: "The POC was very successful, and we were really impressed with how Meraki's single pane of glass provides full visibility and easy management of the network, which is vital as we add more devices".

Redway's engineer then surveyed the original network design and identified a few areas where the WiFi was under-performing and suggested tweaks to improve coverage and capacity such as reducing the amount of legacy access points from 280 to 250. Redway then installed the Meraki MR44 and MR36 access points and configured the Systems Manager dashboard. The network was then validated using Ekahau's heatmapping software to confirm there was complete coverage everywhere on campus and Redway Networks delivered a seamless migration from Aerohive to Cisco Meraki.

Simon says: "Our campus is large with a unique layout and multiple buildings that include modern facilities, listed buildings (with thick walls) and a high-capacity theatre, so the WiFi survey was quite a challenge from an estates point of view. However, Redway's engineer handled it easily and I was very impressed. We were happy to take his advice on reducing the number of access points by 30 and with Meraki's 10 YR for the price of 5 YR licensing promotion, we've got a future-proofed network with a low total cost of ownership. Redway Networks are here for us if we need support, and we have the additional backing of a powerhouse like Cisco Meraki behind us".

Aerohive needs replacing

The Foundation's legacy Aerohive solution did not provide the visibility or flexibility it required and needed replacing with the latest WiFi technology that would deliver superior wireless performance with remote management capabilities.

The Foundation has separate network access for its own devices, BYOD and guests, so the new WiFi had to be robust and secure, whilst delivering continuous access to the Internet.

Simon Cunningham, Infrastructure and Security Manager at Wakefield Grammar School Foundation says: "We're a tech-savvy IT team who wanted to work with a network company who shared a similar drive and passion to us. We spoke to several companies about our requirements but seemed to hit brick walls with their lack of technical understanding. We considered HPE Aruba and Sophos, but the products didn't fit with our digital curriculum goals, so we looked at Cisco Meraki as I had worked with Meraki before and was knowledgeable on its product portfolio. We then set out to find a Meraki partner who matched our brief, and we were recommended to Redway Networks. After two minutes on the phone with its engineer I knew instantly that Redway was the company I wanted to work with. We then had a technical conversation about what we wanted to achieve, which was valuable as Redway offered a real insight into the future including areas we hadn't even considered."

The Foundation meets its digital curriculum goals

Wakefield Grammar School Foundation now has a superior wireless network with a model in place to enable every student to benefit from a personalised, digital learning experience.

Simon says: "We've seen lots of IT benefits as all our information is now in one centralised cloud managed dashboard with click and point granularity, so searching for top applications, users or devices is easy. Before Meraki we had to export all this information into Excel then filter the data to find the answers, but now this visibility is quick and easy".

Simon continues: "Network security has also improved as Meraki's WiFi 6 technology delivers high levels of encryption with patches and updates implemented regularly."

"Our main goal around the WiFi was to support our 1:1 learning programme and access to the digital curriculum and Meraki has delivered the network reliability and performance

we required. Meraki has also given us a lot more control and functionality as each SSID has its own rules set up to ensure that teachers and students have access to the resources they need. We can see exactly who is accessing the network, what they are doing online and what experiences they are having in a clear format."

"We now have a future-proofed network that is very capable from a capacity point of view and won't ever hit a limit as we add new devices. Meraki is light years ahead of our Internet connection so if we ever increase our bandwidth, we know we won't have to do anything with the WiFi."

"Redway Networks was fantastic to work with. I found its engineers very knowledgeable and our move to Meraki was seamless."