

How **Larkmead School** transitioned to a true digital workplace solution



 **Workspace365**
Everything simplified

LARKMEAD
School 

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Over the Easter break of 2021, Larkmead School transitioned from their old IT system to a modern digital workplace with Workspace 365. We spoke to Peter Beasley, Senior ICT & Network Manager, about their experiences during the rollout and implementation, and with working with the adaptive digital workplace so far.

With 5 or 6 buildings and 150 staff members, Larkmead School provides education to approximately 1,000 students in Abingdon, Oxfordshire. They are part of the Vale Academy Trust, which comprises a total of eight church and community schools.

From platform to true digital workplace

Last year, Larkmead was already planning on taking a big push to the cloud – a huge project. This meant moving away from the platform they were using before: RM Unify, and migrating to Office 365. To complete their digital workplace, they compared 3 providers with similar specs and designs, and Workspace 365 came out on top.



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Uniting document and application access

It was key to offer students and staff one place to go to, that would take them wherever they needed. Therefore, document and application access were two of the most important elements the digital workplace had to contain.

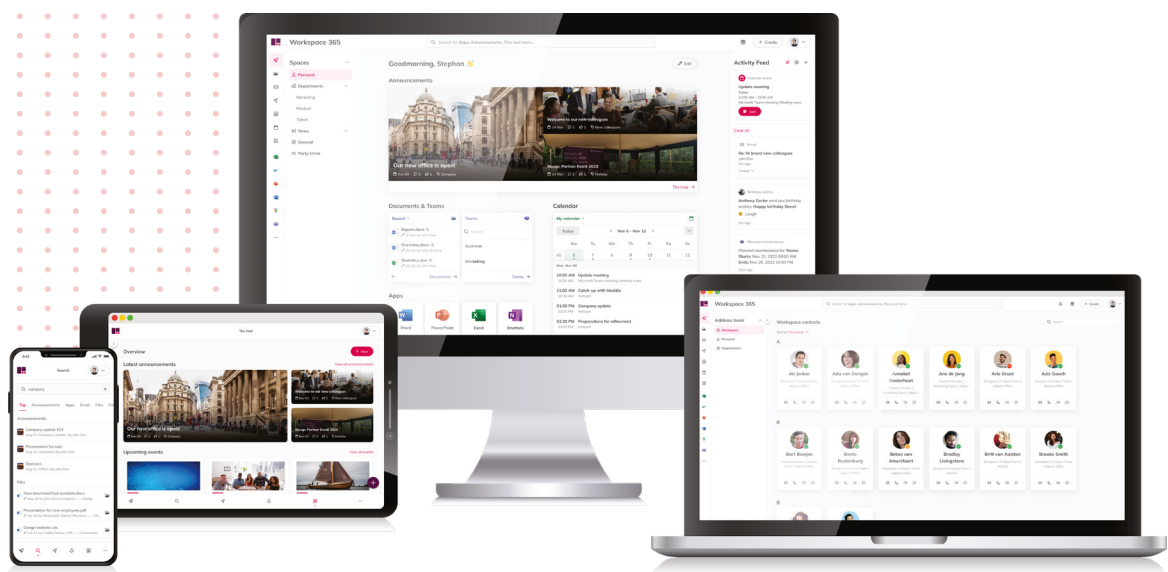
This means that the adaptive digital workplace had to include links to apps and tools, so staff and students could move around, and they needed to quickly be able to find whatever they needed.

Simplifying Office 365 and Microsoft 365

Using just Office 365 as a landing page has been considered, Peter Beasley says. But over the last six months it became apparent that using a layer on top of Office 365 is actually exactly what they needed.

According to Peter, the use and integration of Office 365 elements is one of the beauties of Workspace 365; having them embedded and having OneDrive and SharePoint functionalities available in one simple interface.

“They (the end users, ed.) don’t necessarily know what OneDrive or SharePoint is, they’ll go to their workplace.”



A phased rollout during a pandemic

Larkmead School was already working on their cloud transition previous to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it sure did affect the process. Peter, who was the project lead, told us about it.

Launching the digital workplace step by step

With the implementation and rollout, besides Peter, a colleague from the IT team was involved, the senior leadership team, the school Business Manager, and various other stakeholders across the school.

Implementing the digital workplace was part of a wider project, where they changed basically everything on the domain. To make sure the transition went smoothly, they started small with one or two users, and then rolled it out slowly to the wider population of staff and students.

They choose to do it this way, largely because the project was so big – and they wanted to make sure they got it right. So far, Peter feels that the investment is rewarded.

“We didn’t want to just throw something out there that’s completely different and then the project not become a success.”

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COVID-19 as a boost for digital use

The global pandemic did not negatively impact the transition process. In fact, if anything, it may have propelled the project forward and actually helped with the use and adoption of the adaptive digital workplace.

With more education taking place online and remotely, students were looking for a digital workplace to access the application and information they needed to get to.



Constantly evolving to create the optimal digital workplace

Since day one, Larkmead School has had to add a lot to their digital workplace, and they keep improving it.

Getting to know all the possibilities

Due to the many functionalities and possibilities Workspace 365 has to offer, it did take students and staff some getting used to. However, they very quickly embraced the change, and it's been well-received.

"I think we can comfortably say it's been a success, considering we are using it every single day."

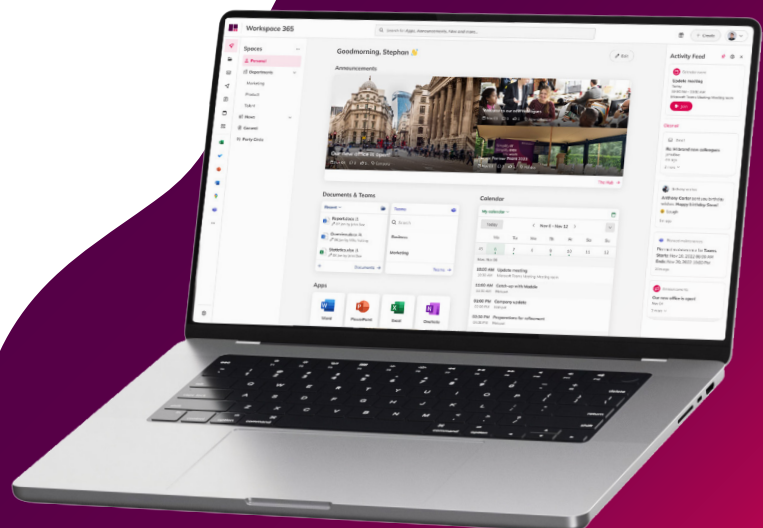
Going forward, they want to continue to embed as much as they can into the digital workplace, and use it even more.

The next steps for Larkmead School

There are a lot of potential next steps to take, Peter thinks, and the opportunities it offers for them as a Trust are massive.

"From a Trust perspective it might be something we'd look to build upon and add across multiple schools within the Trust. To enhance the collaboration opportunities that are around now and merge into one central tendency."

Key to making sure the next steps are successful, whatever they may be, is taking them at the right speed, at the right time.





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