

Archway School Case Study

• Archway School

Archway is a comprehensive school in Stroud, Gloucestershire, with approximately 1,200 students aged between 11 and 18 years old. Academic achievement, innovation, creativity and care are hallmarks of Archway: students exhibit high standards in their work, behaviour and play. Archway School's aim is to offer quality and breadth in its teaching and learning, underpinned by individual care.

• The Need for Greater Performance

For many years Archway had been running an Infortrend EonNAS on SATA disks, but as the number of networked devices and users increased, it had started to exhibit performance bottlenecks. The storage performance simply wasn't coping with the IOPS that were being asked of it, and it didn't have any real analytics that monitored performance, latency or IOPS.

Archway were also experiencing problems with their SQL databases and the amount of time it was taking to run reports. Archway use a program called SIMS to manage all of their school data. It's a large database containing information such as student data, lessons, monitoring, exam results, registration data, parent's addresses, details on what the students and staff are doing and staff employment information throughout the school. It could often take several minutes to run a report which staff were finding frustrating and unacceptable.

• A Hybrid Solution

Archway knew they had to find a better storage solution and initially started talking to Dell, EMC and HP, before visiting Cristie Data's offices for an introduction to Nimble. Archway had previously partnered with Cristie for a data backup solution and knew them well. All suppliers were sent details of Archway's IOPS data from their existing Eon and the



Challenges

- Storage performance not coping with IOPS
- Time consuming to run reports, often up to 2-3 minutes
- No real analytics on latency or IOPS

Solution

- Nimble CS215 with InfoSight

Benefits

- Flexibility of a hybrid solution
- Improvement in log on times of 20-30 seconds per computer
- Reduction in time taken to run reports, from 2-3 minutes to 10-15 seconds
- In-depth reporting capabilities on current performance and capacity with predictive analytics
- Experience zero issues with storage writes or latency



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Storage / Virtualisation
Backup / Recovery / Protection



Nimble responded favourably.

Archway really liked the Nimble because it was a hybrid solution, using flash storage and disk drives to give both the performance and capacity they needed, so they decided to go with Cristie's recommendation. "With Nimble we also got InfoSight," explained James Moth, Senior IT Technician at Archway School. "It gives us an in-depth analysis of what performance is like and what the storage capacity is like, as well as predictive analysis of what our data usage is going to be in X amount of weeks - we've never had anything like that before and it's fantastic."

• Significant Increase in Performance

With the Nimble system, Archway have seen reduced latency and significantly higher IOPS than they had before, as a result user log on times have dramatically improved. Archway keep all their file storage on the Nimble system and use folder redirection for all of their student's directories. "Log on times have improved by 20-30 seconds per computer, which has made a big difference to lessons as students can access their information much faster," commented Moth. "Technology plays a big part in our school and everyone relies on that technology. If students are moving between lessons 6 times a day, they need to be able to log on quickly. Any time that is wasted is time that could be spent learning. The quicker our storage solution can cope with students saving their work at the end of a lesson, or logging on and coping with folder redirection, the better."

When it comes to running large reports from SIMS, times have significantly decreased from 2-3 minutes to 10-15 seconds maximum. In fact, all Archway's SQL-dependant applications have become far more responsive since their virtual machines were migrated to the Nimble.

"I would definitely recommend the Nimble," concluded Moth. "Before we were having intermittent network issues which all suggested storage issues. We would regularly see large latency spikes in VMware as big write jobs were processed, and our terminal servers were struggling to cope with the load on user logins. Since putting in the Nimble we've had zero issues with storage writes or latency. We haven't had to contact support once - it is so reliable. I knew we could trust Cristie to recommend the best solution for our requirements and they most definitely have."

"Our customers have seen really positive results from Nimble Storage," commented Peter Bennett, Business Development Manager at Cristie Data. "Archway love InfoSight which lets them know exactly what's going on, and the reliability of the Nimble is second to none. It's a really good product, and we knew that it would be the perfect fit for Archway."

• About Nimble Storage

Nimble's flash storage solutions enable the consolidation of all workloads and eliminate storage silos by providing enterprises with significant improvements in application performance and storage capacity. At the same time, Nimble delivers superior data protection, while simplifying business operations and lowering costs. More than 9,000 enterprises, governments, and service providers have deployed Nimble's flash storage solutions across more than 50 countries. www.arcserve.com

• About Cristie Data

Cristie Data have been IT infrastructure and data management specialists for over 40 years. We take a consultative and platform agnostic approach to any customer project and advise on solutions that are best aligned to your businesses. www.cristie.co.uk