

*Low-cost computing for education*

# Branksome Heath Middle School empowers pupil ICT learning on a tight budget

## **Challenge**

*Replace old PCs to enable new software applications on a limited budget.*

## **Solution**

*Deploy 21 U170 NComputing access devices and 4 PCs to create 35 pupil stations.*

## **Impact**

*Acquisition costs reduced by £1000; realized a savings of £400 per year in PC power savings; reduced demand on IT support; and eliminated heat and space problems in classrooms.*

## **Partner**

*Academia, a UK NComputing partner that supplies software and licensing, hardware and training solutions to UK academic institutions and charitable organisations, assisted Branksome Heath with their installation.*

**academia**  
 IT solutions for the next generation

Established in 1971, Branksome Heath Middle School is a middle deemed primary school located in Parkstone in Poole, Dorset with approximately 500 pupils. Branksome Heath recognized that information technology plays a central role in today's economy, and sought to empower their pupils with computer skills to drive improvements in pupil achievement and preparation for career training.



*A classroom at Branksome Heath Middle School with 21 U170 NComputing access devices running on 4 PCs, creating 35 pupil stations.*

## **Obsolete PCs are not the right fit**

As the virtual learning environment at Branksome Heath began to take shape, there was significant demand from teachers and faculty requesting additional workstations to increase the computer-to-pupil ratio. Classrooms were equipped with out-dated, standalone towers that occupied most of the limited desk space available and hindered pupil learning. The software was also obsolete. Simple tasks such as logging on took 5 minutes or more and opening programs such as web browsers took over 30 seconds. It became crucial and time sensitive for Branksome Heath to find a way to upgrade their existing computer architecture.

## **Budget-friendly upgrade**

Looking for solutions that were cost effective, the IT department reviewed and compared various products. They were looking for a product that would be eco-friendly, reliable, and simple to install and manage, while still affordable with their limited budget. They assessed Microsoft's Remote Desktop Services and a number of virtualization technologies, but found that many solutions required several costly third-party hardware components.

“When it comes time to replace in 3 years, we don’t have to buy 35 new PCs, just 4, leading to additional savings of £4000-5000”

MR THOMAS CATHERINE  
ICT TECHNICIAN  
BRANKSOME HEATH MIDDLE SCHOOL

## Confident in the NComputing solution

Branksome Heath discovered NComputing at Edugeek.net, a forum for school IT professionals. Branksome Heath chose the NComputing solution for its unified protocol, software, and hardware platform. NComputing’s express Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) deployments are simple, fast, and affordable. No additional VDI infrastructure is required and virtual desktops can be rapidly deployed without taking on significant investment and project risk. For their initial deployment, the school turned to Academia, a UK-based NComputing reseller, to purchase 21 NComputing U170 access devices, 4PCs, and a variety of new school applications to create new 35 pupil stations.

The NComputing solution works because today’s PCs are so powerful that the vast majority of applications only use a small fraction of the computer’s capacity. NComputing’s hardware and vSpace™ virtualisation software tap into this unused capacity so that it can be simultaneously shared by multiple pupils. Each pupil’s monitor, keyboard, and mouse connect to the shared PC through a small and very durable NComputing access device. The access device itself has no CPU, memory, or moving parts—so it’s rugged, reliable, and easy to deploy and maintain.

NComputing U170 combines simple and affordable desktop computing with plug-and-play simplicity. Connecting this access device to the shared computer couldn’t be easier; it just plugs in with the included USB cable. For those who don’t have enough power outlets at their desktop and want to eliminate cable clutter, the U170 get its power through the USB data cable. Each access device uses only 1 watt of electricity, compared to 110 for a standalone PC, making NComputing the greenest solution on earth. By utilizing the full power of the processor and sharing it among multiple users, the solution remains affordable while acting responsibly and sustainably. Reducing the amount of electricity that is consumed by the PCs and monitors considerably reduces the heat and noise in the lab, keeping the room cool without the need for additional air conditioning.

Since the deployment of the NComputing express VDI solution, Branksome Heath Middle School has saved £1000 in acquisition costs and £400 per year in PC power savings. Thomas Catherine, ICT Technician explained, “When it comes time to replace in 3 years, we don’t have to buy 35 new PCs, just 4, leading to additional savings of £4000-5000.” Future disposal costs and e-waste materials will also be reduced by an additional 12 per cent due to the reductions in towers being used. The solution has also brought significant benefits to the school in terms of time and labour. As Mr Catherine explained, “It has made our information and communication technologies (ICT), systems easier to manage which saves time and maintenance, major goals of any new IT system.”

## Setting a path to a better future

The success of NComputing solution has given Branksome Heath Middle School the confidence to deploy access devices in more classrooms and learning areas. In 2012, the school plans to extend NComputing virtual desktops to additional classrooms on a smaller scale, with 1-8 pupil stations per classroom. This decentralized theme of ICT is strongly supported by the government, which is moving away from dedicated suites and rooms to give pupils more access to ICT resources for cross-curricular study during normal lessons in their classrooms. Mr Catherine explains, “The NComputing solution is perfect for these deployments as they require less space and cabling can be reduced.”

