



SUCCESS STORY  
**Education**



**CHAT ACADEMIES | PROBLEM SOLVED**

NetApp FAS2552 hybrid flash storage system helps unite five schools within the CHAT Academies into a single IT infrastructure.

## NetApp FAS2552 hybrid flash underpin digital transformation

CHAT Academies needed to consolidate four data centres into one to address legacy infrastructure issues that hampered teachers from carrying out their work and created a range of problems for its virtual desktop infrastructure. By turning to the NetApp FAS2552 hybrid flash storage system, CHAT Academies successfully addressed the legacy system issues and laid the foundation for digital transformation.

Another NetApp solution delivered by:



### LEARNING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

CHAT Academies runs five schools in North London, educating approximately 2,200 students. It was formed in 2010 by bringing together primary schools Cuckoo Hall, Woodpecker Hall, Kingfisher Hall and Enfield Heights. Several years later, Heron Hall, a secondary school, was opened and also came within the fold. Collectively, the schools are known as CHAT Academies.

The overarching strategic objective of CHAT Academies is to provide outstanding education and

life-changing opportunities for its children, and to be recognised for delivering academic excellence whilst developing a reputation for providing pupils with the skills and knowledge required to be successful in life. CHAT Academies' CEO, Marino Charalambous, places a strategic onus on the trust being geared up for expansion and growth by having the right skills and expertise in place to drive the schools forward.



“We now have a foundation for the business, enabling the academy to drive forward its goals of ensuring academic excellence and equipping students with the educational tools they need to succeed in life. Teachers and admin staff are no longer restricted by boundaries which in turn is benefiting students; all are gaining from greater flexibility.”

Manish Chandaria  
CIO, CHAT Academies

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## CHALLENGE

### Digital transformation to drive educational objectives

Because CHAT Academies previously consisted of separate schools it had four distinct data centres and a small IT team that was overstretched.

Manish Chandaria was appointed as CIO and recognised the need for sweeping consolidation to underpin a digital transformation. He said: “CHAT Academies has an ambitious strategic goal to help children in the area become the best they can be. Clearly, there are many factors that contribute to this and one of them is an IT platform that helps enables these goals.

“However, the problem we faced was essentially a different infrastructure for each of the schools. The IT team was constantly addressing issues such as teachers unable to access different applications from different locations, or simply being unable to connect to the school’s infrastructure.”

The first step was to consolidate four existing data centres into one and improve the operations of a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) so teachers and admin staff could access relevant applications from any school and also from home instantly.

However, to facilitate this the academy needed an underlying storage platform. Manish Chandaria said: “Our legacy platform would break down quite often which, as you can imagine, created problems for staff who couldn’t access important teaching materials.”

As a result, the Trust chose to consolidate its four data centres into one by using the NetApp FAS2552 hybrid flash storage system as the underpinning storage foundation. This platform provides both blisteringly fast start up speeds for the VDI infrastructure, significant scale-up potential as the academy grows and expands and fast, reliable performance for its business and educational applications.

## BENEFITS

### Enabling teaching, helping drive up standards

Many of the teachers within CHAT Academies work between the different schools and also remotely from home. Being able to access applications and educational websites is critical to their ability to teach, set lessons, research homework topics and provide guidance for pupils. The single consolidated data centre underpinned by NetApp FAS2500 now makes this easy and effortless, increasing staff morale and providing the impetus to deliver high quality teaching.

Manish Chandaria said that prior to using the FAS2500 staff often had difficulty in using the VDI, it was slow and sometimes wouldn’t work when trying to access it from another location. “Today, staff are benefitting from education without walls. It makes the work of the Trust easier and the teachers and admin staff have instant access to their everyday work tools,” he said.

“A user survey revealed satisfaction levels were close to 85% compared to 30 to 40% previously. Clearly, satisfied end users means improved morale and better performance which of course is central to delivering top quality education.”

Manish Chandaria  
CIO, CHAT Academies

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## BENEFITS

### Aligning IT with business

The introduction of NetApp FAS2552 and consolidation into one data centre has essentially created a situation where IT now supports, aligns and helps drive business objectives. Previously, the IT was actually undermining business goals.

“We now have a foundation for the business, enabling the Trust to drive forward its goals of ensuring academic excellence and equipping students with the educational tools they need to succeed in life. Teachers and admin staff are no longer restricted by boundaries which in turn is benefiting students; all are gaining from greater flexibility,” added Manish Chandaria.

### Improved staff morale, better performance

The Trust’s legacy infrastructure was forever causing problems and undermining the ability of staff to carry out their work. In turn, this was impacting on staff morale and certainly made many less than keen to use the VDI terminals, which in the long term threatened to undermine the Academy’s objectives.

“Support was a problem,” said Saud Aslam from the academy’s IT partner Datatronix: “but since the infrastructure consolidation and the introduction of the FAS2552, calls to the support desk have plunged by about 70 per cent.”

Manish Chandaria added: “A user survey revealed satisfaction levels were close to 85 per cent compared to 40 per cent previously. Clearly, satisfied end users means improved morale and better performance which of course is central to delivering top quality education.”

### Investment in digital transformation

The next step for CHAT Academies is the creation of a disaster recovery platform using NetApp FAS2552. Manish Chandaria explained: “CHAT Academies is driving a digital transformation in education to create an organisation that is suited to the 21st century and one that works hard for its students. There are many components to this and one of these is a disaster recovery platform.

“The NetApp hybrid flash platform has shown just how important it is in helping underpin the school’s digital transformation drive and as result we’re also going to use it to create a disaster recovery platform. It also dovetails with our future strategy to make use of the cloud when appropriate as we help the academy meet its objectives.”

### Importance of partnership

CHAT Academies’ IT partner Datatronix was integral to the successful infrastructure consolidation. Datatronix helped implement an auto support feature in which issues are identified and managed proactively. It was also instrumental in helping the infrastructure consolidation project be completed within 12 months as opposed to an initial provisional estimate of between 24 and 36 months.

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Saud Aslam,  
Director, Datatronix

## BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Helps drive digital transformation of CHAT Academies' schools to position them as 21st century places of learning
- Underpins strategic objectives of delivering high quality education and equipping students with important academic and life skills
- Delivers lightning fast access to VDI terminals from multiple locations ensuring teachers and staff can drive the academy's education forward

## SOLUTION COMPONENTS

### NETAPP PRODUCTS

NetApp FAS2552 HF

### PARTNER

CHAT Academies

[www.datatronix.com](http://www.datatronix.com)

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