

Data#3



Banksia Montessori School Powers Collaboration with Microsoft 365 Mail Migration

A Data#3 Customer Story

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ABOUT BANKSIA

Banksia Montessori School, situated in Perth's Northern suburbs, is known for its nurturing environment. Providing a quality-driven Montessori program for three to six-year-olds is the primary focus of the school's small, dedicated group of staff.



OBJECTIVE

Staff at the Banksia Montessori School had a very limited ability to share files, which meant that they often doubled up on work. The school wanted to improve productivity and collaboration with a planned move to Microsoft 365, and required an experienced partner to help with the transition.



FUN FACT

By **2023**, organisations that promote data sharing will outperform their peers on most business value metrics.

Gartner (2020) Data Sharing Is a Business Necessity to Accelerate Digital Business
[Online] <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/data-sharing-is-a-business-necessity-to-accelerate-digital-business/>



COMMENTS

Data#3 gave us a lot of extra support that wasn't a part of the deal. We have minimal IT knowledge, and planning to move our data was overwhelming, but we couldn't have asked for anything to go smoother.

Christine Tng, Finance Officer,
Banksia Montessori School



APPROACH

With no IT staff within the small school's personnel, the school did not have the bandwidth or tech expertise to undertake the transition in-house. Banksia decided to take advantage of the Microsoft Enrolment for Education Solutions licensing program, and used Data#3's professional services to ensure the process went smoothly.



BENEFITS

- Mail and data migrated safely without data loss
- Secure access to email and documents enabled from any connected device
- School documents are better secured
- Staff can collaborate on documents and send emails from anywhere
- Unnecessary administration efforts eliminated
- Costs of IT are better managed



TECHNOLOGY

- ✓ Microsoft 365 Licensing
- ✓ Microsoft Mail Migration
- ✓ Data#3 Professional Services



The Background

Banksia Montessori School, situated in Perth's Northern suburbs, is known for its nurturing environment. Providing a quality-driven Montessori program for three to six-year-olds is the primary focus of the school's small, dedicated group of staff.

As a small school, there is no IT support on-site for Banksia's technology requirements. For a period of time, the school's staff depended on Google Drive for document storage, and used Gmail for communications. This limited collaboration impacted productivity, with staff unable to access the most up to date documents. School administrators feared data loss if they were to migrate to a more appropriate option for Banksia's long-term needs.

The Challenge

In a busy, small school environment, teamwork is vital. At Banksia Montessori School, the group of teaching, administration and management staff had grown over time. The Google platform utilisation that had begun as a quick, easy technology solution for one person became increasingly problematic.

"We had no IT staff in the school at all, so we found ourselves just doing what our predecessors had done. We inherited a system that wasn't designed for collaborating the way we needed to," said Banksia Finance Officer Christine Tng.

"I would have my files and emails, and our admin staff had hers, but we couldn't share. That meant we often had multiple copies of documents, and sometimes the version I was working on was not the right one."

Aside from becoming increasingly frustrating, the situation affected productivity, especially where the workload of part-time staff overlapped.

The school soon realised that retaining the existing solution was more expensive than a more suitable, modern option. Working closely with Data#3's team of education specialists, the school was able to join an Enrolment for Education Solutions licensing program to access the Microsoft 365 A3 service.

"We realised that we were paying quite a bit for our existing solution, it was more expensive per month, and it just didn't offer us the collaboration tools we needed," outlined Tng.

With no way to collaborate on documents, staff often needed to redo previously completed work, significantly impacting staff productivity and morale.

However, without in-house IT support the prospect of change was daunting. Given the strict data retention requirements in place for schools, Tng's main fear was data loss.

"Without expert help, I had a real fear of losing everything. Schools are covered by statutory regulations that mean we must keep everything for a specified minimum period. If we lost any data and we were then audited, we can't just say 'the dog ate my homework' or 'a virus ate my hard drive'. The threat of losing data was always in the back of my mind," commented Tng.

IT Outcome

Tng reached out to Data#3 for information about how Banksia Montessori School could join an Education Solutions licensing program. She was soon convinced, based on the potential to improve the school's overall efficiency.

"Once we understood more about exactly what the whole Microsoft 365 package included, it was a no-brainer for us."

A key part of that decision was the availability of Data#3's specialist Microsoft Services team within a broader professional services group. As Microsoft's largest partner in the Pacific region, and combined with over 25 years' experience in the Education sector, Data#3 was able to align the Banksia Montessori Schools' ICT strategy with their learning goals to support a modern learning environment. Knowing that the school could hand over the task of migrating data to experienced, certified experts gave Tng the confidence to proceed with the critically required upgrade.

"As soon as the Data#3 Account Executive offered us support to move, that was the biggest thing. Our response was, 'please help us!', and they did. Knowing that we had no IT support, they were very patient with us, very helpful," described Tng.

After an initial needs assessment, Data#3 engineers performed mailbox migrations and cutover for the Banksia Montessori School staff.

They safely downloaded 28 Gigabytes of data from Google Drive, and moved it into the school's Microsoft 365 drive for shared access. User details were modified so that they could use edu.au sign-in details and email addresses. Because Microsoft 365 is cloud-based, there are no servers for the school to manage, and support needs are low, making it ideal for the small Banksia Montessori School team. The licences also include a range of security and data protection features that keep confidential organisational information safe and secure.

Once the migration was completed, members of the Data#3 team held a workshop to take the Banksia staff through the use of One Drive, Outlook, and other Microsoft 365 tools, so that they could confidently share files and collaborate on day-to-day activities. Further to the core project requirements, Data#3's Microsoft Services team even lent a hand when the school found that another organisation had already registered a domain in its name.

"The attitude from the engineers was that they were there to answer questions, and they checked in with us in the days that followed, to see if we needed anything," said Tng.

"Everyone was very professional, and very understanding – we are not IT people, but none of our questions were treated as silly."

Business Outcome

While making a change in the workplace can be daunting, the right help makes all the difference. For Banksia, handing over the responsibility of the data migration to Data#3's Microsoft Services team meant that progress could be made quickly, and the financial benefits of leveraging the Microsoft Enrolment for Education Solutions licensing program could be enjoyed immediately.

"Cost-wise, we definitely did our homework: this was vital due to the size of our school and our budget. When we looked at the fees, and established which apps came with the Microsoft 365 A3 licences, for us it was good value for money. Having the solution delivered with a bit of support was 110 percent the reason we went ahead when we did," explained Tng.

"Without that, we would have probably waited another 12 months, for fear of losing emails and data."

With growing interest in Montessori pedagogy, and the school's child-centred methods offering an alternative to families in the growing local community, Tng cited scalability as an attractive element of the Microsoft 365 Education A3 licence.

"We only have a small team, but we have the flexibility to expand to ten users at zero extra cost, which is a bonus if we need to add more staff."

For users, the transition to Microsoft 365 was straightforward, thanks to an existing familiarity with Microsoft applications.

"We all use Microsoft at home, or have used the tools in previous jobs, and most people had already used Outlook. We can find things more easily now. It absolutely makes the day easier for us," said Tng.

"It saves us a lot of time, because when one person updates a file, we have the added assurance that we are all working from that current version: we no longer waste time amending files that are already outdated."

Working remotely has become much easier for the team. Tng described 'formatting issues' as some of the key challenges she had faced previously when working from home, and said this was a time-consuming problem.

"If you saved something on Word and accessed it elsewhere, it opened in Google Docs, and Excel files opened in Sheets. Once we got back to the office, the format wasn't always recognised, it was really frustrating. Eliminating those problems was a real selling point of Microsoft 365- now it just works on every device."

Conclusion

Banksia's crossover to Microsoft 365 was scheduled to occur just as workplaces around the world went into lockdown due to pandemic. While school closures were mercifully brief in Western Australia, the experience highlighted the positive role that technology can play in such emergency situations.

"If we ever have to lockdown again, we learned that teachers will need more resources to help them prepare; they now have to have the ability to plan for this changed future," said Tng.

"It is likely that we will carefully embrace select smart technology tools for the classroom, so that the teachers have another tool at their disposal. We are now better prepared."

Working with the right IT partner was critical to the outcome, concluded Tng.

"Data#3 gave us a lot of extra support that wasn't a part of the deal, at no extra cost. We have minimal IT knowledge, and planning to move our data was overwhelming, but we couldn't have asked for anything to go smoother."

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