Australian Islamic College

Australian Islamic College transforms teaching, learning and IT management outcomes with Microsoft 365

Data#3

AUSTRALIAN
ISLAMIC COLLEGE

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Testimonial

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Tamjid Aijazi, Chief Information Officer, Australian Islamic College.

Objective

With staff overly reliant on dated technology and processes, limitations in licensing and security meant teachers and students weren't maximising the use of technology to support the modern classroom. To help the Australian Islamic College continue as one of the state's top independent schools, they sought a highly experienced partner to support their digital strategy.

Approach

The Australian Islamic College embarked on a significant digital transformation journey to enhance collaboration, support online learning and digitalise core processes including academic reporting. By working closely with Data#3's National Education team, they were able to leverage Data#3's partnership with Microsoft to upgrade from Microsoft 365 A3 to a more powerful and secure digital foundation using Microsoft 365 A5.

Solutions & Services

☑ **Microsoft 365 A5**

Benefits

- **Seamless migration to Microsoft 365 Education A5**

- **Adoption of Microsoft Teams for collaboration and virtual learning**

- **Simplified onboarding and remote management**

- **Streamlined, data-led reporting with Power BI**

- **Robust and secure foundation for ongoing digital transformation**

- **Preprepared for rapid transition to remote learning**

- **Modern classroom experiences – teachers and students can access collaboration tools for teaching and learning**

- **Enhanced collaboration with Microsoft Teams**

- **Access to real-time, comprehensive academic reporting**

Australian Islamic College

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The Background

The Australian Islamic College ("The college") is a co-education, K-12 college located in Western Australia. It is the state's largest school, with 4,000+ students, 400+ staff and a network of three campuses. Tasked with the responsibility of providing a high level of academic and integrated Islamic education through a network of three colleges, the college prides itself on being the state's top independent school.

Since 1986, this Islamic educational facility has focused on coupling excellent academic achievement with exceptional morals and values. The college includes students from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and all are taught to be proud Australian citizens and to help build a prosperous, harmonious, safe and inclusive country.

The College's success in achieving its educational objectives is attributed to its network of highly experienced teachers, emphasis on effective learning, and the goal of inspiring its youth to aim for excellence in both their academic and personal lives.

The Challenge

Prior to scaling up its digital transformation, the college was operating with predominantly manual processes and outdated systems. Students and caregivers would often be required to complete paper-based forms, the details of which needed to be entered manually by office staff. Most reports were also produced manually and based on data from Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. This proved both time-consuming and inefficient due to the large number of reports required.

From a staff perspective, there was limited capability for digital collaboration, and therefore most communication was conducted via phone calls or email. There was also an expectation that colleagues would always be readily available to answer questions or resolve issues.

"As we hadn't yet rolled-out Microsoft Teams, our staff were making a lot of phone calls – mobile to mobile, rather than simply sending a chat message to a colleague and awaiting a response," says Tamjid Aijazi, the college's Chief Information Officer. *"This meant there was a lot of excessive communication noise, which can be distracting. Something that could probably be resolved in a few seconds was taking at least a few minutes. It proved very inefficient,"* he adds.

Reporting was also slow and required a lot of time for preparation, and there was too much reliance on paper-based documents and spreadsheets. To deliver a better experience for its staff, the college knew it needed to streamline and automate processes to facilitate greater collaboration and information-sharing.

In the classroom, outdated technology was making it difficult for teachers and students – this meant they were missing out on the newest advancements for modern learning. Although the college did have Office 365 in place, they weren't using it to its full potential. Aijazi knew that his staff and students would benefit from additional functionality that would enable them to collaborate, teach and learn in a more dynamic and effective way. Based on guidance from Data#3, it was decided that a migration from Office 365 to Microsoft 365 A5 for Education would help the college to achieve their modern classroom goals with enhanced security management, data analytics tools and compliance capabilities to protect learners.

From an IT perspective, the system suffered from insufficient security controls and digital rights management. Previous attempts to create digital tools for learning also meant that technology costs were outpacing the available budget.

"We simply weren't using best-practice processes and technology," says Aijazi. "We had grown quite quickly, and our existing technology wasn't able to facilitate the needs of a school of our size. We were experiencing bottlenecks and it forced us to go to market to look for better solutions," says Aijazi.

"We had already implemented Office 365, and it had grown organically within the college, but we realised that we needed some guidance to ensure we were working to a standard that is best practice. It was important that we found an expert technology partner to provide the support and guidance we need, and that was when we turned to Data#3," he adds.

The college reached out to Data#3's National Education team for assistance. As Microsoft's largest partner in Australia, and with over 25 years' experience in the education sector, Data#3 was ideally positioned to help the college with its digital transformation.

The first step of the digital transformation journey was to migrate all staff and students to Microsoft 365 Education A5 licenses.

IT Outcome

From an IT perspective, the benefits of the upgrade to Microsoft 365 A5 have been very clear and considerable.

Aijazi and his team now have the peace of mind that all staff and students have ready access to a modern learning experience that not only drives student engagement but provides enhanced safety and security. If a staff member or student joins, they can be easily onboarded and deploy software updates – no matter where they are located.

As Microsoft 365 A5 is cloud-based, there are no servers for the school to manage, and support needs are low, making it ideal for the College's small in-house IT team. The solution also include a range of security and data protection features that keep organisational and personal information safe and secure.

The college took advantage of Microsoft 365 A5s ability to tailor a solution that would meet the needs of students and teachers from both a system and device perspective.

Another significant, yet unexpected benefit of the solution was that Aijazi's forethought into embracing modern technology, positioned the college to rapidly transition to remote learning when the world was plunged into lockdown, due to COVID-19.

"When the pandemic happened, we already had robust cloud-based infrastructure in place. When Australia went into lockdown, we were able to switch to online learning in a very structured way in a matter of days. There were a limited number of schools in Western Australia that were able to do this. Now, over a year on, we have embraced remote or hybrid learning and it has become part of every day life. We can transition without disrupting the learning experience, which is very important and helps keep our students engaged in learning," says Aijazi.

"We have a great school, and we know that with this technology we have what it takes to be one of the best in Western Australia."

Tamjid Aijazi, Chief Information Officer, Australian Islamic College.

Australian Islamic College

> **"The Data#3 team collaborated with us and provided some great advice and expertise when it came to selecting new technology."**

Tamjid Aijazi, Chief Information Officer, Australian Islamic College.

Business Outcome

The impact of the new technology was felt almost immediately and the uptake of Microsoft Teams, both by teachers and students, has been fantastic.

"The most successful thing for us has been the improved efficiency and collaboration we now use every day. We started promoting the culture of Microsoft Teams, and used this opportunity to create a communication strategy around channels and group chats," says Aijazi.

"Initially, when we rolled it out, people were scared to send messages to people who weren't online," says Aijazi. *"Now everyone really appreciates the efficiency and the extra hours that it's given back to them, as they're no longer interrupted by constant phone calls and they can address each message they receive at a time that is more suited to them."*

Microsoft Teams has also been enormously beneficial in the classroom, for online learning. *"We used the schools' data facility and exported it into Microsoft Teams – creating a unique Microsoft Teams structure tailored for each teacher, subject and class,"* Aijazi explains.

Now that the college has a modern collaboration tool, staff and students are able to use Microsoft Teams to interact with other schools around the world, and even run hybrid classes. This means that if some students are in the classroom, at the same time as others are learning remotely, they can all see the same information on the teacher's screen in real-time.

According to Forrester's most recent Total Economic Impact™ of Microsoft 365 report, Microsoft 365 has the potential to save a teacher up to 216 hours of time per year[1]. These benefits are felt with teachers within the college leveraging tools within Microsoft 365 to plan lessons, mark assignments and work collaboratively with each other, as well as with students.

Investing in Microsoft 365 A5 opened the door for the college to leverage additional tools such as Microsoft Power BI to improve and simplify how they manage reporting. Since deploying Power BI across the business in their reporting process, the college has significantly reduced the time required to collate, visualise and disseminate reporting – allowing staff to focus on other higher priority tasks.

With the new technology now rolled out to all staff, teams such as the Finance department are able to automate reporting for the board and provide near real-time details such financial information and forecasting when requested. Another benefit of the automated reporting is that the colleges operational staff are now able to better manage student attendance and Australian Tertiary Admission Rank ("ATAR") performance.

"Power BI has been fantastic. Our staff are always excited by the endless opportunities now open to them. We are constantly getting requests from for more reports they want to see. As well as saving us a lot of time, it's also providing the school with some very valuable insights to help us improve the way we operate, and that is something we haven't been able to visualise before," says Aijazi.

Digitalising and streamlining processes also had an important sustainability benefit for the school. According to Aijazi, the school previously had 45 printers on campus to collaborate and distribute reporting. Since embracing Microsoft 365 Education A5 licensing, it now just five by utilising Power BI dashboards to monitor printer usage, and to detect where printing can be potentially avoided.

Australian Islamic College

"The biggest benefit of all is that we now have an ideal foundation for our staff and students to achieve incredible things both now and into the future."

Conclusion

According to Aijazi, the future is bright – and where the college is now is just a baseline. *"In the next two years, we will build on where we are now to gain enormous business efficiency and cost savings. We are digitalising and automating whatever we can. In the future, a process that currently takes us a week will only take a day,"* he says.

The college is also looking at digitalising all of its current processes – from teachers' performance appraisals, to coordinating student transport.

"We have a great school, and we know that with this technology we have what it takes to be one of the best in Western Australia. We want it to be the best possible place for our students and staff," explained Aijazi.

For the college, having a responsive partner like Data#3 has made all the difference to beginning their digital transformation journey.

"Not only was it important that we had a solid IT structure and process, but we needed a highly experienced partner who understood where we wanted to go and why it was so important. The Data#3 team collaborated with us and provided some great advice and expertise when it comes to selecting new technology. Their help has meant we have saved a considerable amount of time and money," commented Aijazi.

"The biggest benefit of all is that we now have an ideal foundation for our staff and students to achieve incredible things both now and into the future," concluded Aijazi.

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[1] Forrester (2020), The Total Economic Impact ™ of Microsoft 365 for Education. [Online] https://info.microsoft.com/ww-landing-Forrester-TEI-Of-M365-Education-WhitePaper.html?lcid=en-us

Data#3 and Microsoft

Since 1994, Data#3 has combined forces with Microsoft to help our customers adapt and grow. Today, we are Microsoft's largest Australian business partner with the highest level of competency across the Microsoft ecosystem. Our hundreds of accredited consultants are ready to help our customers deliver the digital future; from enhancing productivity and collaboration with Microsoft 365 and the latest Surface devices, to transforming business processes with Dynamics 365, to ensuring our customers get the most value from Azure cloud. Our scale and expertise enable our unparalleled support to customers selecting, deploying, managing and securing Microsoft applications, products and devices.

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