

CASE STUDY

# Online learning delivers ideal solution to training needs

A Virtual College Case Study



St Helena School



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## The background

St Helena School in Colchester is an 11-16 secondary comprehensive school with 870 students.

It is part of the North East Essex Education partnership, a formal collaboration of seven academies in the area.

The academy ‘strives for all students to develop a passion for lifelong learning; to test the boundaries of their abilities and to develop the personal attributes necessary to face the future with confidence.’

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## The challenge

St Helena School employs 65 teachers and 80 support staff including cleaners, caretaking and catering staff.

Delivering the training needs to this large and diverse group provided some significant challenges.

“We used to train most staff face to face using our own staff who, in turn, would need to be trained in the particular subject,” explained Jennifer Shone-Tribley, HR Manager at St Helena School.

“It was challenging enough scheduling training for teaching staff as they work regular hours but trying to accommodate all of the support staff, who often work irregular hours, was almost impossible.

“In addition to this being a very costly process, with so many courses and staff, it was difficult to monitor, record and report on training progress.”

## The solution

Like most schools, St Helena works to a lean budget and needs to ensure that it receives value from its expenditure.

“We needed to find a better, more cost-effective solution for our training requirements,” said Jennifer, “so we started to test online learning for some topics, purchasing on a piecemeal basis from various suppliers, but even this was not the most economical solution.

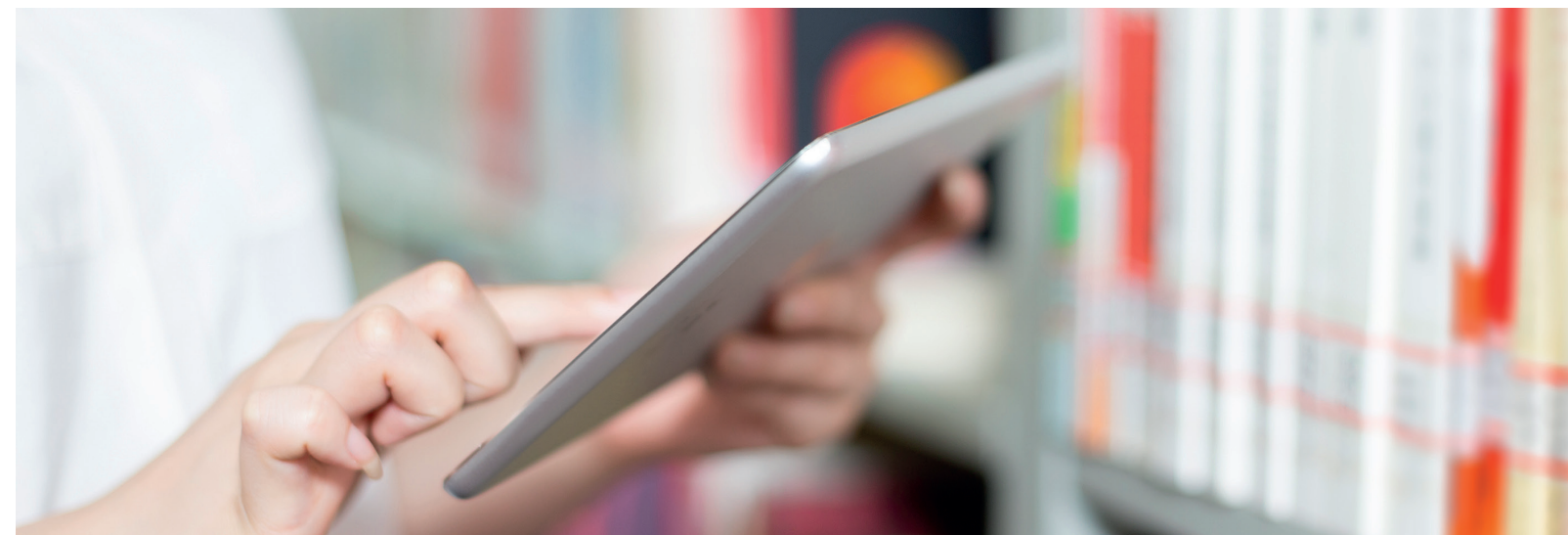
“Virtual College’s flexible package of courses and the opportunity to make use of their learning management system for our own school-specific training offered an attractive and economical proposition.”

The school now uses a diverse range of courses for both its teaching and support staff covering induction and compliance requirements mainly. These courses range from safeguarding children and Prevent training for all staff, through to specialised training required by specific staff, including working at heights, food safety & hygiene for catering staff and the safe use of insulin syringes, pen devices, pumps and sharps.

Jennifer added: “We expect everyone to understand and support our students’ needs so when Virtual College makes additional free courses available such as FGM and Forced Marriage, we make them available to our staff via the learning management system, which allows us to track and record the training undertaken and provides a simple, known platform to access the courses from.”

“Previously, if we wanted to access specialist knowledge for our staff, we would have to go out and try to access an external course or conference for one employee and then have them share the knowledge internally.

“Virtual College’s courses are updated regularly and it’s reassuring to know that it works with the Home and Foreign Office as well as other district councils to develop current and very relevant content on a regular basis. It couldn’t get better than this.”



# The results

Online learning from Virtual College now accounts for around 80% of staff training at the school.

Staff prefer to spend an hour at their own convenience studying online, rather than having to spend three hours in a face to face session. They like the facility to learn in bite-sized chunks and return to where they have left off. Many take advantage of the flexibility it offers by taking the courses at home in the evening.

"Most of our induction and compliance training needs are met by Virtual College and as our staff go through regular refresher training, they not only understand what they have learned but are implementing it every day," explained Jennifer.

"Compared to paying to get a speaker for 60 or so staff, the cost per online course from Virtual College represents real value for money.

"We have a 'joined-up' training strategy which uses our finances wisely by always considering online learning as the first option. It's not always appropriate in all cases, but in many cases it has saved money in costs and covering staff absences. It has realised substantive savings in compliance training that is now allowing us to offer staff management training."

The Virtual College learning management system provides quick and easy tracking and evidence of training.

"When we had our Ofsted inspection, I was completely confident as I was able to demonstrate our processes clearly and provide clear, unequivocal evidence of our training," remarked Jennifer.

“ The cost per online course from Virtual College represents real value for money. ”

## What next

St Helena School has its own staff policies and code of conduct covering aspects such as expectations of staff, safe use of the internet and the duty of care.

It has recently created its own online course for this, including a section at the end to test and question knowledge and understanding, which staff access via the Virtual College learning management system.

"We are looking to make more use of this learning management system functionality to bolster our own specific training, for example when staff are absent for essential CPD sessions," said Jennifer.

"We had a major challenge with our training provision and Virtual College has helped us find a solution. We are so pleased that we have recommended Virtual College to our partner schools."



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### About Virtual College

With over 2 million online learners, Virtual College is one of the leading providers of e-learning in the UK. For over twenty years, we have provided online courses to individuals and companies across the world, breaking down the boundaries of traditional learning to deliver cost reducing, time efficient training. Unlike many other e-learning providers, our training extends to actual programme and qualification creation and delivery - resulting in a unique blended solution. The knowledge, experience and feedback that this delivery provides helps ensure that we strive to continually improve our solutions.

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