

Academia and Sophos deliver value for Solihull College and University Centre through upgraded MDR and Firewall solution





Solihull College and University Centre is a further education institution, based at three campuses in the Solihull area and in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. The centre offers full-time, part-time and further and higher education courses, bespoke employment training and apprenticeships. It has around 10,000 students and 1000 staff.

**Industry**  
Education

### **Numbers of users**

Circa 4,000 endpoints

### **Sophos Managed Services**

Sophos Managed Detection and Response (MDR)  
Complete for Endpoint

### **Sophos Product**

Server Sophos XGS Firewalls

### **Academia/Sophos Customer**

Over 10 years

## Introduction

Acutely aware of increasingly prevalent threats against education establishments, Solihull College and University Centre sought a fully managed cybersecurity solution. Supported by specialist IT solutions and service provider and Sophos Platinum partner, Academia, the college began exploring the options available to them and in February 2023 the college implemented Sophos MDR Complete. Read on to understand why Sophos MDR was chosen over and above other solutions and to learn more about their journey.

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We were aware that cyber criminals were particularly targeting schools and colleges and the massive impact that had, both financially and in disruption to teaching and learning. We couldn't take the risk of this happening to us but we didn't have the capability in-house to get the level of assurance we needed. //

**Dave Gartside, Director of IT,  
Solihull College and University Centre**

## Business Challenges

Solihull College and University Centre had adopted Sophos antivirus and firewalls back in 2017 but over the years that followed, the college's Director of IT, Dave Gartside, was aware of the growing frequency and complexity of cyber threats.

While the college's IT team was highly proficient in supporting the staff and students with all things IT related, they were not security experts. Securing the large amount of data and safeguarding students were key priorities for the college but as the risk of cyberattacks became of increasing concern, a key challenge was getting the right expertise in place to monitor and rapidly respond to threats. It had also become apparent that threat actors were often targeting institutions at busy periods such as exam time, or the beginning of school terms, as well as outside of work hours, resulting in a 24/7 threat.

### Leading Detection and Response Times







The option of developing a college security operations centre (SOC) was considered but recruiting and retaining the right talent, plus having employees available to work around the clock would prove difficult and expensive. Dave Gartside consulted its trusted partner Academia, to explore the solutions available to the college for 24/7/365 cybersecurity. Together, they assessed several options, including moving to Microsoft Defender and employing a third party to operate as a SOC for the college. However, as an existing customer Dave already trusted Sophos and Sophos also offered the best scope for integration into the college's existing systems. Additionally, due to Academia's number one ranking on the SRLA framework, the college was able to meet its restricted budget for this project.

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The assurance we get from Sophos MDR is fantastic but what I particularly like about the service is the human interaction and escalation points. This is what differentiates Sophos from other providers. "

**Dave Gartside, Director of OT,  
Solihull College and University Centre**

## The Technical Solution

Following the assessments carried out by the college, Sophos MDR Complete was implemented in February 2023. With MDR Complete, the college receives cybersecurity as a service with ransomware and breach prevention services 24/7/365. This effectively provides the equivalent of an instant SOC, giving the IT team more time to focus on supporting staff and students. The MDR service was implemented alongside the college's existing solution, which meant that its cybersecurity has been significantly strengthened, without the need to duplicate contracts or purchase new infrastructure.

Dave and his team have found the service invaluable in day-to-day operations and use the Sophos Central interface each morning to check the activity across all the college's 4,000 endpoints. For any alerts or suspicious activity, they have the assurance that these will be managed by Sophos' active team of threat-hunting experts, who are also on hand around the clock to discuss any concerns. As part of the MDR Complete service, all staff and students at the college also receive free Sophos Home licences.



For anyone in a similar position, I'd highly recommend the Sophos MDR service. Institutions like ours can't take a risk with cybersecurity. With this service, we not only get access to the security expertise we need to prevent the worst from happening but we get it at a cost that does not break the bank. //

**Dave Gartside, Director of IT,  
Solihull College and University Centre**

G2 Winter 2024 Reports – MDR



G2 Winter 2024 Reports – Firewall



## Business Benefits

Since implementing Sophos MDR Complete, with the assistance of Academia, Solihull College and University Centre has experienced significant benefits. Dave highlights the convenience the service delivers as the #1 standout benefit, saying: "With Sophos MDR Complete, we basically have our own expert SOC, without the need to recruit and manage the team ourselves, which would be extremely challenging." Dave lists additional benefits as being:

- ✓ 24/7/365 managed threat detection and response
- ✓ The ability to triage security incidences with Sophos and Academia
- ✓ Easy visibility across all endpoints in a single dashboard with Sophos Central
- ✓ The ability to easily integrate the service with existing infrastructure and solutions
- ✓ Assurance that staff and student data is effectively protected
- ✓ Time savings for the IT team, enabling them to focus on other important tasks
- ✓ Free Sophos Home licences for all staff and students
- ✓ Support from Sophos' industry-leading threat detection and response experts and Academia

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Having a trusted partner to work through every step of the process of moving to a new 24/7 threat protection service was vitally important for us. With Academia, we have a single point of contact backed by a team of cyber security and technical specialists to ensure we had the guidance and support required from the start of the project and beyond. With Academia being a Sophos Platinum Partner and ranked number one on the SRLA framework, the procurement process was seamless and compliant, leaving us safe in the knowledge that we were getting the best possible cost for the solution. All these factors combined meant that we were getting the most advanced cyber solution for our institution, supported by a partner that we could trust. //

**Dave Gartside, Director of IT,  
Solihull College and University Centre**



To find out more about Sophos solutions for the education sector, speak to Academia, Sophos Platinum Partner.

Email [info@academia.co.uk](mailto:info@academia.co.uk) or call **01992 703 900**.

[www.academia.co.uk/sophos-mdr](http://www.academia.co.uk/sophos-mdr)

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