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**Page:** N/A  
**Reach:** 864  
**Value:** 15

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## **IP-based surveillance from Axis creates secure environment for joint school venture**

By Anthony Hildebrand

Axis Communications and 2020 Vision Technology have helped secure Excelsior Academy in Newcastle.

Excelsior Academy is a new concept in secondary education situated in the West End of Newcastle.

With a model that is the first of its kind in the UK, the academy is designed to play a major role in the regeneration of the West End of the city.

It is made up of five schools within a school and delivers education and learning opportunities to a capacity of 1,800 students aged 11-18.

Excelsior Academy has been designed to create four small 11-16 age group schools: The Hadrian Environment school which specialises in environment, technology and design; The Jefferson Arts School; The Milburn Health School; and The Armstrong Business School, as well as a post-16 college.

Each school has a total of up to 375 students with 75 in a year group and, while the academy specialises in business enterprise, every school has its own identity and boasts its own entrance, classrooms and playground.

Excelsior Academy is committed to providing the best possible learning opportunities for all students through high quality teaching and a wide curriculum. It is also committed to offering a safe and secure environment for its staff and pupils.

### A secure environment

When the original concept for Excelsior Academy was conceived, one of the primary concerns raised was how the pupils from the individual schools would interact with each other in the communal areas such as the dining and sporting facilities.

With as many as one in three schools in the UK subjected to some form of vandalism, the new academy was determined to monitor behavior and maintain its surroundings by trying to prevent any damage being done to its buildings.

For the pupils own safety, they are not permitted to leave the site during the day and must remain in the academy during their lunch break. The academys dining facilities enable all pupils to sit down to eat lunch together as a school.

With the safety and security of all staff and pupils of paramount importance to the academy, it was initially decided that an analogue CCTV system should be rolled out throughout the organisation.

The academys consulting engineers Cundall brought in security integrators 2020 Vision Technology to advise on this decision, who recommended that the academy would benefit from an IP-based surveillance system.

We recommended IP-based surveillance as it offers a host of benefits that will help create a secure and safe learning environment at the academy. The flexibility offered by network cameras allows staff to log on to the



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system from the office or remotely and for footage to be shared across the academys network, said Peter Houlis, managing director of 2020 Vision Technology.

#### Modifying behavior

2020 Vision Technology rolled out Axis 216 Fixed Dome cameras throughout all areas of Excelsior Academy except the classrooms. The 216 FD is a discreet, compact and offers effective protection against tampering.

It was recommended as it is suitable for indoor environments which could potentially be exposed to vandalism.

It also has built-in two-way audio capabilities including an audio detection alarm which allows for real-time communication with visitors and intruders.

The academy wanted to ensure that any inappropriate actions by pupils could be followed up and the network cameras give staff the opportunity to analyse footage once an incident has occurred and identify the culprits.

Peter Snowdon, the academys business manager, explained how he believes the system has helped curtail inappropriate behavior: When the academy first opened, our pupils werent really aware of our cameras and the impact they could have on their actions.

However, this soon changed. On numerous occasions we have been able to positively identify the instigators of inappropriate conduct due to the image quality the cameras provide. And, because we had the evidence, on more than one occasion, one of our pupils was reported to the police and charged with criminal damage.

The pupils have seen that we take such incidents seriously and due to the widespread presence of our cameras, they know that there is nowhere to hide. As a result, less incidents of vandalism or other inappropriate behavior have been reported.

The network cameras are situated in public areas of the academy and with the exception of the classrooms, there are very few areas not monitored.

The cameras are not manned, so if an incident occurs, staff log-on to the system from the office or remotely and play back the footage to establish what has actually taken place and who was responsible. The system is operated from an easy-to-use command centre that allows images to be analyzed in detail.

Snowdon said: Without doubt the camera presence has helped to modify behavior in the school and create a safe environment for all staff and pupils. Although difficult to quantify we have definitely received an excellent return on investment from our surveillance equipment by preventing a lot of unnecessary damage and inconvenience.

Ultimately it has allowed us to get on with the day-to-day running of the academy without having to waste time and money dealing with the irresponsible actions of a minority of disruptive pupils.

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