# Castle Phoenix Trust elevates cybersecurity with Sophos to safeguard teaching and learning

The Castle Phoenix Trust, based in Coventry, is a growing Multi-Academy Trust. It was founded in February 2013 on the success of the Caludon Castle Teaching School (the original Trust member). Currently, there are six schools within the Trust including three primary and three secondary schools, serving over 4,500 students with approximately 600 staff.

## CUSTOMER-AT-A-GLANCE

**Castle Phoenix Trust**

**Industry**
Education

**Website**
www.castlephoenixtrust.org.uk

**Number of Users**
Approximately 5,100

**Sophos Managed Service**
Sophos Managed Detection and Response (MDR) Complete

**Sophos Solutions**
Sophos Email
Sophos Phish Threat
Sophos Central Device Encryption
Sophos Firewall

*"One of our biggest challenges was managing the sheer number of devices and endpoints across the Trust, especially during holidays and off-peak hours. Sophos MDR has been a game-changer, providing 24/7 monitoring and ensuring our systems remain secure even when our IT staff aren't on-site."*

**Alex Handy, Strategic Lead for Digital Technology, Castle Phoenix Trust**

Since it was established in 2013, Castle Phoenix Trust has focused on building a unified, collaborative environment for both staff and students, relying increasingly on digital tools to enhance learning, communication, and efficiency. However, with thousands of digital endpoints distributed across its schools, the Trust faced significant challenges in ensuring robust cybersecurity, particularly with the rise in cyber threats targeting the education sector. Alex Handy, the Strategic Lead for Digital Technology at Castle Phoenix Trust, oversees the digital strategy and cybersecurity across the six schools. Read on to find out about the security challenges he faced, the Sophos solutions the Trust implemented, and the benefits for its schools.

## Challenges

As Castle Phoenix Trust expanded, its exposure to cyber threats "including phishing attacks" increased significantly, posing potential disruptions to teaching and learning. The Trust's diverse digital infrastructure spans thousands of devices, including iPads, laptops, and desktops used by both students and staff. Managing and monitoring all of these presented myriad challenges, especially when the devices were used off-site or during weekends and holidays when IT support was less accessible.

‣ One of the Trust's primary concerns was mitigating phishing threats, which could compromise the network through human error. Staff received a high volume of phishing emails, often difficult to identify, leading to frequent clicks on fraudulent links. While many incidents were benign, repeated mistakes increased the risk of a significant data breach, risking personal and school data.

‣ A significant challenge lay in securing the numerous endpoints that connect to the network. With students and staff frequently accessing devices from various locations, ensuring secure log-ins and usage became increasingly complex. Each type of device — whether iPad, laptop, or desktop — required its own set of security protocols, further complicating the task. There was also a need for rapid recovery capabilities in the event of a cyber incident.

*"Our trustees and school leaders greatly value the reassurance that Sophos MDR offers. Cybersecurity is a top priority, and knowing we have an expert team actively monitoring and managing threats across our trust makes a substantial difference in our ability to maintain safe, uninterrupted education for our students."*

**Michele Marr, CEO, Castle Phoenix Trust**

## Technology Solution

After thorough research and consultations, Castle Phoenix Trust selected Sophos Managed Detection and Response (MDR) as its cybersecurity solution. Sophos MDR provides the Trust with a fully managed, 24/7 monitoring service to detect, investigate, and respond to security threats in real-time. The solution integrates seamlessly with the Trust's existing infrastructure, strengthened by the Trust's longstanding relationship with Sophos for email filtering, device encryption, firewall and antivirus solutions.

To address phishing concerns, the Trust also implemented a comprehensive phishing awareness program for staff, in collaboration with Sophos. Sophos conducted simulated phishing campaigns that tested staff responses to common phishing techniques, providing valuable feedback that allowed the Trust to identify staff members who

were more susceptible to phishing and to offer targeted training to improve their response.

The Trust also established policies to improve password security across its network, requiring passwords of at least 12 characters. Additionally, multi-factor authentication (MFA) was implemented for access to critical systems, such as the Trust's management information system (MIS) and Office 365, further safeguarding data.

## Business Results

Sophos MDR enables Castle Phoenix Trust to centralise its network security across a diverse array of devices, including Apple and Microsoft products, and ensure consistent protection across all six schools. The MDR service includes both automated and human-led monitoring, meaning that potential threats are flagged and

managed by cybersecurity experts on behalf of the Trust, ensuring quick containment and minimal disruption. Benefits include:

‣ **Enhanced security and peace of mind**

Sophos MDR has significantly strengthened the Trust's overall cybersecurity posture. The constant monitoring provided by the MDR service gives leaders the confidence that the network is protected around the clock. For staff, this peace of mind means they can focus on their core responsibilities without concerns about cybersecurity risks. School heads also appreciate the invisible nature of the system, as users do not experience any disruption to their work and security improvements occur seamlessly in the background.

‣ Improved incident response readiness

The real strength of Sophos MDR lies in its incident response capabilities. In the event of a security incident, Sophos immediately takes action to contain and neutralise the threat, notifying the Trust and providing guidance on any necessary follow-up steps. This minimises disruption and allows the IT staff to maintain continuity without spending hours responding to incidents.

‣ Reduced cyber risk through phishing awareness

Phishing awareness campaigns have proven effective, with the frequency of phishing incidents among staff decreasing by 50-60%. Sophos's phishing simulations allow the Trust to identify and support staff who may be at higher risk, helping them build better cyber practices through targeted training.

‣ Streamlined security management and reporting

Sophos MDR's centralised reporting capabilities have improved the Trust's ability to track and report on cybersecurity metrics. The network lead can now quickly generate detailed reports for trustees, providing transparent insights into the Trust's cybersecurity efforts.

‣ Value for money and ease of use

Sophos MDR has proven to be a cost-effective solution for Castle Phoenix Trust, offering a comprehensive, all-in-one security system. By consolidating cybersecurity solutions under one provider, the Trust avoids the complications of managing multiple vendors and systems, simplifying security management and reducing costs.

## Conclusion

For Castle Phoenix Trust, the implementation of Sophos MDR and a robust cybersecurity strategy has been transformative. The partnership with Sophos has provided a secure foundation for teaching and learning across its schools, allowing the Trust to embrace technology without compromising safety. The peace of mind offered by MDR's round-the-clock monitoring and rapid response capabilities has empowered staff and students to focus on what truly matters — uninterrupted teaching and learning for all.

*"This service has been invaluable in giving our staff and trustees confidence that we are prepared to manage and recover quickly from any potential cyber incidents, allowing our schools to focus on what they do best — educating and supporting our students."*

**Michele Marr, CEO, Castle Phoenix Trust**

To learn more about Sophos Solutions, visit Sophos.com

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