

## Case Study

### Avantis demonstrates superior reliability and quality in Kingston's schools

Market Sector: **Education**  
Customer: **Royal Borough of Kingston LEA**  
Solution: **Avantis CDserve+**

#### Background

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames has been installing Avantis Multimedia Servers into local authority schools for around ten months now and the product has had an outstanding record of reliability in this time.

Hugh Sweeney is a network assistant with Royal Borough of Kingston and has found the Avantis Multimedia Servers great to work with. **"I've never had a problem with a single unit in all the time I've been working with them"** said Sweeney **"they are very simple to install and not one has had a fault"** he said.

Hugh's department recommends products to schools and installs the equipment they need. He assured us that Kingston makes sure they carry out strenuous testing before recommending any product. **"We have a central purchasing division who look at, rate and test all the products we use. Typical criteria includes price, performance and reliability, can it do the job we need it to?"** said Hugh. **"With the Avantis product the answer so far has been a resounding yes!"**

#### The Solution

Royal Borough of Kingston began looking at the CD Servers as a replacement for their previous solution. Prior to using the Avantis CDserve+ Multimedia Server Kingston was using conventional CD towers. These were becoming an expensive choice, Hugh said.

The advantage of the Avantis solution is that it is hard disk rather than optical based. This means it is much faster and more hardwearing than a CD jukebox or tower. Fast hard disk drive technology enables dozens of students to access the same or different CDs simultaneously. An image of the CD is stored on the hard drive on the CD Server so you can keep your original CDs safe from harm in storage.

However the hardware would mean little without the software that comes with it. Avantis pioneered Multimedia Virtual Drive™ technology, proprietary client software that guarantees 100 percent CD/DVD compatibility. Many educational CDs like Microsoft Encarta, for example, will not network if they are just copied to a hard drive on a server. However MVD™ fools the application into believing it is really running from a local CD/DVD drive and not from a hard disk on the server. Avantis do not copy the CD; they take a 'raw bit image' of it, a process known as Adaptive CD Imaging™, so that all files and folders behave exactly as they would on the optical format. This, combined with the use of virtual drive technology, enables Avantis to guarantee 100 percent support for all types of CD and DVD – including audio CD, video CD and many other multimedia formats.





## Installations

Kingston is installing CDserve+ Servers in primary schools. The usual practise is for someone like Hugh to go along to the installation site and boot up the server, which he says “takes no more than 10 or 15 minutes”. He will then install one CD to demonstrate how it is done and then watch the teacher install a second CD to make sure they understand. It is that simple. The only task then is to install the MVD™ client (if required) onto the PCs. This can be a laborious task but you can load the software directly from the CD Server once you have set it up.

“The teachers really like the simplicity” said Hugh. “I’ve never had to use the Avantis support line and we have a central support unit here but people don’t want to have to rely on us to help with what should be a simple task”, he explained. However the authority does offer to support its workers and is the usually the first port of call for information. Due to this Kingston has only had to call Avantis on two occasions.

The units require very little maintenance. All that really needs to be done is to add and delete new/old CDs, a task the teachers themselves perform, helping to keep running costs down.

The only real difficulty anyone could possibly have is over subscription with too many users logging on at once, but with a 255 concurrent user limit on the systems installed by Royal Borough of Kingston this is unlikely to be a problem in junior schools. In fact, a major advantage of the system is that workstation/user licenses are not required to access the CD Server (unlike some of the other CD networking solutions available). This can save the school hundreds of pounds.



## Conclusion

The CD Server technology has proven its worth at Kingston both in testing and in the classroom. The product has been demonstrably more reliable than alternative solutions as well as delivering improved performance.

The simplicity of the product has been key here. With tight budgets for IT, schools need to get the best kit they can afford, but they do not want to pay a fortune to run it either! The fact that it can be up and running in just 15 minutes and afterwards the teachers can administer it themselves is great. **“The teachers get on really well with the product and it has been a massive change from the old CD towers/jukeboxes we were installing before,”** Hugh said.

Royal Borough of Kingston junior schools are only touching the surface of the CDserve+ abilities but they have found the product more than able to cope with **their demands. So would Hugh Sweeney recommend Avantis to other people? “I haven’t got a bad word to say about them”**, he said.

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