

# Big savings in reaching for the clouds

KAT DUGGAN  
kat.duggan@mex.co.nz

A project to bring the computer system at Marlborough Boys' College up to date has given a Blenheim IT company a ticket to the national Microsoft awards.

A team from PC Media in Blenheim has spent about six months putting together a system to improve the school's technology after being approached by the college's e-Learning team last year.

E-Learning and IT leader, deputy principal Michael Heath, said the school wanted a modern system which would support student learning, and would also help their teachers.

PC Media managing director Lee Harper said they had done away with traditional servers, which cost the school \$100,000 to \$150,000, and replaced them with free cloud services.

The school was able to use those savings to upgrade its technology, allowing students better access to IT services. They had installed 100 new computers during the summer break, Heath said.

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Jack Laws  
Year 12 student

Using the cloud system, students were also able to access their school work from anywhere they had an internet connection.

Another saving had been made by training about 10 students to be "tech wizards" at the school, acting as IT support for other students. The roles had allowed the school to save on IT support costs, but also gave students an opportunity to develop their skills as IT specialists.

Harper said the company was looking at taking on one to two apprentices each year, after working closely with them during their time as tech wizards.

Head tech wizard, year 12 student Jack Laws, had been involved with IT at the school for the past three years.

Working with the team from PC Media had improved his role, giving him the skills required to maintain systems at the school, and deal with IT issues, he said.

"When I first started it was just showing kids how to use the internet and create posters for school events . . . since school started [this year] I have learnt a whole lot more. This time last year I wouldn't have been able to do half the stuff I can [now]."

With many schools yet to move away from traditional servers, PC Media's design is innovative for New Zealand schools.

As a result, the company has been selected as a finalist in the education section of the Microsoft awards on March 19, selected from about 2500 entries. Its success had been a result of direct collaboration with the school, Harper said.



Marlborough Boys' College year 12 student Jack Laws, left, has been working closely with Lee Harper, centre, and John Nelson from PC Media as the school transitions to a cloud-based IT system designed by the company. Other students from the school, known as "tech wizards" also received training in IT support from PC Media.  
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