

PRESS INFORMATION

ST IVO CASE STUDY

St Ivo School installs online cashless catering system provided by M H Systems in partnership with Toshiba to reduce cash handling, increase customer throughput in the restaurant and improve its catering service.

St Ivo School, a comprehensive school based in St Ives, has 1,825 students between the ages of 11 and 18 years. Prior to the decision to implement a cashless catering system, the school's canteen had, for many years, relied on cash registers combined with a manual cash system, leading to long queues at the till, finance errors from the manual processes and an under-utilised restaurant.

In order to identify shared best practice, in early 2007, Barbara Kessel (Head of Finance) and the IT Manager, Chris, began a programme of research into school catering systems in other Cambridgeshire schools. They recognised that a 'cashless' catering solution would improve service and encourage more students to use the facility, resulting in increased turnover for the restaurant. From the three companies considered, M H Systems, a specialist in supplying 'cashless' catering and 'cashless' vending software management solutions was selected as the software supplier, using Toshiba hardware.

Explaining the reason for the selection Barbara Kessel said, "M H Systems was the only company that could fulfil all our requirements, specifically our need for a link between the catering system and our Business Centre programme". The Business Centre opened in 2004 and in 2005 launched internet purchasing, enabling parents to pay on-line for items such as school trips and books, thereby eliminating the need for teachers to collect cash or pupils to queue at the finance office to pay for these items. The introduction of the Business Centre Internet purchasing offered an alternative to parents and reduced the amount of cash carried by pupils in the school. Barbara continued, "M H Systems was able to integrate cashless catering into our Business Centre System, allowing the school to extend the on-line purchasing options available to parents, to include, for example, topping up their child's unique cashless card for use in the restaurant facility."

M H Systems installed its "Chips" 'cashless' catering system on three Toshiba ST-71 tills in the school's servery. A fourth Toshiba ST-71 Toshiba till was installed in the servery as a stand-by "Admin till" enabling students to check their card balances before making any purchases. To complement Internet purchasing M H Systems also installed cash-loading machines in the school Reception offering a convenient alternative for students and parents wishing to load their cashless card with money.

With the new "Chips" cashless catering system in place, St Ivo has removed two-thirds of the cash from the school. Students simply load cash onto their unique cards (either by machine or via the internet) and use the card to pay for their school meals at the Toshiba tills. Each student's photo appears on the ST-71 touch-screen to confirm visually their ID, reducing the problem of students

being able to use each other's cards without permission. Students can use the "Admin Till" to review their purchases and to check the cash balance, teaching them independence and responsibility for money management.

The new M H Systems / Toshiba solution has eradicated the sales discrepancies previously experienced with the manual till system. All items and prices are loaded onto the system, and the school is no longer reliant on the catering staff having to remember them. Also, in the event of a student losing his or her card, the system has the facility to disable the lost card and thus avoid its unauthorized use.

The M H Systems / Toshiba solution also allows St Ivo to integrate free school meals into the system with all students being treated in exactly the same way, and this has helped to eliminate any associated stigma. Commenting on this aspect, Barbara Kessel said, "Before the new system, free school meals children had to be separately identified. The manual system we were operating had no prices, so these students were only able to go through the till once, regardless of whether they had spent their daily £2 allocation or not. Now, the new system enables students to track exactly how much they have spent and because they are treated the same as all other pupils we have seen an increased uptake in the use of the 'free school meals' entitlement, which is a very positive development."

The M H Systems/Toshiba solution provides parents with the reassurance that their children are not spending the money on unhealthy snacks outside the school. The system sets a £2 per day spend default value on each card, which parents can change using the Internet or by writing to the school.

With the bright Toshiba screen tills, and customised menu options and layouts, catering staff at St Ivo's find the tills easy to navigate from the top down, resulting in speedier transactions.

Future Plans

Being a proactive school, St Ivo's future plans include extending the use of card payment for its business centre. For example parents could set up an e-purse to pay for the many educational trips run by the school. The system also has the facility to manage stock levels, and provide invaluable information for menu-planning and monitoring wastage.

Commenting on the success of the new catering solution and the service provided by M H Systems, Barbara Kessell said, "Since cashless catering was installed in Dec 2007, nearly 400 parents have signed up to the website. M H Systems was willing to work with St Ivo to develop a customised solution rather than just sell us a system. The flexibility of their software and reliability of Toshiba hardware has given us a future-proof solution allowing us to enhance the facilities St Ivo can offer both students and parents".

For more information on the M H Systems Cashless Catering System call +44 1732 376227 or visit their website at www.gcgold.co.uk