

Case Studies

James Montgomery Academy Trust

WaveConnect, WaveProtect & WaveTalk



From Funding to Finish: JMAT's Connect the Classroom, Delivered

When the Department for Education's Connect the Classroom funding became available in 2023, James Montgomery Academy Trust (JMAT) saw a rare opportunity to modernise its wireless and network infrastructure across several schools.

With twenty primaries spread across South Yorkshire, the Trust's network varied widely, some sites with newer equipment, others ready for upgrade.

For Ian Farmery, Head of IT, the goal was straightforward: build a reliable network that his small team of three could manage efficiently across every school.

"Everything from networking to technicians ends up at my door," Ian explained. "So whatever we build has to make life easier to manage."

That brief led to a partnership with Wave9, who helped the Trust navigate the complex, time-bound funding process and deliver seven successful network upgrades under Connect the Classroom — paving the way for a later broadband rollout that would bring every school online under one managed service.

Raising Standards through DfE Funding

The *Connect the Classroom* scheme is a Department for Education initiative designed to raise network and wireless standards in schools. It provides funding to upgrade cabling, switches and Wi-Fi access points where existing infrastructure no longer meets current performance or coverage expectations.

Eligibility is linked to location and need, with schools in designated Education Investment Areas invited to take part. Wave9 supported JMAT through that process, interpreting the requirements and preparing the technical information needed to secure approval within tight DfE timelines.

"Wave9 had done it before and guided us through it all. I just needed to share the information they asked for and answer a few questions — they made it really easy."

Ian first came across Wave9 on the [EduGeek](#) forum, where their services were well known in the education IT community. After discussions with both Lee Neely and Andy McFarlane, he was confident they had the right experience and offered the best technical and financial fit for the Trust.

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Handled Without Fuss

Once the funding was secured, the project moved quickly. Wave9 oversaw the process, coordinating with approved cabling contractors who carried out their own surveys, arranged site visits and completed installations around the school calendar.

"They managed everything," Ian said. "They told me when people were coming and got on with it."

Most of the work was completed over weekends or during holidays to avoid disruption. Delays with PFI approvals threatened deadlines, but Wave9 and their subcontractor worked with the provider to secure sign-off in time.

"They just got on with it and kept me in the loop — no fuss, no drama."

Quiet Proof of a Job Well Done

By the end of the 2024 autumn term, all seven schools had new switching and wireless infrastructure in place — delivered on time despite approvals and site constraints.

"You could see the difference straight away," Ian said. "Faster speeds, better coverage, and a lot more reliability."

Some schools with newer hardware were able to repurpose their existing kit elsewhere in the Trust, stretching the value of the funding.

For Ian's small central team, the biggest change was visibility:

"With the Cisco Meraki setup, I can now see what's connected where, without being on-site. I can troubleshoot remotely instead of driving to schools."

That visibility also reduced day-to-day noise from staff.

"Teachers aren't reporting Wi-Fi problems anymore. When nobody notices, that's the sign it's working."

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From Networks to Broadband – Extending the Partnership

During August 2024, the Trust took another step, rolling out [WaveConnect broadband](#) and [WaveProtect firewalls](#) across all 21 sites. The decision didn't require another procurement search.

"Because of the Connect the Classroom project, I went straight back to Wave9," Ian said. "They'd already proved they could deliver."

The new setup replaced a patchwork of separate broadband contracts and in-house web filtering managed by the Trust. Wave9's managed service brought internet, firewalling and [safeguarding reporting \(via Fastvue\)](#) together under one provider.

"It made sense," Ian said. "Now we've got one partner managing installs, connections, and firewall changes, but we can still make tweaks ourselves if needed."

Working through the DfE-approved [Everything ICT framework](#) ensured compliance and simplified sign-off. The rollout itself took time because of differing contract end dates, but the result is a unified broadband platform across the Trust.

"They're always available," Ian said. "We had an internet issue recently and they just took ownership of it — kept me updated the whole way through."

Project team members Lisa and Sam also earned praise for persistence.

"They chased the suppliers, so I didn't have to. It meant I could focus on everything else." That hands-on ownership, Ian felt, reflected genuine understanding of how schools operate.

"You can tell they work with education. They know how to fit around schools rather than expect schools to fit around them."

Looking Ahead

With resilient networks and managed broadband now in place, the Trust is considering its next steps — including further upgrades to Wi-Fi 6 and 7 standards and expanding [WaveTalk telephony](#) to more schools.

"St Ann's are really happy with their new phone system. We'll look at where that makes sense next."

For Ian, the value of the partnership is measured not in fanfare but in dependability.

"Honestly, I sound like a salesman for Wave9," he laughed, "but I've not had a single issue. I can't fault them."

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At a Glance

- ☑ **Connect the Classroom (2023):** Wireless and network refresh across seven schools
- ☑ **WaveConnect (2024–25):** Broadband, Sophos XGS firewalls, Fastvue reporting across 21 sites
- ☑ **WaveTalk (2025):** First telephony rollout at St Ann's Primary

Key Outcomes

- ☑ Modern, DfE-compliant wireless networks delivered within tight deadlines
- ☑ Full PFI approval and compliance achieved without funding loss
- ☑ Major uplift in performance and reliability across upgraded sites
- ☑ Remote management visibility via Cisco cloud environment
- ☑ Unified broadband and firewalling under a single managed service
- ☑ Early telephony success paving the way for centralisation