

CASE STUDY

School: Rush Croft Sports College
Location: Chingford, London
Type: Secondary



Attendance has improved, communication with parents made easier and telephone bills cut by an estimated £800 per year at Rush Croft Sports College, a 900-student secondary school in Chingford, East London, since the school installed Groupcall's Messenger text and voice alert system.

"We used the system recently to let parents know that the school was going to be closed due to adverse weather," explains Attendance Officer, Gareth Hunt. "Ordinarily that would be a process that would take us at least two hours. But, using the Groupcall system, we were able to contact all parents with either a text or voice message in around two minutes. And given that a text is cheaper than a call to a mobile, we estimate that we have been saving around £200 per quarter on our telephone bills in the year since we started using the system."

Groupcall Messenger allows schools to send text messages (SMS) to the mobile phones of parents, staff and other school contacts or voice messages to landlines or mobile phones, or emails in any language for a low monthly subscription fee. The system was developed in consultation with primary and secondary schools and provides First Day Contact, unauthorised absence chasing and general parental communication all in one integrated desktop solution. The Groupcall system reads student attendance information live and in real time from the school's management system.

Independent data from the Scottish Executive has proven that the system reduces truancy by nearly 30% and the system has also had a noticeable impact on attendance at Rush Croft.

"Parents have told us they like getting the messages by text because it gives them a chance to respond when it's most convenient for them to do so," adds Gareth. "And we have seen a knock-on effect in school, where attendance among the few persistent absentees has improved since we started sending the message alerts."

Since installing the system a year ago, Rush Croft has found itself increasingly using Groupcall Messenger as a routine channel of communication with parents, keeping them informed about a range of other school issues, from reminders about parents evenings and sports days to appraising them of issues more directly relevant to their individual children.

“With students, particularly where there may be a concern about behaviour, the school has started sending messages to let parents know whether their child’s behaviour on a particular day has been good or not. This keeps them more easily in the loop and enables them to have an informed conversation with their children at home in the evening.”

Messenger is installed in more than 750 primary and secondary schools throughout the UK, enabling all absences to be quickly investigated to ensure they are genuine and known about by parents. In so doing, it also drastically reduces administration time spent on the telephone and saves on telephone costs, providing an inexpensive and robust method of contacting all or groups of parents in the event of an emergency or change to the normal school day.

The system has been deliberately designed to be affordable. Subscription is geared to the number of pupils on roll. The result is that it can be offered to schools for approximately £1 per pupil per year. There is no additional cost for each email but there is a small additional monthly fee for schools wanting the email capability.

The software works with existing computers, existing telephony and existing infrastructure. There is no requirement on the school for data entry; installation causes no disruption to the day to day running of the school, and nor are schools tied in to long-term contracts.