

# UK college cuts malicious Office 365 emails by 20% after comprehensive email security refresh.

## The Sheffield College

The UK's education sector, like many around the world, has come under increasing scrutiny from opportunistic threat actors. As schools, further education colleges, and universities were forced to rely on remote learning to reach students during the pandemic, their exposure to ransomware and other threats dramatically increased. GCHQ's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) [was forced to release new guidance](#) following another surge in attacks in June 2021.

Yet one college in the north of England was well prepared for the onslaught.

"Around 18 months ago we started systematically experiencing targeted attacks coming from hackers from around the world and our incumbent was struggling to deal with it," explains Paul Warren, Head of IT and Development at [The Sheffield College](#). "We trialled Barracuda for a month and the drop rate for incoming malicious emails was massive."

The College had decided to trial Barracuda Networks' Total Email Protection platform after choosing the company for cloud-to-cloud backup for the college's Office 365 environment. After consulting his peers in the further education sector, many had positive things to say about the company.

He was also looking for a more intelligent and flexible email security solution.

"Our incumbent mail filtering system that we had at the time, while adequate, was actually lacking some of the newer AI-based capabilities. We were getting an abundance of junk," Paul explains. "We also found with our previous supplier that it was very difficult for us to control. You had to go through their support channels and whitelisting processes to actually get things unblocked."

### Profile

- The Sheffield College is a further education college in northern England
- It provides high quality academic, technical, and vocational training to around 15,000 students and apprentices
- The IT team run a hybrid infrastructure of on-premises and cloud

### Challenges

- An inflexible email security solution lacking in control
- Further education sector under threat from increasingly targeted attacks (ransomware, BEC, etc)

### Solution

- Barracuda Networks Total Email Protection including Cloud-to-Cloud Backup

### Results

- An estimated 20% reduction in spam and malicious emails
- Enabled tweaks and fine-tune control to improve protection
- Fast, effective incident response
- Easier management of email security and backup from a single pane of glass

A short trial was all it took for The College to make his mind up about the solution. “The first time we saw the product and had it running and tested it was pretty much sold,” he says.

## Comprehensive protection

Total Email Protection offers a suite of capabilities to help organizations prevent, detect, and respond to known and unknown threats. This includes AI-based blocking of social engineering attempts, Advanced Threat Protection for multi-layered security, encryption, DLP, account takeover protection and much more.

Deployment was straightforward for The Sheffield College, and then it was a case of fine-tuning the product to ensure it fit Warren’s exacting requirements.

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“As we were using it, the ability to do that allowed us really to rapidly change the way that we deal with incoming mail and outgoing mail.”

### Paul Warren

Head of IT and Development  
The Sheffield College

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## Faster, better, more secure

Total Email Protection immediately proved its worth in helping The Sheffield College to adapt to evolving cybercrime as the pandemic struck. Paul explains that there was a noticeable uptick in more targeted phishing attempts, using information on recipients harvested from social media.

“More and more FE colleges are being targeted by attacks and especially ransomware and we found we were having to adapt the product rapidly to the changing nature of what was going on,” he says. “The attacks were getting more sophisticated, and they were getting more personalized. But unlike our previous provider, Barracuda allows us to quite easily and rapidly change our filters to catch this stuff.”

As a result, The Sheffield College managed to cut spam from around 30% to 10% of emails with Barracuda Networks, and



Warren and his team are continually working to further refine and enhance these capabilities.

“If it wasn’t for Barracuda, I do believe we might have been breached when everyone was working from home, stressed out and with no interaction with colleagues,” he adds. “It can be difficult to hold onto your sanity and professional focus in those situations.” The product’s incident response capabilities have also been a hit.

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“If there’s a malicious email that’s got through, within 30 seconds Barracuda can find it flag it, drag it out of the mailbox and it’s sorted. It’s that kind of speed that sells the solution for us.”

### Paul Warren

Head of IT and Development  
The Sheffield College

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Knowledgeable and attentive phone support staff have also been well received at The Sheffield College, resolving most issues within 3-4 hours. And the range of capabilities offered from a single UI has enhanced IT productivity and reduced operational costs.

“With our previous way of doing things we’d all need to go into different systems and the training cost for staff to use the tools was quite high,” Paul explains. “Now we have a suite of products it all makes more sense. I can start to build a centrally held set of resource to manage IT. We all strive for a single pane of glass.”

As for the future, Paul and his team are interested in the product’s PhishLine security awareness training capabilities, and the roadmap for the solution over the coming 24 months as threats continue to evolve.

“There’s no endpoint to the journey. But attackers will get more specialized, and they’ll target us in new ways,” he concludes. “If the product develops then as we hope then it will continue to safeguard our staff and students, and I think our relationship with Barracuda will go from strength-to-strength.”

**Learn more about Barracuda Total Email Protection**

[barracuda.com/products/totalemailprotection](https://barracuda.com/products/totalemailprotection)