

## The Southport School Modernizes Security with Abnormal AI

Leading boarding school in Queensland protects against advanced email threats and unlocks Microsoft 365 security and compliance.



**Industry**  
Education

**Headquarters**  
Southport, Queensland,  
Australia

**Protected Mailboxes**  
2,000

Founded in 1901, The Southport School (TSS) is a leading Anglican day and boarding school for boys on Queensland's Gold Coast, serving Prep to Year 12. Known for its strong academics and holistic approach to boys' education, TSS combines innovative teaching, leadership development, and co-curricular excellence in a diverse community of more than 1,700 students.

### The Southport School Email Security Challenge

Over two decades at TSS, CIO Richard Humphreys has seen cyber risk evolve into one of the school's most significant operational risks as systems moved to the cloud and identity became the new perimeter. Email remained the primary entry point for attacks, but as threat actors shifted from malware to increasingly sophisticated social engineering, TSS recognized that traditional secure email gateways (SEG) were no longer enough. Mimecast improved security when it was first deployed, but advanced threats still bypassed its static rules and signatures. The SEG also limited visibility within Microsoft 365, delaying broader security, compliance, and data governance initiatives.

### Customer Key Challenges

- Stop impersonation attacks aimed at executives and finance staff.
- Reduce effort spent releasing messages and whitelisting senders.
- Restore Microsoft 365 mail flow for Purview and Defender.

### Abnormal Solution

- API-native email security provides post-delivery Microsoft 365 protection without MX changes.
- Inbound Email Security autonomously detects and remediates advanced email threats that bypass traditional controls.
- Email Productivity automatically learns users' preferences for graymail management to move messages to the preferred folder.

"Abnormal's Behavioral AI understands how our staff actually communicate and what 'normal' looks like. It's given us protection against sophisticated impersonation and BEC attacks that routinely bypassed our traditional gateway, while letting us modernise on our Microsoft 365 security stack."

Richard Humphreys  
CIO



# Customer Case Study

**170+**

advanced attacks  
stopped per month

**113.8K**

graymail messages  
sorted per month

**100%**

reduction in employee time  
spent on remediation

## The Abnormal AI Solution

Abnormal gave TSS a modern, cloud-native alternative to rules-based email security. Instead of relying on static rules and signatures, Abnormal uses behavioral AI to understand how users communicate, who they interact with, and what "normal" looks like across the organization. This enables Abnormal to detect and remediate the sophisticated threats targeting TSS, including BEC, impersonation, and vendor fraud. Abnormal has restored native Microsoft 365 mail flow, improving the school's visibility across its broader security stack.

## Why The Southport School Chose Abnormal

TSS continues to invest in Abnormal because it delivers outcomes the school could not achieve with a traditional SEG. Abnormal stops the impersonation and phishing attempts that previously reached staff inboxes, particularly those targeting executives and finance workflows. The IT team spends less time releasing held messages, troubleshooting false positives, and tuning brittle rules, and more time on strategic work like its Microsoft Purview program. Additionally, Abnormal's Email Productivity automatically sorts graymail into a dedicated promotions folder based on user preferences, allowing them to better focus on important messages. And with native Microsoft 365 mail flow restored, Defender and Purview now see the full email signal, enabling consistent sensitivity labelling, data loss prevention, and encryption and strengthening TSS's overall security posture.

## Modernizing Security For an AI-Driven Future

For TSS, adopting Abnormal was about more than replacing one email security tool with another. It marked a shift from perimeter-centric, gateway-based security to an AI-driven, cloud-native model aligned to Zero Trust and identity-first principles. With Abnormal, TSS has stronger protection against impersonation and BEC, better visibility across its environment, and a more streamlined architecture that enables long-term data governance and compliance.

"For TSS, adopting Abnormal wasn't just about improving email security; it was about modernising our entire approach. We've moved from a perimeter-based model to an AI-driven, cloud-native solution that integrates seamlessly with our Microsoft investment."

Richard Humphreys  
CIO

### Abnormal Products in use:

- Inbound Email Security
- Email Productivity

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