

GDPR: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOUR SCHOOL?

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G DPR seems like an overwhelming requirement that schools have been left to cope with, without any clear direction from local authorities - or anyone, for that matter. But is it something schools need outside help with? The answer is: not really, as long as you've put systems and procedures in place. The fact is, schools are pretty procedure-led and are doing some of what is needed already, so you won't be starting completely from scratch!

To be compliant, schools need to follow the guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office. Essentially, there are five main areas to consider:

1. People

Make sure your governors, trustees and SLT all know what your school needs to do to meet the requirements - and that the staff are aware of their roles in helping the school to achieve this.

Appointing a Data Protection Officer has proved the most challenging task for schools so far, not least because the chosen person must be impartial and not know the staff and students whose data they will be viewing.

Schools are finding that reciprocal relationships with other schools, or suitably qualified governors or trustees, could be viable solutions.

2. Data: what and where

Schools need to know what personal data they have, where it is stored, and whether it is contained in physical or online files. There are software tools available to help with this, e.g. NetSupport DNA will reveal where online data-type files are, plus will log what software is being used across the school - even teachers' personal favourite apps - ready for you to check what data they extract from your users and whether it's in line with GDPR requirements.

3. Protecting and handling personal information

Update your school's policies to take account of GDPR and upload the appropriate new versions to your website. Implement a manageable procedure to ensure you can follow the process to find, delete or disclose any data that is requested from you by a parent or member of staff - and keep a comprehensive log. Regarding

consent, schools already record this; you'll just need to make sure that the way you're doing it meets the GDPR standard.

4. Report and record

Should a data breach occur in your school (like a memory stick being left in a classroom PC overnight), don't panic. Just make sure that staff know the requirement to report it within 72 hours. The school must record the breach and be able to confirm whether the data was accessed or not, i.e. was the classroom locked or was the memory stick encrypted? Note down everything.

5. Evidence

This needs no explanation; your evidence is your protection to cover you should any breach and subsequent inquiry occur - and, if you have it, it's one less thing to worry about.

In a nutshell, that's it! If you organise and share the preparation workload between colleagues, by acting immediately, you'll not only feel better about GDPR, but will realise that it's not anything schools can't cope with.

