

HOW CAN MAT SCHOOLS MAKE THE BEST USE OF THEIR IT?



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It takes a good deal of planning and it certainly doesn't happen overnight, but one of the primary benefits of operating as a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) means that significant savings (alongside central HR and Finance functions) can be made on IT to make next year's budget go the extra mile. At the very highest level, a MAT can standardise its network and centrally procure the services it runs in all its schools, offering economies of scale and efficiency savings on things such as licensing and maintenance contracts. Plus, the significance of being a MAT can mean more power to negotiate contract terms to improve value for money across the group – or work with a supplier to develop, test and implement any bespoke functionality required, by having more influence than if it was a standalone school.

Bringing it all together

Traditionally, some schools have been reluctant to spend on non-teaching IT solutions, seeing them as an unnecessary expense. However, having a secure platform on which to run educational applications (and more) and that unifies all the schools in the group is a huge advantage.

So what are the benefits of a collaborative IT landscape? Firstly, technology can help overcome distance barriers between individual MAT schools by allowing technical support and reporting to be carried out from a central point. Reporting in this way, especially in areas such as safeguarding, will highlight differences between schools, allowing school leaders to examine successful practices and adapt and apply them to other schools. Also in this area, for example, if all schools add their own safeguarding terms to a single database, it will prove much more effective as they can all benefit from the input, rather than be working in isolation.

Can the right IT save money?

Absolutely. Now that schools have a tonne of technology on board, it makes sense to be well informed about how it's

all working – and IT Asset Management (ITAM) solutions are the perfect tool for this. Gathering up-to-date data on all devices, they provide technicians with a wealth of information to ensure efficiency on software use and spending. For example, by monitoring application usage, technicians can see where infrequently used software licences can be redeployed to areas where they will be used fully – instead of just buying more licences. Likewise for devices: the data provided by an ITAM solution can show which hardware can be upgraded rather than be replaced and where devices can be redeployed to maximise their use. Recycling in this way is a great way to reduce spending and, across a MAT, is even more powerful.

There will always be times when PCs get left on over weekends. But, by using technology to monitor energy use and then subsequently invoke automatic power management policies to ensure PCs are powered down out of school hours, schools can begin to make savings instantly. And likewise for printing: restrictions can be put in place to limit paper and toner use to cut these costs too.

ITAM technology allows technicians to maximise their time spent keeping the network secure and reliable by automating tasks and setting up proactive alerts to warn them of potential faults or issues before they occur. In this way, disruption to staff and students can be minimised and learning can continue uninterrupted.

Saving time is saving money

As a technology enabler, ITAM delivers a tangible return on investment for MATs by maximising efficiency of their single network and providing a safe and productive environment from which to enhance learning outcomes. Its time-saving features will benefit SLT, technicians, staff and students, and the cost implications of downtime will be minimised. It's certainly worthwhile MATs checking out this technology, as the benefits make multi-school asset management more cost-efficient and so much easier.

