

"SCHOOLS HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF OVERVIEWS; IT'S SPECIFICS THEY NEED NOW" SAYS AL KINGSLEY ON GDPR FOR SCHOOLS

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The late arrival of official guidance and support available for schools ahead of the introduction of general data protection regulations (GDPR) this May is a serious problem in education.

Until very recently, many schools have been left to interpret the vague guidelines for GDPR and decide how best to implement them. This has resulted in confusion – even leaving some schools feeling that they have no option other than to enlist paid-for services, rather than negotiate the minefield themselves.

Now that information is finally beginning to come through from the Department for Education (DfE) and is being disseminated by Local Authorities, instead of providing clarity, for some the debate is becoming even more fraught, as schools feel that they are still not being given enough detailed guidance (or support) to be ready in time for the deadline”.

The DfE has very recently released the first of its school-specific video guides to GDPR, with the promise of more to follow. However, the feedback from schools so far is that, at this relatively late stage, the information is too general, as the guidance required by a large secondary school that

is part of an academy trust is quite different than that for a rural primary. Al explains, “Schools have simply had enough of ‘headline’ topics; it’s specifics that they need now.”

There has been much scaremongering about GDPR. However, the reality is that schools are already carrying out some of the functions it demands – i.e. recording consent – so they just need to check that they are doing this to the required standard.

Using software tools such as NetSupport DNA can greatly help schools with aspects of their GDPR compliance. A major plus point is its data discovery tool. This helps schools to know what confidential online data they actually have (including duplicates, revisions and personal copies) and where it is located. This knowledge immediately puts them in a better position in terms of carrying out an information audit – and, significantly, to know when data has been lost and to be able to report it in a timely manner.

Al Kingsley says: “With the latest update to NetSupport DNA, we’re making the burden of GDPR a little lighter for our existing customers. The fact that they can now gain a clear picture of where their online data is located and then use remote control

features to quickly access any PC or laptop on the network to remove or move confidential files, is a major help.”

An effective software licensing module also helps schools keep track of the software they use (including as teachers’ personal favourite apps) as well as highlighting whether it is GDPR-compliant. In addition, its USB stick endpoint security can be used to lock down data for set periods with its usage controls – and alerting tools highlight when any number of changes occur on the school network, helping IT Managers improve network security and prevent data breaches.

GDPR aims to return control of personal data back to individuals, so with the database and administration tools, schools can identify a particular student and instantly find specified data ready for requested disclosure – or delete it, as required.

Al concludes: “In addition, with our existing endpoint security and alerting module to help prevent data breaches occurring – plus the comprehensive software licensing module that allows schools to keep track of every piece of software they use (and record whether it is GDPR compliant), NetSupport DNA makes what could prove a potentially arduous task, so much easier.”