

HOW DOES I.T. HELP YOUR SCHOOL WORK SMARTER?

How does IT help your school work smarter?



By AL KINGSLEY, Managing Director of NetSupport and Chair of a Multi Academy Trust

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Decision making
First of all, schools need to appreciate the benefit of managing and identifying their whole IT portfolio rather than just concentrating on specific areas. Using an IT asset management solution that tracks, monitors and manages the entire infrastructure is the easiest way to do this. Not only does it provide a real-time overview of their IT, showing the exact items of hardware and software it has (and where they are), but it also gathers a wealth of data to inform decision making and allow accurate planning of future IT spending and refresh plans.

Published by Education Today

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For example, it can reveal which applications are installed but rarely used (and therefore do not need renewing or can be redeployed elsewhere), and which PCs can be upgraded rather than replaced. Using

energy monitoring tools, schools can also calculate energy usage from PCs left on overnight and invoke policies to schedule 'power on/off' times. The same principle applies for printing. High paper and toner costs are common in many schools, but technology can show where expenses are being generated and allow printing limits to be set.

In addition to identifying cost savings, (including the cost of school IT itself), an IT asset management solution can also be used to help save time by eliminating manual checks and fostering a proactive environment. For instance, keeping a network secure and reliable using manual procedures is time-consuming; with a solution that automates tasks and alerts technicians to potential issues, disruption from downtime can be minimised and learning can continue uninterrupted.

Safeguarding

As safeguarding continues to be a key focus for Ofsted and the DfE, schools should ensure they have the tools in place to fulfil their requirements. Using standalone safeguarding solutions will cover the basics such as internet filtering and keyword

monitoring - however, when schools opt for a solution offering a joined up approach, they can apply age-specific web controls or take safeguarding to the next level by having a complete picture of any safeguarding event; even ones that are not just browser-based, e.g. what time the student logged in, on which PC or device, what websites or applications they used before and after the event, and what keywords were typed, copied or pasted. These extra details not only provide context but can also highlight trending issues among student groups, enabling the school to become proactive rather than reactive.

Evidence for Ofsted

One of the key benefits of this kind of technology is that all data - e.g. from tracking AUPs to viewing safeguarding activity reports - is stored digitally. It's easy to access and ensures everything is covered ready for Ofsted inspections or submitting evidence.

In short, schools should really consider an IT asset management solution - particularly if they have a large number of devices. The benefits are significant and with so many different technologies in use within schools, working smarter is the only outcome.

