WHITE PAPER:

Key considerations for schools

Advancements in technology are making for a much more collaborative and efficient learning environment, however with these advancements comes increased cyber threats and risks.

Our white paper, written by our IT Services expert Adam Blades, will help you to understand what you should be taking into consideration to keep your school protected, safe and secure.

Pace of change and the costs associated

Technology is always on the move and budgets are being stretched more than ever. Schools are having to strike a balance between technology advancements and the costs associated whilst looking to improve or upkeep security requirements and adoption rates.

The pandemic increased the pace of change with more lessons incorporating or relying on technology as a method of delivery. This change has now become the norm and common practice across education environments which has left some schools and academies either allocating more budget to IT pulling from other streams or gradually looking to implement more technology organically. Unfortunately, this method can be seen to have a detrimental effect on cohort numbers, staff retention or advancements in lessons delivered overall.

Incorporating a strong and decisive IT strategy procurement and delivery plan can begin to put education organisations on or ahead of the curve whilst satisfying budgetary requirements.

Security

With more smart devices and software being deployed within school environments, this can lead to more security problems. The implementation of smart boards, tablets and Internet of things (IoT) connected devices has brought significant advancements in learning experience environments, but it has also increased the security threat parameters that a school needs to consider and defend against. Therefore, Schools must first understand the cyber security risks that these advancements can bring and how best to protect their networks and users. Whether that is evaluating and improving their cyber security solution, additional training or implementing further solutions in line with an IT strategy.

The first steps of this should include a review of passwords, multi-factor authentication procedures and if software patches are managed and applied in a timely manner according to a hierarchy of threat.

The next point of action would be to review long term security – look at network vulnerabilities - have default settings and passwords been changed on IoT devices? Is regular Cyber training being attended, completed and practiced? Are the main attack vectors of email/cloud applications secure with multiple layers of security?

Backup of cloud services

Daily (at a minimum) backups, that are immutable are becoming a requirement for education organisations that have made a move into cloud services such as 365 or G-Suite. Ensuring that recovery of data from instances of data corruption or loss (whether that be due to security breaches or innocent errors) is both immediately available to restore and does not purge data is becoming common place.

Schools are high value targets to criminal elements especially through cloud services and IoT devices as previously mentioned. The ability to restore from a previous backup on a cloud-to-cloud restore system can be the difference between schools being heavily hit by attacks and manually restoring data, costing time, money and reputation. Or being able to identify an attack, restore from a previous backup of immutable data and continue working quickly with little to no affect.

Time to install, support, deploy, train and manage

In today's budget sensitive economy schools are requiring more from their IT teams than ever before, whether that be day to day support and upkeep of networks or implementing project work and new systems. The strain on resource and technical expertise can sometimes become a detrimental factor that slows deployment or affects user adoption rates and can even stop a project completely which can drain budgets or have further affects throughout the rest of the school.

Many schools look to co-source or co-manage their environments via outsourcing to IT professionals. This can keep budgets stable and add further layers of IT expertise whilst achieving high levels of delivery and support.

For further advice, or to speak to one of our IT experts visit acsitservices.co.uk