



Guidance

Moving your school to the cloud

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Why is the cloud important?

The cloud describes systems or services that are hosted and managed online, rather than locally in the school building. Computers, including mobile devices and smartphones, now increasingly operate in this way.

Moving your systems and services to the cloud:

- has the potential to make services more useful and engaging
- can break down barriers you encounter with older systems, such as remote access
- can lead to a cost saving
- can be more secure

Some of your community will already be experiencing the benefits of having made the move to the cloud including parents, pupils and staff. They will now expect this kind of service in all aspects of their lives.

You may already be using some cloud-based services, such as:

- communication tools - including email, instant messaging, video conferencing and telephony
- new versions of core office applications - including online collaborative versions of word processor, presentation and spreadsheet software
- specialist applications - including HR and finance systems, management information systems (MIS) and curriculum software and content
- back office systems - including document storage, backup, content, filtering and user and device management

- online servers - for example, full versions of school servers hosted online and managed over the internet

Some schools may have everything in the cloud with a server free solution. For others, a 'hybrid' approach will be suitable, with a mix of cloud and locally hosted systems or services.

Moving to the cloud can be gradual and specific to your school's or trust's requirements.

Benefits for schools

Economy - saving money

Moving to cloud-based services can reduce costs by:

- reducing licence costs – leading technology providers offer free-to-use cloud services, including communication tools and core office applications
- using cloud only user devices – cost effective and reliable devices, designed to link directly to cloud applications, are widely available and usually cheaper than the systems they replace
- using pay as you go services – some cloud-based services are charged on a pay as you go basis
- saving money on the energy required to run and cool on-site servers

Cloud based services could also help financial planning as you:

- move to predictable annual subscriptions
- may see a reduction in capital refresh costs - for example, reducing the need to replace old servers
- do not need to replace 'cloud only' devices as often, and it may extend the lifespan of older devices

Efficiency – saving teachers' time

Moving to cloud-based services can:

- give staff the flexibility to access services from wherever they are, using the devices that are most convenient for them
- support collaboration by helping staff to easily share and co-author documents, files, lesson content and plans – reducing duplication of effort

- make it easier for teachers and pupils to research, analyse and use new curriculum resources
- reduce the time it takes to access data and applications anywhere, due to faster log in times

Effectiveness – what you can do

Moving to cloud-based services can make it easier to access applications and content, wherever there is an internet connection:

- reducing the workload of local technical support teams, as applications can be automatically updated and managed
- mitigating the risk of files and data being lost

It could also support flexible working as you can access data remotely at any time.

What schools should consider

If you're thinking about moving to cloud-based services, you should consider the following questions.

How are you using the cloud already?

You should consider:

- what cloud-based services you're already using
- whether staff, pupils or parents are using unofficial services, where you are not currently using a cloud-based service
- if you're using services to their full potential
- your current mix of old and new systems
- what benefits you've seen by using these services – such as efficiency, access, security and online safety

Could you use more cloud-based services?

You should consider:

- what other functions you could use in the cloud

- how you would introduce this functionality to teachers and pupils
- how using cloud-based services would support your overall school strategy
- whether you need a cloud champion to support your school or multi-academy trust strategy
- how much you could save and how to reinvest it
- whether you can make use of a cloud system already being used in your area or multi-academy trust
- what you can learn from existing developments and expertise

Do you have the right infrastructure?

You should think about whether your:

- current internet connection is sufficient – many schools will need a full fibre connection
- school network offers the right level of connectivity – many schools will use both wired and wireless infrastructure

Both of these can act as a single point of failure. Plan how to make your system as resilient as possible as part of your move to the cloud.

More information is available in:

- [Broadband for schools: introductory guide](#)
- [Assessing your school ICT infrastructure](#)

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

You may need to update your policies for managing personal data as part of your move to the cloud.

The [data protection toolkit for schools](#) includes more information.

Procurement

DfE's commercial team has a range of advice and guidance to help you secure value for money and make the best use of your resources.

More information is available in:

- [Buying for schools guidance](#) which provides advice and guidance
- [Deals for Schools](#) which can help you get cheaper prices through pre-negotiated contracts across a range of technology products and services

Further information

Department for Education

Our [Cloud computing: how schools can move services to the cloud](#) and [Cloud software services: how schools should protect data](#) provides further information for schools on the cloud.

National Cyber Security Centre

The National Cyber Security Centre's [Understanding cloud security](#) guidance provides further information on cloud security that schools should consider.

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