

Schools' ICT Factsheet 3

Hosting MIS Data and Systems

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Hosting of schools MIS data & systems

The primary pilot project

This is primarily about the possibilities of removing the burden of technically supporting administrative systems (including SIMS) in schools and making MIS more widely available more simply. The approach also supports anytime, anywhere access for all staff via remote access and makes it easier to implement links to learning platforms in a managed learning environment to provide access to a wide range of stakeholders. Current plans aim for approximately 50 schools to pilot during the Autumn Term 2007. More information can be found by searching for “Centrally Hosted MIS” on the Education Portal. This project was formerly known as the Managed ICT Service.

Potential benefits to schools

- Cost benefits: a centrally managed system removes the need for each school to set up its own systems and support and manage them. It therefore allows schools to **focus resources on strategic and innovative use of ICT** rather than operational needs.
- Easing the path to remote access to SIMS. This is part of a number of government objectives: **improving teacher access to MIS** (and other systems), flexible working and **workforce reform**. A centrally managed service should enable remote access solutions to be implemented more easily (and cheaply). This should also generate some savings in staff time.
- Centrally managed upgrades and backups. Upgrades occur more or less monthly, taking around half a day to complete, **saving staff time in schools**.
- Enabling SIMS to run on any computer capable of running a web browser. This effectively **extends the lifetime of office computers by at least a year**, equivalent to the cost of a PC or more per year, even in relatively small schools. It also enables **SIMS to run on equipment that would otherwise be incapable of doing so**.
- Enabling **SIMS to run in the classroom with no installation or upgrade costs**. Access to MIS is critical to school improvement. In most schools the cost of giving all teaching staff access to SIMS (in terms of installation costs and equipment upgrades) will be significant.
- Managing security: Direct access into schools’ networks represents a significant security risk to the school. A single centrally managed service **simplifies the management of security** and **makes school systems less vulnerable to attack** while **opening up access**.

How it works

The systems we are aiming to include are SIMS.net, FMS, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), Dinner Money and Outlook-based email (irrespective of email provider). These would all be running on a central shared server maintained by the Education ICT service. Schools would access this via a web browser. Once logged in the use of the systems is identical to using them now, so the training implications are minimal. A key point is that **nothing has to be installed in school** – all that is required is a web browser (and a user ID and password, of course). Remote access requires additional authentication by way of a key fob device to protect sensitive information from hacking attempts.

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