Selecting Broadband Connectivity for your School

Management Summary

This paper sets out in broad terms a process for deciding (a) whether at any particular time a broadband upgrade is advisable and (b) if so what issues need to be considered when selecting a supplier.

After the **Introduction** we set out the extent to which the **School Development Plan** defines the requirements of the broadband connection. Having defined the school's various objectives what level of broadband is required to support them? This section provides a definition of "the cloud" and makes some general comments about services increasingly being provided in this way.

In order to decide whether an upgrade is required the site's **current usage** needs to be audited to see whether the existing connection is restricting the ability of staff and students to fully utilise the tools and content available online.

For schools that are part of multi-site organisations (be they formal Multi Academy Trusts or a looser collective such as a senior school purchasing for itself and feeder primaries) there is a discussion around the issues of **multi-site purchasing** of broadband services. In such cases there are additional contractual, "political" and legal complications that need some consideration if the contract is to prove sustainable and fit each member's needs in the longer term.

There then follows a more technical discussion on the appropriateness (**What connection type is Appropriate?**) of two particular technologies (symmetric, asymmetric) and provisioning (Fibre Leased Line, FTTP, FTTC). The most appropriate is a contract delivered over either as a *Fibre Leased Line* or *FTTP* but these are not always readily available or affordable. The key recommendation is that any contract should future proof connectivity by providing an easy, predictable, and capital costless upgrade path to higher speeds as required.

Challenges to schools' ability to provide the ideal broadband connection at a reasonable, sustainable cost - particularly in rural areas - are noted here.

What you should be looking for in a potential supplier is considered in **What to expect from a supplier?** This looks at both the physical infrastructure and its management together with various optional services which can be supplied either by the main supplier or a third party.

There follows a brief reference to the government's **Local Full Fibre Initiative** (LFFN) which includes the potential for connecting schools to the Internet via FTTP and is currently (2018) being piloted in several regions of the UK.

Finally, there is a summary and **Conclusion** followed by a **Glossary** of terms.