Schools IT News

Suffolk County Council

Welcome to the Suffolk County Council Schools IT Newsletter.

A range of the services we offer can be found on our new website, which can be visited by clicking on the following link:

https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/it-services-for-schools-and-academies

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CAPITA SIMS

SIMS news and updates

School Census Spring 2021

The following information is correct at time of publishing, should anything change we will email schools directly

The Spring 2021 School Census Date is 21st January 2021

For Guidance documentation, please use the following link Data items - Complete the school census - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The most recent fileset is Fileset 1703 this has been placed in your anycomms miscellaneous folder, please extract it and import into SIMS.net
We will advise you when the next fileset is released to you.

The Census Helpline number is 01473 260666, and will be open:-
18th – 22nd January 2021
8.30am – 5.00pm Monday to Thursday
8.30am – 4.30pm Friday

The SIMS Support team will be able to help you with Census queries at other times if you log a call with the IT Service Desk in the normal way by calling 01473 265555 or emailing ITServiceDesk@suffolk.gov.uk

If logging a call for any other SIMS issue during the period when the helpline is open, please advise the Service Desk how urgent the issue is so that calls may be prioritised.

The main change for this census is that **ALL** attendance categories will be collected for the first time and we recommend that the schools read the guidance from the DfE found HERE

If you have any queries regarding the above, please log a call for the SIMS Support team with the IT Service Desk in the normal way by calling 01473 265555 or emailing ITServiceDesk@suffolk.gov.uk

SIMS Primary webinar

Capita will be hosting a SIMS Primary webinar to demo their cloud-based solution. We will be sending joining instructions in the next monthly newsletter. Save the date in your diary now ***Thursday 25th February – 10:30-11:30***

DfE's Get Help with Technology Scheme

For school closures, or where more than 15 children are self-isolating, schools can order a pre-determined allocation of computers from the DfE. This is triggered through the daily DfE educational setting status form. You can log on here to see your school's allocation.

Suffolk County Council have distributed over 1000 computers via the DfE scheme for children with a social worker. If you are supporting a young person who has a social worker and you feel they do not have sufficient access to a computer, please contact the young person's social worker or personal adviser directly so that they can request one from this scheme. There are only a limited number of computers remaining, but SCC are exploring how this can be sustained.

In addition to these schemes:

We are aware that schools have been using the Pupil Premium Grant to secure additional devices to support remote learning.

We are also aware that Vodaphone's schools connected scheme is providing 30GB free data only SIMs connectivity for 90 days for schools and colleges. This is intended for disadvantaged young people to support remote learning. Our understanding of the scheme is that all SIMs are pre-configured to block age-restricted content when using the Vodaphone network. Please contact Vodaphone directly to find out more.

For more information please contact: dfelaptopscheme@suffolk.gov.uk

IT Services Survey

Suffolk County Council are continuing to update and improve IT Services and it is important, particularly with the current Covid-19 Pandemic, that we undertand how we can continue to support our schools and academies to function during this time. Therefore we will shortly be sending out a survey and invite you to take part, your input would help us to fully understand your needs.

Please keep a look out for the link that we will send to you via email later this month.

Schools Email Service

A reminder that O365 mailboxes need to be requested for new starters via our website using the following link https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/it-services-for-schools-and-academies/request-a-school-mailbox-account/.

We would also like to emphasise the importance of letting us know about any members of staff that will be leaving their post in order that we can delete their mailbox in a timely manner and to ensure that the school is not charged for these mailboxes at renewal time. Please note that any requests for deletions must come from the person managing the email service within the school/academy. There will be a new form set up on our website and will be availble for use very shortly.

Ask IT – What is the current SCC IT advice regarding password security?

This is a good question that we get regularly. We can give you some recommendations but please bear in mind that whatever a school chooses to implement very much depends on it's own risk appetite.

We would recommend the below as a minimum:

- It must be at least 10 characters long - 15 for system admin accounts.
- not contain your name, username or the name of your organisation or office or your home town.
- not contain any words, names or phrases that someone could obtain from social media.
- not contain a single complete dictionary word (You can use three dictionary words together).
- be significantly different from previous passwords.
- contain three of the following four character types:
  - upper case letters (e.g. A B C)
  - lower case letters (e.g. a b c)
  - numbers (e.g. 1 2 3)
  - keyboard symbols (e.g. * % &)
- Never use a dictionary word as hackers can try to use known lists of millions of known passwords if they are trying to guess (Brute Force) your account.
- Never use your name, username, office location, or any other information that may be available on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat etc).

- Never write down your password and leave the paper near the device where it is used as it would be very easy for someone to use your password to logon to our systems. It can be stored somewhere personal e.g. your purse or wallet, for reference until you have remembered it but make sure there is no username or any other indication of what the password references.

- Always use a different password for each different username or ID, both at work and at home.
- Never re-use a password you have previously used in case it is known by someone.

You can find further advice on the NCSC website at:

Password policy: updating your approach - NCSC.GOV.UK

If you have an IT question for the newsletter or would like further advice on cybersecurity then please contact us at: ITServicedesk@suffolk.gov.uk

2-factor and Multi-factor Authentication (2FA / MFA)

In our September newsletter we provided a reminder about the importance of mailbox security, specifically around sharing username and passwords of mail accounts with colleagues. Alongside this we frequently get asked about 2-factor and multi-factor authentication.

"Two-factor authentication (2FA) helps to stop hackers from getting into your accounts, even if they have your password. Some online banking uses 2FA automatically. It does this by asking for more information to prove your identity, such as a PIN, password or code" (NCSC)

Currently mail accounts provided by Suffolk County Council do not have 2FA switched on due to previously defined requirements. However, given the ever increasing threats around cyber security we will be looking to implement this in 2021. We will contact schools who currently take the service with further information as we make the changes required for 2FA.

The National Cyber Security Centre provides a full guide about setting up 2-factor authentication:

Setting up two-factor authentication (2FA) - NCSC.GOV.UK

You can also find more details about protecting your school from Ransomware attacks on Schools IT pages at:

Ransomware advice for academia | Suffolk County Council

If you have an IT question for the newsletter or would like further advice on cybersecurity then please contact us at: ITServicedesk@suffolk.gov.uk

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How to contact us

You should continue to raise all standard incidents and service requests via the IT Service Desk on 01473 265555 or via itservicedesk@suffolk.gov.uk, our offices are open 08:30-17:00, Monday-Friday.

We have setup a new mailbox for non-standard queries, e.g. enquiring about a new service, please email us at Schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk

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Schools IT Pricelist and Order Form

Local Authority (LA) maintained schools who buy into the Enhanced SIMS Service can order hardware from our IT procurement team. The price list and order form are available on request by contacting the team on itservicedesk@suffolk.gov.uk.