

Schools' IT Newsletter

DECEMBER 2023

Included in this month's issue:

- MIS Procurement Update
- Sims & FMS Autumn 2023 release
- Preparation for the next census
- Cyber Security Training for School Staff
- Contact Details

Suffolk County Council's IT Department would like to take this opportunity to wish all our colleagues in schools and academies, a very Merry Christmas and we hope that you all enjoy a very Happy New Year.





MIS PROCUREMENT UPDATE

FOR LA MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Following the article in the November newsletter, we have completed the initial supplier demos.

We included a group of LA maintained schools who were recommended by our colleagues from CYP. But we would like to make these demos available to all LA maintained schools who wish to view them and provide feedback. Several schools as a cross representation of our LA Schools community are now engaged in more detailed requirements capture, as the next step in the procurement process.

If you would like a copy of the recordings, please contact Andrew.brown2@suffolk.gov.uk by 22/12/2023. The recording can only be shared with people who have a school mail address, we are unable to send these to private email accounts.

Once viewed please provide your questions, feedback and any specific requirements by 26/01/2024 so we can collate these responses for the next stage of the procurement process.

Although our contract with SIMS and FMS doesn't run out until 31st March 2025, this is a major piece of work, and we are unable to move the project completion date. We recognise our tight deadlines may not work for everyone, so although your participation is recommended, it is not essential to help us choose a new MIS and finance supplier for our LA maintained schools.

As a local authority our procurement process is tightly regulated, so we would ask schools not to contact potential suppliers directly or speculate on the outcome at this stage of the process.



SIMS and FMS 2023 AUTUMN RELEASE

We are pleased to inform you that the Autumn 2023 upgrade for SIMS. net and FMS has been released on 15/11/23. This will be downloaded and applied via SOLUS3.

SIMS and FMS release notes

Please find the SIMS and FMS release notes that include details of any new features:

SIMS

http://sims.eadidom.com/Downloads/Documentation/SIMS_Combined_Autumn_2023.pdf

FMS

http://sims.eadidom.com/Downloads/Documentation/FMS_Autumn_2023.pdf

This will upgrade SIMS. net to version 7.214 and FMS to 6.214.

Please be aware there are **no** new base lookups in the release.

Guidance on how to upgrade your system can be found:

http://sims.eadidom.com/Downloads/Documentation/Deploying_an_Update_or_Patch.pdf

Enhanced SIMS schools:

We will contact any school who buys into Enhanced SIMS to discuss the release. This will be scheduled in SOLUS3 to be applied out of school hours or be carried out by a member of the SIMS support team during school hours.

Remote Support Academies:

We will contact any academy who buy into Remote Support to discuss the release. This will be scheduled in SOLUS3 to be applied out of school hours or be carried out by a member of the SIMS support team during school hours.

If you have any questions or problems with your upgrade, please contact the IT Helpdesk on 01473 265555 or email itservicedesk@suffolk.gov.uk.

Preparation for Next Census - 18th January 2024

You may have read the release notes for the Autumn upgrade that brings Sims .Net to version 7.214; a link to this can be obtained from the Useful Information section.

Please ensure that you prepare for this and perform a dry run before census date to remedy as many queries and errors as possible. Documentation can be obtained from the ESS statutory returns link within the Useful Information section below.

School Census Spring 2024 Key Dates:

- Census day 18/01/2024
- Attendance collected from 01/09/2023 to 31/12/2023
- Exclusions collected from 10/04/2023 to 31/12/2023
- Alternative Provision Placements collected from 05/10/2023 to 18/01/2024
- Funding and Monitoring collected from 01/08/2023 to 18/01/2024
- Free School Meal Eligibility collected from 06/10/2023 to 18/01/2024

Please remember that free school meals do not have an end date, if a pupil has qualified then they do not need to re-apply until at least the Summer of 2025.

“Transitional protections were initially enacted with an end date of March 2022, the date the rollout of Universal Credit was due to end. When the end date moved to March 2023 the Government extended the protections in line with this date. As the rollout is continuing, the end date for transitional protections is being further extended to March 2025.”

DfE Sita Data Items 2023 to 2024 (accessed 30th November 2023)

Filesets:

As and when filesets become available, we will endeavour to release these via Anycomms as soon as possible. However, notification will be sent to the schools designated mailbox, please ensure that someone checks the mailbox for updates. As of 30/11/2023, ESS are working on fileset 2603, no date for release is available yet.

DFE Site

Please ensure that you can login to the DFE collect site as you may find that there is a significant delay in DFE response on census week.

Census Line Open Times (15th to 19th January)

- Monday to Thursday 0830hrs to 1700hrs
- Friday 0830hrs to 1200hrs

Useful Information:

- [DfE School Census Dates](#)
- [DfE Class Information](#)
- [ESS News Hub England](#)
- [ESS Fileset Series 2600](#)
- [ESS Spring Census 2024](#)
- [ESS Statutory Returns](#)



Cyber Security Training for School Staff

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) have produced a free training package to help raise awareness, so that school staff can manage some of the key threats facing schools today.

Please see the link below for more information:

[Cyber security training for school staff - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

The NCSC has also provided lots of other useful, practical tips for school staff to enable their understanding of cyber security. There are downloadable cards to help raise schools' resilience to cyber incidents.

With the rise in internet usage, it is important to educate children of all ages to understand the risks they face when using the web and what to do when they encounter them. There are a lot of useful resources contained on the NCSC website, a few of which we have highlighted below.

Educating Children around Cyber Security:

A new online game Cyber Sprinters, has been launched by the NCSC aimed at children aged 7 to 11 on how to stay secure online. This is a free resource and can be found using this link:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/cybersprinters-interactive-game>

There is also a new interactive video, CyberFirst Navigators, aimed at pre-teens and young teenagers, this is about raising awareness on the potential dangers/risks of using the internet. Again, you can find this information using the following link:

[New interactive video - and related downloads - to help... - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

CONTACT THE IT SERVICE DESK!

Please note that the Schools IT Services mailbox is for sales enquiries and is only monitored periodically. Therefore, if you have a query with regards to a new service, please send an email to schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk.

All standard incidents and service requests **must** be raised via the IT Service Desk on 01473 265555 or via itservicedesk@suffolk.gov.uk otherwise this will result in any responses being delayed.

Our offices are open from 8.30am to 5pm Monday - Friday

