

Schools' IT Newsletter

September 2024

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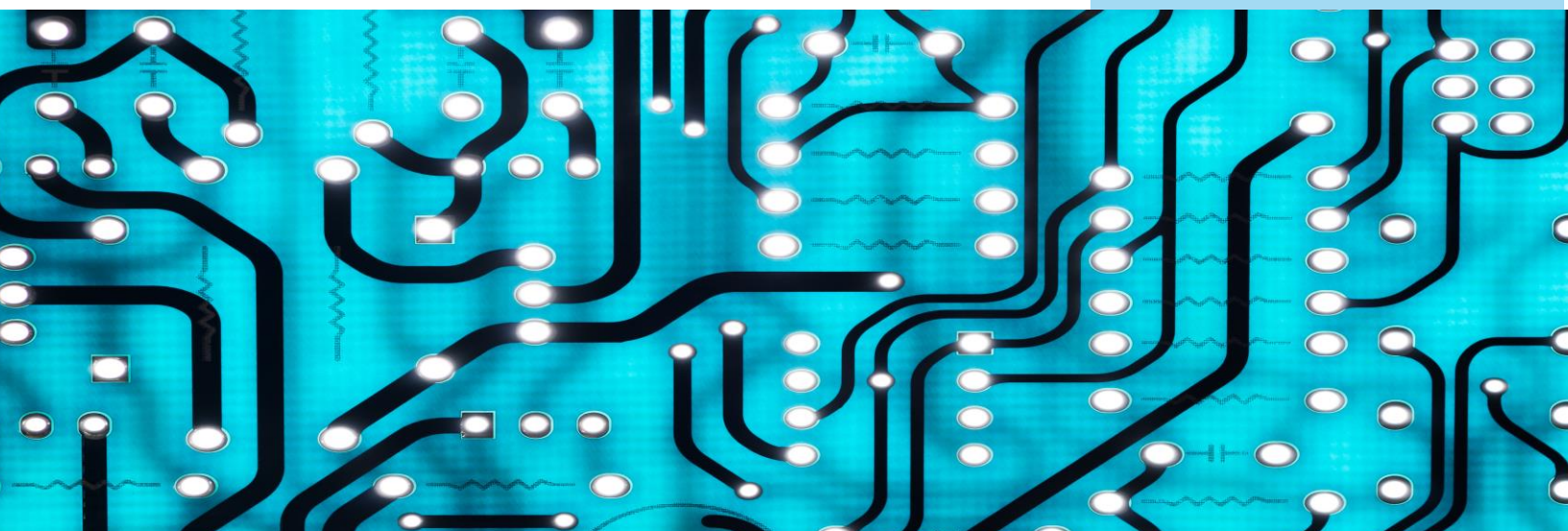
New School Year 24/25

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you back and hope that you all had a relaxing summer break.

For those academies that have not yet returned the signed yearly statement of services please will you ensure that you do so as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about any of the services, please contact us at the email below:

schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk





NEW ATTENDANCE CODES

You may or may not be aware that there have been changes to the attendance codes for the coming academic year 2024/25. That means there are new/altered attendance codes in use and some that have been dropped. This was set by Westminster and adapted into MIS systems by various MIS suppliers. For Sims .Net, this new change will come in the Summer 2024 release version 7.218 but further changes for the workstation/server are via a consolidation patch 2 which would have to be deployed after the summer release.

Some attendance codes will have two characters i.e. Y1, Y2, etc.

Some codes will require a reason to be given for their absence and other codes have been removed from the active list. It is important that all schools update their MIS systems to the latest version, if you are using a cloud-based MIS then this would be either already done or done for you soon.

It will be the responsibility of the school to ensure that they are using the new codes as set down by Westminster. To this end, if you have not upgraded Sims .Net to the latest version then do not do the attendance until you have or you will have to repeat this task with the correct codes after upgrading.

ESS have released a notification that all schools should be able to access:

[Attendance codes for academic year 2024/25 onwards](#)

All MIS providers are releasing such information and notifications. The schools' team in Suffolk LA has released this information several times and updated the schools' FAQ site. The DfE has released advice/technical notes and the new attendance codes are on page 76 "Attendance and Absence", Suffolk Headlines has also released information on this.

If this is new information to you then please seek guidance from your MIS provider or ICT support. Please likewise disseminate this information to all bodies within the school that take, edit or maintain the attendance. This could become a source of frustration for the Spring Census should the notes have been missed where they are required, or incorrect codes are used due to their meaning having changed.



Consolidation Patch 2

for administrative staff/Headteachers/technical staff

As you are fully aware the attendance codes have changed and some of those codes now cause an issue with Sims MIS. The result is that if some codes are used then Sims can generate an error message and then close.

To resolve this issue ESS have produced a consolidation patch version 2. This needs to be deployed by the school as soon as possible to avoid the problems associated with this error.

This can be deployed via the deployment application Solus 3; this is located on the sims server. Please contact your ICT support to get this consolidation patch deployed as a matter of urgency.

Further advice from ESS:

[Sims Newsfeed - CWPsu](#)

This patch would need to be deployed to both the server and the workstation. If a workstation experiences crashes and closes when undertaking attendance, then it would require the patch even if it had been deployed successfully on the server.

If further assistance is required, please contact the IT Service Desk either by email at ITServiceDesk@suffolk.gov.uk or by telephone on 01473 265555.



SCHOOLS' MIS PROJECT BRIEFING

FAO Headteachers, IT & Admin Staff of LA maintained schools

Following a competitive tendering process, we have awarded a contract to Arbor Education for the provision of a new MIS and Finance system to replace the existing ESS SIMS and FMS products. We believe that this will offer a very much enhanced solution to our schools in Suffolk.

We awarded the contract in July and despite there being limited time available at the end of the last school year, we have had an excellent response from schools. We now have commitments from more than 50% of our LA maintained schools. Thank you for your positive engagement so far.

Previous information has been shared in Suffolk Headlines. This has included information about the Arbor webinar held in July, migration plans and pricing.

We are now reaching out to those LA maintained schools who have not yet made a decision or responded to previous communications. Please contact the project team if you would like further information about the project and plans, including copies of the slides and recording from the July webinar and how to get booked onto a Migration Wave.

The contract we have secured with Arbor allows schools to migrate between now and the end of next March with no licence costs applicable until 1st April 2025.

It would also be appreciated if any school not wishing to participate in the new Arbor contract could communicate their intent as soon as possible.

As previously advised the current SIMS and FMS solution provided by ParentPay / ESS will cease at the end of March 2025. Suffolk County Council will not be providing any options to extend or provide any ongoing support beyond this date.

Please contact Andrew Brown if you have any queries by email at andrew.brown2@suffolk.gov.uk .



NEW ARBOR MIS & FINANCE SYSTEM PRICING MATRIX

Please ensure this is shared with all relevant staff within your school.

Following on from the item above and the new provision of the MIS & Finance System, we believe this is an incredibly exciting opportunity for schools. Switching MIS is more than just a system change – [it is a real opportunity to change the way your school works for the better](#). The right MIS can positively impact everything from workload to staff happiness, parental engagement, and the way you make decisions. Further benefits range from more flexible working, improved collaboration between staff, better use of data to inform planning, and a reduction in admin in favour of more fulfilling work.

["Why my school switched" - Arbor \(arbor-education.com\)](#)

You will have previously received this information via email prior to the summer break, as we wanted to ensure that you received this information in good time, rather than waiting until the new academic year when things are very hectic for most staff.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us, you will find the contact details below.

If you were unable to join the webinar that was held on Tuesday 16th July 2024 with Arbor and would like a copy of the recording, please contact Andrew.brown2@suffolk.gov.uk.

As we have received several queries relating to the proposed pricing you will see attached to the email a pricing matrix which includes the Basic Support Package, the Enhanced Support Package, and the benefits of moving to the Arbor Package. Just to note that these costs are including the base cost plus the price per pupil.

If you require any further information or have any questions regarding the new service please contact us in the usual way, details below:

Email: ITServiceDesk@suffolk.sch.uk

Tel: 01473 265555



AUTUMN CENSUS TRAINING

FAO ADMIN STAFF/HEADS/TECHNICAL STAFF

Please see below training dates for the Autumn Census on 3rd October 2024

Training will be from 9.30am to 12.00pm on:

- 17th September – Primary
- 19th September – Secondary

Training will take place via teams.

This will cover the changes in the Autumn census.

To book a place on the training, please either log a call through the IT Service Desk by telephone on 01473 265555 or by email at ITServiceDesk@suffolk.gov.uk or email Catherine Hudson at catherine.hudson@suffolk.gov.uk.



NEW SELF SERVICE PASSWORD RESETS for O365 MAILBOXES

The self-service method for resetting your passwords ([One Identity Password Manager \(suffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk)) is nearing the end of its life and is to be replaced with Microsoft's **Self Service Password Reset (SSPR)**.

This new method will enable you to reset your password or unlock your account.

The functionality relies on the user registering and having a second authentication method set up before it can be used.

We will contact those schools who buy into the O365 Mailbox service individually with further information and timescales for this change in due course.

In the meantime, please continue to use the current method (detailed below) and please remember that SCC will **not** accept telephone requests for password resets, due to improved data protection/security measures.

If any member of staff is unable to remember the answers to their security questions for Password Manager or needs a password reset for an O365 mailbox, there is a request form on the Schools' IT Services website [IT services for schools and academies - Suffolk County Council](#).

N.B: Individual users **cannot** request a password reset for themselves, the request must be sent from either the Headteacher or the School Business Manager/Bursar or equivalent within the school. The request must also be sent via a named mailbox, any requests from a generic/shared mailbox will not be accepted.

In the case of a password reset for a Headteacher, this can be requested by the School Business Manager or the equivalent.

If for any reason a user needs to access their email account outside of normal school hours e.g. during the school holidays and they have either forgotten their password or it has expired, it is important that measures are put in place within the school so that a manager can be contacted by the user to organize a password reset. Without a correctly completed request form the IT Service Desk will not be able to take any action, due to being unable to follow security protocols.

We appreciate that this may be inconvenient, however with cyber-crime on the rise these protocols are designed to protect your organization and individuals against the actions of criminals.



REQUESTS FOR NEW OFFICE 365 MAILBOXES FOR SCHOOLS & ACADEMIES

A reminder that O365 mailboxes **must** be requested for new starters via our website using the following link [**IT services for schools and academies | Suffolk County Council**](#). This is so that all security checks can be carried out and to ensure that there is no delay in setting up new mailboxes. All sections must be completed and ensure that the school's 3-digit code is included, the payroll number (if applicable) and the date of birth for the new user.

This form may be used for all members of staff including governors (*payroll number and date of birth is not required for governors*). You do not need to use a separate form for each user, as all new users can be added to the one form, and it **must** be sent to the ITServiceDesk@suffolk.gov.uk for your request to be actioned. Once the form has been received it can take up to 3 working days for the request to be processed. ***Please note that if the request is sent to any other mailbox this will result in delays with any action being taken.***

N.B. All requests must be sent from either the Headteacher or the School Business Manager/Bursar (or equivalent) at the school/academy, using a named mailbox requests will not be accepted from a generic mailbox. New mailboxes cannot be requested by the new user.

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. Again these request forms are available on our website and can be accessed using the following link [**IT services for schools and academies | Suffolk County Council**](#).

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

