

Schools' IT Newsletter

JUNE 2024

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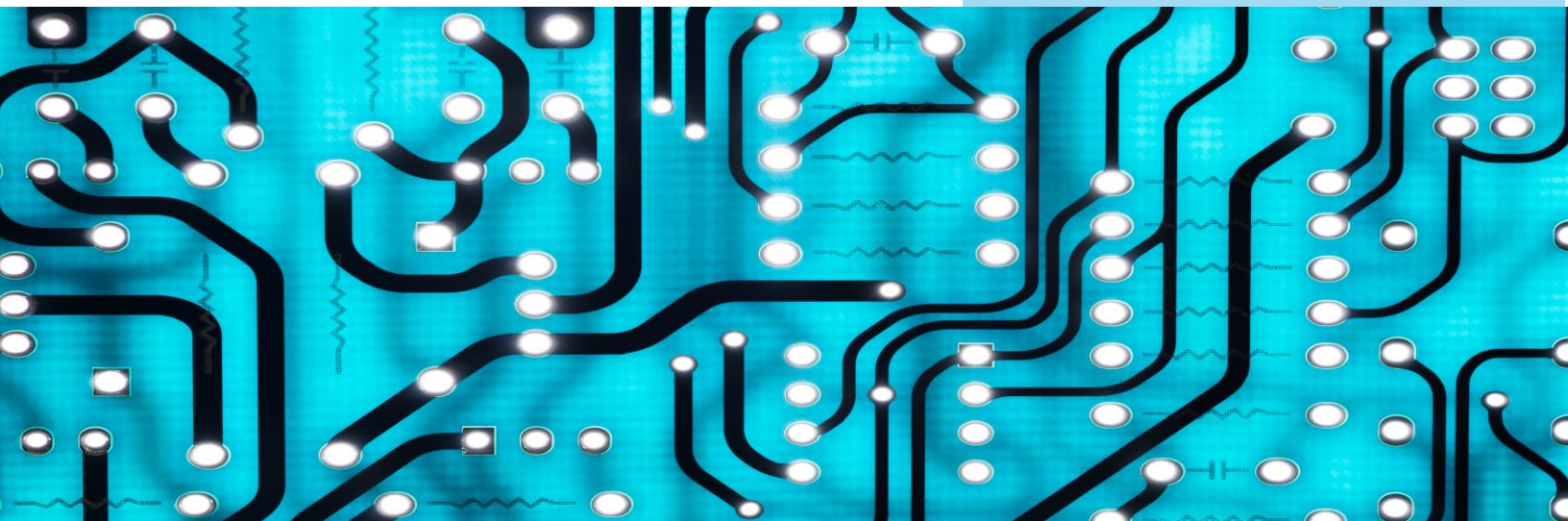
ACADEMIES' YEARLY STATEMENTS

We have begun sending out the yearly statements for the Academies' IT Services.

If you have not received one for your establishment, please be assured that you will receive it shortly.

Please ensure that you check the statement thoroughly and if you have any queries send them to schoolsITservices@suffolk.gov.uk.

Details of all our IT Services can be found on our website: [IT services for schools and academies - Suffolk County Council](#)



SIMS Housekeeping/Data Cleansing

The SIMS logo consists of the letters 'SIMS' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, enclosed within a thin blue rectangular border.

Housekeeping staff data - you cannot delete old users in Sims .net as this can orphan or corrupt what a user has undertaken in sims. However, there should be no need to delete a user as it does not contain sensitive information.

Focus>System Manager>Manage Users

Users that have not been used can be deleted without issue if you have just created them in error.

Users can be made inactive if they are no longer required, this removes the username from the user account and nothing more.

Teacher and leadership user accounts are linked to their Staff data which comprise of personal details, professional details, employment details and appraisals. It does not pull all this data down, just the name and address of that it is linked to.

Focus>Person>Staff

If you would like to delete staff, then Routines>Staff>Delete Staff.


You would have to search for the staff member and then open them. The data summary should indicate if there is a problem with deleting them. If this is linked to a staff account, then you can “data mask” the staff member rather than delete them.

To “data mask”, ie cleanse/obscure the personal data, in Sims Focus>Person>Staff. You replace the fore name and last name with ZZZZ then delete all other personal information manually.

The link between the user account and the staff data account will remain but there is no personal data to draw.

There may be other reasons why the staff data cannot be deleted which will be summarised when you access Delete Staff option. This may highlight other GDPR actions that need to be undertaken. For instance, behaviour records, SEN, etc. If this is the case but have differing retention limits, you may have to “data mask” the staff member rather than delete them.

Sometimes it is not obvious why the staff member cannot be deleted. This is due to the way in which the data is linked within the Sims .Net database. If it is not possible to delete, then your only option is to “data mask” the staff member.



Housekeeping Files - Contrary to beliefs that you should retain past CTF, ASL, ATF ADF, Census and Workforce Census files, all these files fall under the standard operating procedure, (SOP), for General Data Protection Regulation, (GDPR). Once these files have served their purpose then their reason for retaining has expired.

CTF files, whether exported or imported, have no use beyond their purpose for importing or uploading to where the data is required. If a pupil was destined to come to your school but then delays/defers, the CTF could become inaccurate data and thus, not to be considered for importing. A newer, more up to date CTF should be acquired and not a CTF that is months/years old.

This is true for all files that are imported/exported in sims.

MIS systems should be able to pull up old Census data without resorting to the files themselves. So, once the census has been authorised by the DfE its use becomes redundant. Should the DfE need for the census to be uploaded again, it is usually because the data is invalid in some way. If this is the case, then changes need to be made to the data so a new census would be an easier path to correction.

Should your GDPR SOP require such files to be retained then it should have an explanation as to why and for how long it is to be retained and not kept indefinitely. It should also have the location these files are kept and who should have access to this information.

DfE, ESS and literature produces by the LA routinely indicate that data of this nature should be in a safe location as it contains sensitive information with restrictive access.

Linked documents that are linked to pupils and/or staff in Sims .Net should be covered by the SOP GDPR, which should give guidance on linked documents. This should cover the location and who has access to these files and cover their retention reason and length of time before deletion.

Linked documents are different to other files in that sims only provides a link to this file and not a copy of the file itself to sims unlike the others.

Ultimately, the school is the data controller/manager and cannot defer this to another body. They are responsible for GDPR policies and procedures and being compliant with them.

The schools are expected to be compliant with the various bodies that they are in contact with. To have data sharing agreements with those bodies and be aware of their duties and responsibilities with the data that the school gives them.

File locations that Anycoms use may be worth a tidy up to make it easier to locate items the school is seeking. For example, filesets, once this has been imported into sims for the census it has no further use.

S:\Other\Misc

Other folders in S:\Other... would be helpful if they are cleaned up or investigated if they should be retained.

Your data could be at risk: Download SIMS cyber security whitepaper

(A message from our partners)



Cybercrime poses an **increasing threat** to the education sector. In 2023, there was a **70% increase in the number of attacks** on the previous year, which means it's now more crucial than ever for schools to have a robust cyber security strategy in place.

School cyber security is only as strong as its weakest technology supplier, and with over **40% of EdTech suppliers showing a critically weak patch management system**; there's a significant risk for schools. And cyber criminals will look to exploit these weaknesses in your IT infrastructure.

The consequences of a breach can be severe, with over 50% of victims either paying the ransom or losing their data entirely.

Informed by our market-leading security intelligence, our whitepaper outlines invaluable insights into the current cyber landscape for schools in the UK and what we are doing to protect our customers.

[Download the whitepaper](#)

	ParentPay	SIMS	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4	Vendor 5	Vendor 6	Competitor A	Competitor B
Safeguard	96	86	84	93	81	67	88	65	59
Privacy	96	96	94	89	87	80	92	91	85
Resiliency	98	96	87	91	94	93	96	90	89
Reputation	96	96	96	86	93	96	92	89	85
DNS Health	99	99	100	89	85	99	98	87	93
Email Security	94	86	92	89	97	89	100	89	82
SSL/TLS Strength	87	87	91	81	82	86	87	86	84
Application Security	94	74	73	92	84	81	85	83	87
IT/OT Security			91	90	88	90	88	87	86

Protect your schools

SIMS is proud to be one of the only MIS providers to achieve an 'A' rating for security with the Black Kite independent scoring program.

[Download the whitepaper](#)



Schools' MIS Project Briefing

FAO Headteacher, IT & Admin Staff of LA Maintained Schools

The current contract with ParentPay for provision of the SIMS MIS & FMS products expires at the end of March 2025. Suffolk County Council are in the process of tendering for a new contract and provision of a new cloud-based service.

Responses to our tender for a new MIS and Finance Solution have now been received and are being assessed, with a target to award contract in early July.

ParentPay (who provide the current SIMS and FMS products) have notified us that they will not be submitting a response to our tender. We therefore expect that they may be contacting Schools individually with a proposal for a direct contract. We would therefore recommend that Schools await the outcome of the current tender process and consider their options carefully before entering a new contract with ParentPay.

Please contact the project team if you would like further information:-

andrew.brown2@suffolk.gov.uk



Changes to how you access the Free School Meals Portal

Over the coming months, changes will be made to how users access the Free Schools Meal Portal via <https://schoolsreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

The change is to enable a new authentication method to be used for when you log in.

If you use the Free Schools Meal Portal, please look out for an email in the coming weeks with details of how you log into the Portal will change.

If you require any more information, please email: schoolsmfa@suffolk.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

