

A photograph of a male teacher with a beard, wearing a blue sweater, leaning over a desk to assist a young male student. The student is wearing a white polo shirt and a large black headset with a microphone. Both are looking at their respective laptops. The background is a brightly lit classroom with green and orange accents.

What is the cloud and how does it help schools?

'The cloud' isn't one particular 'thing' or 'position'. Many schools can be 'in the cloud' but have completely different set ups and ways of working. The cloud refers to anything managed and hosted online as opposed to on local servers and computers. This doesn't necessarily mean a school can't be in the cloud and have onsite servers and often, this is the first step for many schools.

Why should we consider the cloud?

Cloud computing can bring a number of benefits to schools and Trusts, over running a traditional server-based network. For example:

Ease of learning

All new educational technology, including the apps that teachers use to teach, is being developed to be 'cloud-ready'. While there may still be a number of really useful older resources (even running on CD's) that the teachers at your school love, it's not the best way to have up-to-date curriculum resources. In addition, cloud apps allow students to learn wherever they are and have the same experience in school as at home.

There are also an impressive number of tools to help all manner of students, for example the Immersive Reader in Microsoft Edge that helps those who struggle with reading, whether that's by reading aloud, changing the background and font colours and size, splitting out syllables in words and more. At a device level, newer laptops will have less stored on them (with more stored in the cloud), meaning that they can boot up faster than older devices, significantly improving the classroom experience.

Collaboration

Cloud apps allow greater collaboration between teachers, students, schools and academies within Trusts, and between schools and parents too. This is mostly down to the ability to access work and resources wherever you are – something that has been critical to many schools and businesses, enabling them to continue working in recent times. On top of this, file management is improved with users able to work off the same files, lowering levels of storage requirements and saving time when bringing together a document that historically would have needed to be passed around with the latest comments.

Improved work-life balance

Very closely linked to collaboration, one of the biggest benefits that staff experience when using a cloud based set up is the ability to work when it suits them. Outside of core school hours, using cloud technologies means that teachers can leave the school at 4pm, run some errands for example, and then get back to marking later that day, should they wish, rather than have to stay physically in school. A really tangible time-saving benefit of Microsoft Teams, for example, is the ability for teachers to create quizzes for students, pre-populate the answers

as well as some feedback on the incorrect answers, effectively marking the checkpoints for the teacher.

Cost savings

There are many ways for schools to save money with cloud computing. The most obvious is through lowering levels of physical hardware. This might mean removing or reducing the number of servers, or reducing the specification needed for laptops, as cloud apps are generally more efficient and less demanding of computing power than local apps on the device. You can now get a perfectly usable laptop in a cloud environment for ~£200 instead of £400+. In addition to this, a school not running a physical server will also benefit from better green credentials with less energy required for both the server and the associated additional infrastructure required. Over time, these savings can really add up.

Security

Cloud devices and infrastructure receive regular updates from manufacturers of both hardware and software. This ensures protection against the latest threats, reducing the chance of malware and ransomware attacks, but also allowing teachers to avoid downtime in class. Manufacturers constantly try to break into their own services to find potential security risks before the wrong people do, patching flaws before they are exploited. Network teams can also force security updates at appropriate times (e.g. overnight) meaning that devices and the network can remain up to date without disrupting teaching.

Training students for their futures

It's often pointed out that students learn to use technology quickly, because they have grown up with it. While true, there is a significant difference between being able to use an iPad to share files and understanding how to utilise Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom to collaborate with other students and teachers, and to get real-time access to results and feedback. We hear that 'X% of jobs of the future don't exist yet'; what's clear is that most of these will involve technology in some capacity, and certainly cloud technology.

In addition, jobs that traditionally didn't use technology are seeing it become more important than ever. Exposing students to technology early on in life means that they are prepared – whether they go to college or university, get a traditional office job, work in retail, distribution or medicine. Furthermore, 'the cloud' may well be old technology in 10 years' time, but training students on it now will enable them to better adapt to an as-yet-unknown style of working later in their careers.

Efficiency of device management

Cloud devices and networks require less management, moreover they can be managed

from anywhere. Cloud management tools can also help save time in provisioning new devices and save money through lower support and maintenance costs. There are simply fewer things that can go wrong in comparison to a traditional network. Whether you have an in-house technician, or IT support partner, in a cloud scenario this person or team can spend more time helping engage teachers and students, leveraging technology to improve teaching, rather than managing and fixing tech issues.



We hope you have found this article helpful. We have added further links below but if you would rather have a conversation about your school's specific situation, just contact us using the link below and we would be happy to have a chat.

Who are RM?

We can help you with every stage of the journey, from getting the foundations right, to investing in new devices, to getting the best suppliers with the best financial terms, to managing your migration from start to finish and adding clarity to your vision for the future, to helping you with training and onboarding.

Because we only work in the Education Sector, we understand how schools really work, bringing our breadth of expertise to your unique setting, so that you always remain in charge, because we – more than many – recognise that no-one is better placed to know what your school community needs better than you.

Further reading

[Before you buy another server: Is now the right time for you to migrate to the cloud?](#)

[How does a server support IT at school?](#)

[Contact Us](#)



RM Education, 142b Park Drive,
Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4SE