

What's Yours?

As increasing numbers of schools begin to consider a Bring Your Own Device scheme for students, BESA's **Caroline Wright** and knowledge lawyer **Michal Stein** explain the importance of a well-drafted policy to protect everyone involved...



Convenience, increased flexibility, accessibility, home school links, the removal of hardware management issues, one device for every child and of course the significant cost savings; all these factors are turning schools' attention to the idea of Bring Your Own Device schemes. In fact BESA's annual 'future of tablets and apps in schools' research suggests that they are fundamental to the adoption of tablets in schools.

First, let's look at the history. Compared with the consumer and corporate markets, schools have always been more cautious in investing in tablet technology. They have always justified this careful approach to using such devices by explaining that they were waiting to see their successful use in other educational establishments before being willing to make the move.

Moving forward to today, with schools having the freedom to move away from local authority control and manage their own budgets, we are starting to see them gain confidence in making their own procurement decisions to suit their school's specific needs.

Schools surveyed for the BESA research now believe that by the end of 2013, over 10 per cent of teaching computers

(PC/Mac/tablet) in schools will be tablets. This is a significant increase from the 6 per cent forecast in 2012. If these figures are measured against data collated from schools' IT managers, it can be estimated that by the end of 2013, 258,000 tablets will be used in schools. This increase is also set to continue with schools predicting that the percentage of tablets will increase to 24 per cent by the end of 2015.

However, despite tablets' price point being a lot lower than that of laptops or even desktop computers, schools are starting to show a preference for using BYOD schemes, with the responsibility being on parents to pay for the technology. In fact, 81 per cent of schools in the BESA study showed a willingness to consider this route of tablet adoption.

Overall, then, the adoption of tablet technology in schools appears to be increasingly linked to the implementation of Bring Your Own Device schemes. 67 per cent of the schools who responded to the survey stated that BYOD schemes were either important or very important to the adoption of tablets and apps in schools.

There are certainly a number of advantages in allowing students to use personal devices for their studies. However, the practice also carries a number of real risks, given that the

device is owned by someone other than the school. While these risks are manageable, it is unwise for schools to embark on a BYOD scheme without an advanced appreciation of the pitfalls and legalities.

If schools are to consider adopting a BYOD policy, they should plan for it well in advance, together with their legal adviser and human resources and IT teams, and ideally adopt a formal policy. A well-drafted BYOD policy will help protect your IT system, reduce the risk of deliberate breach of software licenses and minimise any associated reputational damage.

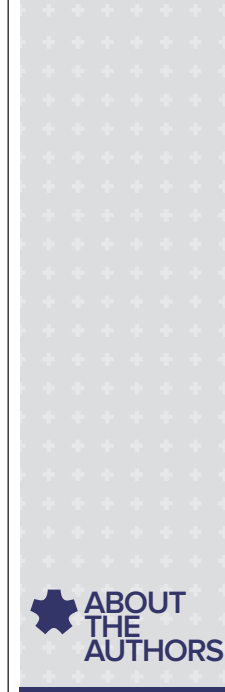
The first – and possibly most legally sensitive – area of concern is an acceptance of the need to support children from low income families, which requires serious consideration. Making BYOD a requirement (as opposed to merely an option) could potentially disadvantage students from low income backgrounds and a worst case scenario could be a claim for indirect discrimination (potentially on grounds of race, disability or sex). Schools must be aware of this and be in a position to supply devices to students in low income areas (with the various legal issues to which this gives rise), and to justify objectively their BYOD practice.

There are many other issues that schools must consider, including how to protect the school's data as well as personal data which your school controls; who will pay the associated roaming costs; and licensing issues concerning home use of your e-learning resources.

Looking at each point in more detail, the first consideration is compliance with data protection legislation and the protection of the school's data. BYOD usage means that inevitably learning content and data will move outside of your school's IT system. Having ultimate control of the type of information students can access, how and where they access it and how secure the information remains is vital to minimise the risk of any breach of a school's data protection obligations. The last thing a school wants is one student accessing the personal data of another student or of a teacher.

Although this question was not asked in the survey, it is safe to assume that the main reason for considering a BYOD scheme is the cost saving. However there are many expenses associated with BYOD and schools must be clear about who bears these hidden additional usage costs. These include day-to-day voice and data charges, technical support and repairs, roaming and app installation costs, as well as recovery of any personal content which may be lost. If you allow students to take their tablet on an overseas school trip so they can carry out research and complete their homework while they are abroad, for example, you must agree in advance whether you permit roaming and if so, who will pay for it.

For schools, the terms and conditions of the software licenses of e-learning resources is probably one of the biggest



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issues. Schools tend to buy e-learning resources on a school license basis, according to the number of student users. The nature of BYOD access brings into consideration remote access to data and this learning content. If the school has paid for a license for a learning application, what are the implications for students accessing it or downloading to their own device?

Another major issue is the operating system of the tablets. Are you going to specify that the parents must all buy android tablets or iPads with iOS mobile operating system? If you want the students to access e-learning resources already purchased by the school, that are possibly more likely to work on an android device, what will happen if students decide to buy an iPad? Are you willing to invest in new e-learning resources that work on the iOS system? Not all devices will connect to your IT system and different devices offer different levels of security and anti-virus measures. How will passwords be managed?

And finally, what is your policy when a student leaves the school? You will need to ensure the student can no longer access the school's network and e-learning resources and, if you purchased the tablet, you will need to be able to get it back. What sanctions can you put in place to ensure compliance? Similar considerations apply in case a student sells his/her device.

The benefits of BYOD are certainly there but the many potential pitfalls make it vital for schools to have a well-drafted BYOD policy to protect them.