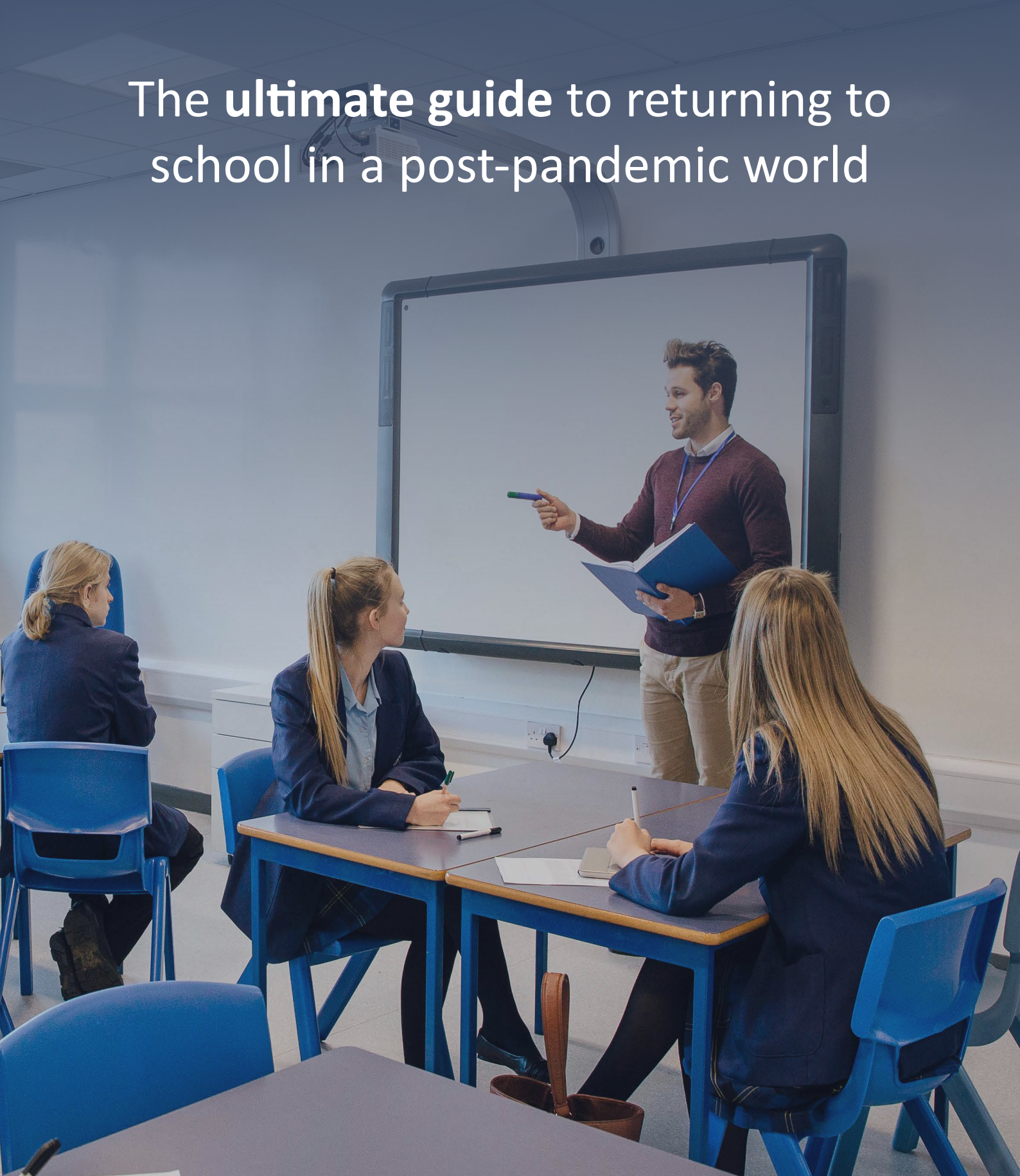


The ultimate guide to returning to school in a post-pandemic world



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Introduction



The new academic year is always a time of great activity and stress, but this year is different. The Coronavirus pandemic has had an unprecedented effect on our daily lives, and no sector is more affected than the education sector.

The government has emphasised the importance of keeping schools open and children learning in their normal environment. That is right - children need their education to protect their futures. However, it seems that the burden of opening schools in a safe manner rests firmly with the teaching staff.

As a company with exceptional experience in the education sector, working with state and independent schools, as well as academies, we spent the summer break talking with schools across the country - teaching staff, governors, and bursars, to understand what challenges they are facing.

We got a broad range of answers, but many followed a theme. It seems all schools across the country face similar challenges right now.

With that in mind, we assembled this guide to provide a helping hand. We discuss what challenges schools face now, what technology is available to soften those challenges, and how we have helped schools to get the most out of it. We hope you find this guide helpful.



DID YOU KNOW? Initial estimations from seasonal learning research suggested that if children didn't return to school until September, they could lose as much as 30% of their "usual" progress in reading, and 50% or more in maths.

The common problems that schools have come to us with



Representatives from the entrust IT Group have been in close contact with schools across the UK as they welcomed all children and young people back this autumn. Every school is unique, but many of them were found to be facing similar issues, which lead them to seeking help from us. These are:

An IT manager who has not been able to return to school on-site due to self isolation or shielding. How can the school cope and ensure things run smoothly without them present?

An IT manager who is overwhelmed by IT issues due to the increased reliance on technology for teaching staff and students.

With more and more children using their own devices when on school premises, how can you keep control of security?

How can students work together on projects while keeping a safe distance as outlined by the Government?

How can lessons being continued for pupil bubbles that must isolate at home due to a positive COVID-19 test among them?

How can teachers communicate lessons to children in the classroom and at the same time include those children who are at home shielding?

Slow or stuttering internet that cannot keep up with the demands placed on it.

Is it possible to provide recorded lessons for pupils who cannot be present?

DO YOU FACE ANY OF THESE CHALLENGES?

How can technology help schools?



Thanks to technology, schooling was able to continue despite lockdown but in a different form. Classes moved online, with some schools requesting that students still followed their existing timetables through the use of video conferencing resources like Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams. Schools were also forced to turn to online learning management software and other modern technology solutions to keep education going as close to normal as possible.

As schools reopen again, technology solutions such as those spoken about above can continue to be used to help schools navigate the pandemic and redesign the education experience amid COVID-19. For example, many are able to adopt a hybrid approach to learning which combines classroom learning with digital. As a result, some or all students can learn from home should it be required.

With many of the modern technologies used amid the pandemic being cloud based, IT support can also be given to resolve issues remotely from an IT provider such as those within the entrust IT Group. Support in this form for your IT manager will help take the immense pressure placed on their shoulders away so that they can focus on projects related to enhancing the student learning experience.

In addition to positive COVID-19 tests which will be disruptive to teaching, future lockdowns are also looking progressively likely as we head into the winter months. For both these reasons, it is paramount that schools adapt now and implement technologies which will ensure full remote learning is entirely possible and better than before.



"The use of technology in education has become a lifeline during the COVID-19 pandemic. As students return to the classroom, school systems must carefully consider the longer-term role of technology."

McKinsey & Company



Schools technical tool-kit



The pandemic has so far seen a huge uptake in video conferencing tools to support the move to remote learning. Microsoft Teams, a central hub for teaching and learning was and continues to be a leader in this, with features designed to make remote learning more engaging, inclusive, and ultimately, more human.

For the most part, students are now back in the classroom. However, isolating pupil bubbles, shielding students and other COVID-19 related situations will still require the help of video conferencing tools such as Microsoft Teams.

This is why Microsoft have recently introduced a whole host of new features to the platform for education. For example, **Together Mode** places all participants in a shared background such as a classroom, and creates a more attentive and connected online class experience. **Chat Bubbles** is a new feature that helps to engage student and encourage idea sharing, but it's important to consider these can cause distraction at times. **Live Reactions** allow anyone in a Teams class to select an emoji and share it with the group. This is a great way to get instant feedback from students and gauge emotional well-being, track comprehension, and encourage participation.

[Find out about more new features here.](#)

Amid COVID-19, there is an increasing reliance on technology in schools to keep education running smoothly. This will place immense pressures on your IT manager. Moreover, if they are have to shield at home, how do you resolve any IT issues that occur throughout the school day?

The entrust IT Group offer an all-inclusive support packages designed for schools which includes regular proactive site visits to your school to make sure that IT issues don't build up. We also offer a support hotline which is available during school hours where issues can be reported and worked on remotely. When you report an issue, you can track its progress online.

Implementing support for your school can not only ease some of the pressure on your IT manager, but if they cannot be on-site due to shielding, will ensure your schools IT is running efficiently at all times.

In addition to the above, while modern technologies are essential amid COVID-19, not all teachers are IT experts. This could result in lessons, remote or in the classroom being impacted. IT training for your teaching staff will be worth the investment - it is expected that we will be living with the rules and restrictions of COVID-19 well into 2021.



In 2017, Microsoft 365 Education was released to help students and their teachers work more efficiently. As it is designed for education, it contains all the essentials including the Office Suite, Windows 10, Enterprise Mobility & Security, plus some added extras.

Throughout the pandemic, Microsoft 365 has truly been a game changer for many schools. While classes were online, Microsoft 365 Education meant teaching staff could hold lessons in Teams as well as from within the platform, make use of the Office apps they are already familiar with. For example, lessons could be saved to OneDrive, along with any assignments that were created in Word, PowerPoint, Excel or OneNote, which could also be worked on in real-time!

Now students are back in classrooms, teachers and students can continue to make use of these capabilities. For example, teachers can record their lessons in the classroom for those pupils who are having the isolate or shield at home. Microsoft 365 Education also means students learning at home can still collaborate with those in the classroom on documents or those in the classroom can collaborate with one another but keeping a safe distance by doing so on their devices.

The use of technology solutions and devices in schools is more widespread now than it has ever been before. Students are increasingly using devices to complete tasks in their lessons and teachers are beginning to store everything online in case they have to revert back to remote classes at all times.

This increased usage of technology in your schools ultimately places much demand on your internet, meaning it can be slow and stutters, thus impacting the efficiency of lessons.

A strong, reliable internet connection is paramount as schools reopen amid COVID-19 and beyond. Experts predict that in a post-pandemic world, technology will still play a huge role in the classroom.

At the entrust IT Group, we supply Ruckus® Wireless Solutions to our schools to ensure that their Wi-Fi signal is strong throughout the entire school. Ruckus® solutions use a network of access points to boost the signal from your wireless router. Each access point effectively acts as its own router, meaning that wherever you are in school, you can get a strong wireless signal.





Schools technical tool-kit



SMART BOARDS

Before the pandemic, smart boards were sometimes considered a luxury. They helped provide students with an enriched learning experience and made differentiated learning much easier. Visual learners were able to observe the whiteboard, while tactile learners could learn by touching the board.

In a pandemic world, smart boards are now an essential resource. They will ensure teaching staff can swap between classroom and remote learning with ease. For example, teachers can upload class notes to the cloud, eliminating the need for paper. Therefore, if some students cannot be in a class due to a situation involving COVID-19, they can still access notes made by their teacher even while they are at home.

The entrust IT Group have a wealth of experience with smart boards. We have been resellers for both **Smart** and **Promethean** for many years, offering installation and upgrade services, as well as providing all the consumables your school would need throughout the pandemic and beyond. If necessary, one of our experienced technicians can provide training to staff on the best way to use the equipment and resources so you know you are getting the best use out of your investment.

As schools have reopened again for the autumn term, we have seen huge demands across all vendors for IT hardware such as laptops, tablets, monitors, and much more, thus creating supply bottlenecks. Students now, more than ever, need IT hardware so they can complete class work online. This means that if they had to revert back to remote learning at any point, they can do and still access any previous class work. Teachers also need to be able to support their pupils whether they are learning at home or in the classroom, and will need the correct IT hardware to do this.

The entrust IT Group have built up close relationships with a number of leading vendors over the years, and therefore have access to preferential pricing for all your IT hardware needs.

In addition to the above, more and more students may now be bringing their own devices into school to complete their school work on. We have many years of experience in ensuring devices are compatible with school networks and can help to make BYOD a success in your school - throughout the pandemic and beyond.



IT HARDWARE

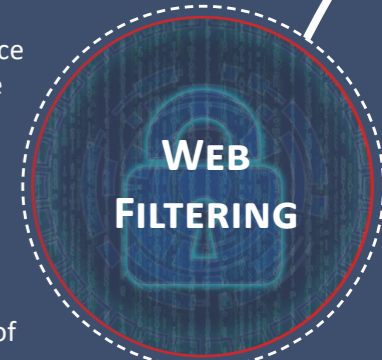


CLOUD CCTV

If your school has been adding new technology investments throughout the pandemic so far, you may be concerned about the safety of it when no one is on-site. Furthermore, if your school has to close again, it may be unoccupied for an extended amount of time - how can you ensure it stays protected if another lockdown occurs?

In the past CCTV has been expensive and particularly out of reach for schools with little funding, but the cloud changes that. Cloud CCTV is a relatively new security prospect that is affordable and accessible for all. Rather than having a complicated DVR on-site that must be maintained and is the only place you can access footage, your camera recordings are stored securely in a Cloud portal and can be accessed via the internet on most devices.

Cloud CCTV means you can view your schools feed in real-time or remotely, and therefore keep a watchful eye on your buildings and the technology within them at all times.



WEB FILTERING

The internet was a dangerous place before the pandemic, let alone now, where there is an increasing reliance on technology which is almost always connected to the internet.

The entrust IT Group know that safeguarding children is of utmost importance at all times. This is why we provide a cloud web filtering service for our school customers.

The service, restricts undesirable content such as pornographic images, gambling sites and drug references from being accessed on the school network. The strictness of the filtering can be adjusted to suit the needs of your school.



BACK UPS

Schools are responsible for substantial amounts of data. Sensitive student information, personal details, education material, audit and compliance information and financial records are just a few examples. As more and more of this moves online and schools reliance on technology rises amid COVID-19, the need for secure reliable backup is becoming increasingly important. This will not only to protect from cyber risks, but will prepare for long-standing risks such as fires and floods.

At the entrust IT Group, we provide our school clients with a cloud backup solution. Cloud backup is the preferred over on-site backup as it remains safe should anything happen to your buildings. You can choose specific files or the entire contents of a hard drive to back up to our data centre. You can also decide where to have files automatically saved to your online back up on a regular basis or your files can be automatically backed up when changes are made.

Why partner with entrustIT?



“
WE WAITED SUCH A LONG TIME TO
GET EVERYONE BACK IN THE SCHOOL
AND THEN HAD A POSITIVE TEST ON
DAY ONE. PUPILS AND STAFF HAD TO
GO HOME AGAIN. WE NEED A WAY
TO KEEP LESSONS GOING REMOTELY
BECAUSE THIS IS UNLIKELY TO BE THE
ONLY TIME THIS HAPPENS.

”

IT Manager, State Primary School

The entrust IT Group have been providing IT solutions to education institutions for over a decade, both in the state and independent sectors. Our experience means we have a real understanding of the unique requirements and challenges that schools have faced in the past with their IT, and have tailored solutions to match.

The Coronavirus pandemic has already had huge implications for schools across the country and as they return to the classrooms, are now being faced with a number of new issues. Representatives from the group have been in close contact with a number of schools throughout this time, so have been able to build up a clear picture of the main difficulties in schools and what technology can help to mitigate them.

By pooling on our pre-pandemic experience with schools and the knowledge gained amid COVID-19 so far, we have built an all-emcompassing IT solutions package for schools to help them navigate through this new normal. We will work with you to identify the causes of problems and to remove them, improving reliability, and helping to make your IT and therefore, teaching more effective, whether that is with students in the classroom or at home.



Education
Providers



SCHOOLS BLOG: Our 'EducateIT' blog was created specifically to address the IT issues at independent schools. The blog was composed over a 18-month period beginning in late 2016.

You can read it here - <http://independentschoolsict.blogspot.com/>

Case studies



Our Lady and St Joseph Primary school

Our Lady and St Joseph (OLSJ) is a catholic primary school in the New Forest and welcomes children from across the New Forest. The school prides itself on providing the best possible start to the educational careers of its children.

“In our previous IT solution, things were constantly going wrong” explains Kirstie Richards, Headteacher at OLSJ. “We didn’t have a very well integrated system so the teachers weren’t able to use our IT effectively for teaching – that was something we desperately wanted to change”

entrustIT engineers put in place a number of crucial changes, such as performing server upgrades, wireless internet upgrades and even installing smart whiteboards and projection equipment. The upgrade programme transformed OLSJ from having unreliable technology to having state of the art IT infrastructure, allowing them to provide a higher quality education to their children.

“We were impressed with entrustIT’s personal approach. Our regular engineer visits keep us online and we know that if we have any problems we only need to phone/ email and our issues are resolved quickly. Now we have an IT infrastructure that actually works, which was not true before.”



BRAMBLETYE

Brambletye School

Brambletye School is a co-educational independent day and boarding school for pupils between the ages of 2 and 13. Pupils are prepared for Common Entrance or Scholarship Examinations to a wide range of senior schools.

“The IT within our school was previously handled by one of our IT teachers” comments Nick Hollamby, Bursar at Brambletye School. “They managed our entire IT infrastructure and provided support to all members of staff.” However, when the IT teacher later retired, this presented Brambletye with a dilemma. Should they appoint another teacher as the main IT contact, or should they look for external help?

After a lengthy tender process, Brambletye chose Serval IT Systems from the entrust IT Group to be their new IT partner.

“The changes that Serval made completely revolutionised the IT at Brambletye.” Recalls Nick Hollamby. “Working with Serval provided an opportunity to build on the successful use of computing and create an even more integrated and secure learning environment. We were able to achieve our goal of making technology a core component of the unique learning experience we provide.”



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