FITS case study

FITS
Framework for ICT Technical Support

Improving delivery of ICT technical support

Professional ICT management in Bolton schools.

The Schools ICT Unit at Bolton LEA provides support, advice and guidance to the secondary schools in the Bolton metropolitan area on a whole range of issues. As part of this support, every year each school gets three consultancy days, of which one focuses on managing ICT.

About FITS

FITS is a set of best practice processes designed to provide a structured framework upon which to build the ICT support provision in a teaching establishment.
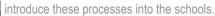
The FITS processes cover the four main functional areas of technical support provision:
- Reactive Processes
- Proactive Processes
- Change Processes
- Strategic Processes

The advice given within the Fits guidelines is neither definitive nor prescriptive and is of benefit and applicable to all schools irrespective of size or the technology in use. We recommend that the guidelines be adopted and adapted to fit each school individually, based on the school's resources and needs.

FITS ICT Advice

David Pott of the Schools ICT Unit discovered the Framework for ICT Technical Support (FITS) on the Becta website. Recognising that FITS provided a sensible Framework for managing ICT support in schools, he asked the nine secondary schools in the Bolton district if they would be willing to trial the FITS processes as a working methodology. The schools were happy to do this and so the LEA worked with Becta to introduce these processes into the schools.

In the six months following the introduction of FITS into the Bolton schools, there has been a significant change in the schools' approach to managing ICT and also an improvement in their communications with the LEA.

Brett Hussain, Assistant Manager o the Schools ICT Unit, says: "I'm delighted with the progress that the schools have made since they started using the FITS guidelines. The meetings that we now have are much more productive than they were in the past and we are all working to a common, consistent agenda – looking to the long term and not just fire fighting"

Brett believes that the FITS guidelines give schools sensible and pragmatic advice, which is logically grouped together in manageable chunks. The guidelines provide a comprehensive overview of the ICT support function and a useful prompt to ensure that schools are addressing all aspects of the service correctly.

The key message we want to reinforce is that ICT services are there solely to support the school and its effcient and effective delivery of teaching and learning.

It is possible to begin by implementing any process within the framework. However, we recommend that you work through the FITS getting started processes first. Even if you currently have a means of recording and monitoring incidents, we believe that some benefit may be gained by working through the FITS getting started processes to identify whether there are some areas that you could improve on.

If you are a primary school or school that relies on an external provider for the majority of their ICT management and support, you will find that in most cases this will be all that you need to implement to make a major impact on the control and management of ICT services in your school.

Secondary schools and larger primary schools that undertake their own technical support will benefit from implementing all of the FITS processes.

Getting started with Fits is very easy. At The Fits Foundation, we maintain a register of approved trainers that can take your support staff through the Fits material and prepare them for the accreditation examination.

To locate a training provider near you and more information about the FITS accreditation, email support@thefitsfoundation.org, or call 01562 740695.

Our 10 main process topics

Service Desk

Incident Management

Problem Management

Change Management

Configuration Management

Security Management

Operations Management

Service Label & Financial Management

Workforce Management

ICT Strategy

He also comments that FITS has changed schools' attitude towards managing ICT by promoting a more professional culture of service management based around the needs of the user. As a result of this guidance, many schools have now implemented the Service Desk process based on proper procedures enabling better prioritisation of response. Less and less frequently, the LEA is seeing schools' senior ICT managers running round doing minor remedial work – they are spending their time more effectively looking at strategic issues.

As a result of using FITS, schools are increasingly seeing the benefits of working more closely with the LEA. Rather than trying to do everything themselves, schools are now considering the ongoing costs and making sure that their investments are sustainable in the longer term. Working in partnership with the LEA can pay dividends, particularly in the areas of framework procurement, managing enterprise-support solutions, maintenance and back-up.

Brett concludes: "Implementing FITS certainly takes time and effort, but it is really worth doing. We have seen huge progress with the schools who have committed to implementing FITS properly, whilst those who have not are struggling."

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