

Ensuring ICT in schools is FITS for purpose

With such wide usage of ICT in schools across Rotherham it is vital that a structured framework is in place to support schools and their teachers, pupils, managers and support staff.

Wickersley School and Sports College has adopted The Framework for IT in Schools (FITS) - a set of best practice processes for delivering ICT in schools.

FITS was created by Becta, the Government agency responsible for innovation with technology within education. Since its introduction six years ago, FITS has established a strong reputation for providing useful process and tools for improving the delivery of technical support within education. It is widely used within primary, secondary, further and higher education.

It is a collection of best practice processes from IT support providers all over the UK. It represents their learning curve over many years which Becta has taken and tailored specifically for schools. This has resulted in a set of processes and tools for schools to use 'off the shelf'.

Dave Orridge, a Rotherham Digital Champion, has helped implement FITS at Wickersley. He explains, "It is important that the ICT delivered in schools has the right backing to ensure the best possible service is in place to support teachers and learning.

"FITS is concerned with dealing with IT problems or issues, software and services through reliable Service Level Agreements (SLAs). It gives schools the guidance and processes on how to improve and maintain a high standard of ICT.

"The school has a dedicated IT support desk which handles over 95% of all ICT requests and enquiries. FITS has helped us get the right approach to the work of the help desk. It emphasises the importance of not losing touch with the staff and learners."

Another key factor for FITS at Wickersley was that it encouraged separating the classroom and technical support, with dedicated ICT support staff for each. This in turn has promoted creativity and innovation in the way that classes are delivered and in the work undertaken by the pupils.

Dave adds, "FITS also offers a range of complementary courses for specific software applications and technical skills, which is a real bonus for teachers. Technical support within the school now works so effectively that we expect zero unplanned downtime in the availability of the ICT services within the school. The change-management elements of FITS are used to help plan maintenance out of school hours and ensure the availability of ICT within the school.

"We will also be one of the first Local Authorities to implement FITS 2, which recognises schools' ICT infrastructure support with an official qualification. We

will be using it from March 2010. The qualification is for ICT staff covering support and management of an ICT service. FITS 2 also introduces new subject areas such as Workforce Management and Security. We are very proud to be one of the

The above case study was featured in Rotherham Digital's Strategy in Action publication from March 2010. To view this publication online, please visit www.rgfl.org