

NetSupport DNA



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NetSupport DNA is a supremely comprehensive approach for the easy running of a school IT infrastructure and provides a bonanza of features to support the competent organisation of school, staff and student technology. It has been designed to save time, money and resources as well as increase productivity and provide extra security to your school. And frankly, it seems to have natural abilities verging on the divine.

This resource makes perfect sense. For donkey's years, schools have had to spend on an assortment of disconnected solutions which combine to give a collaged view of the school network. This isn't very effective, but costly and piecemeal. Imagine, therefore, if you were able to draw on a resource that you could install in minutes, and that would make every morsel of data easy to see and to interpret.

The intricacies and mechanics of NetSupport DNA are mind-blowing. Once it has been installed it gets down to work in a focused and business-like fashion with a proactive auditing mindset. DNA searches and mines, seeks and finds, collects and presents. It will provide a detailed hardware inventory of each device, identifying which PCs are upgradable, which ones need replacing and those that aren't being used to their full potential. It also lets you record accounting details against any PC.

Schools spend a significant amount on software licensing; what NetSupport DNA can do is look at what licences a school owns and where the software is installed – and then track when applications are actually used, enabling you clearly to identify which licences can be redeployed and those, perhaps, which you don't need to renew. DNA identifies all software installed on each PC and a central software licensing schedule is maintained with supporting accounting information. Moreover, it can look for specific file types on each PC, underlining key documents and resources locally that should be deposited on the server for back up every night.

Active monitoring

NetSupport DNA features a software circulation element, allowing flexible packages to be generated and pushed for install instantly or at a planned time on PCs across the network. In addition, packages can be allocated to particular departments and publicised so staff or students can select and pull them down for install on request.

DNA goes further and offers a wider picture view as it includes a discovery mode identifying Simple Network Management Protocol-enabled network devices such as printers and switches, allowing them to be monitored and tracked. I like the alerting suite of DNA because it monitors hundreds of scenarios and proactively warns if problems occur – or, in many cases, are likely to occur – to avoid lost productivity. For example, alerts might include disk space running low, an anti-virus being stopped or unauthorised software being installed.

DNA can monitor Active Directory accounts and warn if any user accounts are locked or have expired passwords. Additionally, NetSupport DNA provides a flexible module to support the delivery and tracking of acceptable use policies across a school. It can monitor internet use and allow lists of approved and restricted websites to be applied at certain times of the day; a real boost for productivity. As for efficiency – DNA can check energy and printing, detecting PCs left on after hours, for example, and spotlighting where print costs are generated. A power management feature is provided to plan 'power on' and 'power off' of selected devices at certain times of the day.

This feature-saturated resource keeps on giving; just when you think that's it, there's more – like the barcode feature. DNA can create printed Asset Tag labels or display an electronic equivalent on screen which can be scanned from any DNA mobile console so that a full hardware and software inventory as well as any changes or outstanding alerts for the device are shown.

Safe and secure

Security and safeguarding are an absolute priority for every school environment and DNA has a fabulous component that allows you to control the use of USB devices whereby individual memory sticks can be assigned and restricted to use by specific departments and individuals for specified periods of time. Safeguarding features such as keyword monitoring, internet metering and the Report a Concern tool which allows students to report concerns directly and discreetly to nominated school staff, provide staff with tools to check and protect students which is now a legal requirement under the Prevent Duty Guidance released by the Government on 1st July 2015.

Essentially, DNA has been designed to be easy to use, accessible and a one stop solution for schools. And it is. It has a clear 'welcome' dashboard, custom views and inbuilt Crystal reports guaranteeing a full view of all school data. It effortlessly delivers a complete suite of IT administration features, and is ideal for MATs, with a unique Gateway feature included as standard, allowing data to be collected from multiple sites and giving the Trust a consolidated view, while staff at individual schools have access to their own data only. If you want to keep tabs on your school assets then this is for you – and the story doesn't end there, as all this is supported by a wealth of curriculum focused assessment features and a range of IT support tools with dedicated modules for teachers, technicians and teaching assistants included as standard.

VERDICT:

NetSupport DNA has to be one of the best IT asset management solutions on the market. It is certainly one of the freshest; this is dynamic network analysis daytime, night-time, anytime.

TO REALISE THE INSIDE, GO OUTSIDE



PGL courses take learning out of the classroom, providing an exciting range of adventure

and study-based activities designed to motivate, improve young people's confidence and develop skills in a safe, fun and friendly environment. They're about giving all students real opportunities to learn new skills, realise their potential and develop a real sense of achievement.

PGL courses are curriculum-linked and tailored to meet the needs and requirements of individual groups. They're delivered by trained PGL teams at fifteen residential centres across the UK, three in northern France and a further four in the south of France and Spain. In addition, PGL Ski trips provide mountain adventure for school groups at hand-picked resorts throughout Europe and in the USA.