

**Please Note This Is A Draft Document & No Way Represents EduGeek.net Or Its Members' Views.
Until The Final Version Is Released**

EduGeek.net Positional Statement: Managed Services

The background to this document is a discussion in a meeting with NAACE in which a staff member gave some feedback to them on the general views of EduGeek.net members with regards to managed services (including BSF and central local authority support). It was felt that it would be useful to formally write these views down in a document for NAACE but also for general public consumption to continue the debate.

The general message from Government agencies is that the centralisation of ICT Support is the preferred strategy and this has become evident through BSF. The expansion of managed services will have a large impact in the future of ICT Support in education and advantages / disadvantages need to be carefully looked at, sometimes on a case by case basis to ensure that the successful work of the various stakeholders in schools does not disappear and, where possible, improved. Managed services in education are not new but the direction of several present strategies has meant that this is becoming more of a reality to schools than before.

While EduGeek.net recognises that ICT Support can be expensive for smaller schools, in particular schools such as primaries or rural schools, but we have to make sure we don't get ourselves in situation where the only 'value' taken into account is money. Having on-site ICT support staff brings a number of key features that are often taken for granted; a quick response to support issues, the fact that schools have staff who can keep abreast with emerging technologies and see how these fit into the National curriculum, and whilst teaching staff can do this they already have the pressure of teaching and are no longer meant to taking part in 'non-teaching tasks', whereas ICT support staff are in ideal position to lead development of ICT in an school. Over past few years we have seen roles change for support staff in schools as part of workforce remodelling, becoming as integral a part as teaching staff in the teaching of ICT as well as many being recognised as middle leaders or even Senior Leaders. The development and insistence on managed services without regard to the educational, as well as operational benefits of in-house support, has the potential to have a negative effect on ICT in many schools.

We are concerned how the use of managed services will impact on the numbers of support staff based in schools, and the overall numbers of staff based in ICT support in education in general. We hope that the companies who provide managed services do not just look at bottom line and look at overall picture when they implement and run managed service in schools.

If managed services are implemented in wrong way then it has potential to stifle innovation and for any service to be implemented successfully we need open communication with all stakeholders. whether they are senior advisors at local authority level, Senior Leaders Team members in each school, through to those who have an impact in the school and in the classrooms; the teachers, network managers and technicians, LSAs and not forgetting students and parents.

Schools and local authorities are often reminded that they should follow a certain amount of best practice the has been developed over the years by the business community. If we do look at this for IT Support we can see the development of industry standards such as ITIL with the work from the

itSMF (IT Service Management Forum) and HDI (Help Desk Institute). This is being replicated by many schools, some through in-house knowledge and some through the BECTA adaptation of ITIL, FITS (Framework for ICT Technical Support). An area that is also mentioned by companies is the outsourcing of support (sometimes centralising support between a number of schools, sometimes just giving another company the work to do). However, a number of organisations that outsourced support (partly due to restructuring of staff, partly due to finances and increasing profit margins and partly due to implementation of best practice) are now looking at expanding the roles of in-house support to take on a number of the services provided by external contracts. A middle ground is being sought and many EduGeek.net members feel that rather than having 10 years of fluctuations of how support is provided in schools this middle ground needs to be sought sooner rather than later.

Draft