

Newsletter: Autumn 2026



Welcome Back!

We hope you all had a lovely Summer break!

As always during the first weeks back after the Summer our phonelines are extremely busy, therefore to help us deal with your queries faster please log a call via the ICT helpdesk if possible. We thank you for your continued support and patience during busy periods and we wish you all a successful new academic year!

Contact us

ICT Helpdesk: <https://eryc.haloitsm.com/portal>

Smart ICT Website: https://erycsmartict.co.uk/contact_us/contact_us.html

Tel: 01482 393333 (8am – 4pm Monday to Friday)

We have some changes and exciting new projects coming up in the new academic year which we would like to share with you.

Welcome to the Team!



We would like to welcome Alfie to the team.

Alfie is joining us as our new IT engineer and will be working alongside our senior engineers, visiting schools who have a curriculum support SLA with us and he will also be on hand to offer remote and telephone support.

He brings with him vast expertise and knowledge having previously worked in school environments, specifically a local secondary school for the past few years.

We are thrilled to welcome him in to the Schools IT team. He will be visiting various schools in the coming months.

Atera

We are excited to launch a new remote support software called Atera.

At Smart ICT, we are always investing in new technology to make your daily IT experience smoother, faster, and more reliable. We are delighted to introduce Atera—our high-performance Remote Monitoring and Management system designed to keep your school running without a hitch.

Please Note: This solution is being deployed exclusively to schools currently covered under our Smart ICT Support SLA Agreement.

What Is Atera and Why Is It Great for Your School? Think of Atera as a dedicated, 24/7 digital health monitor for your entire school network. Instead of waiting for something to go wrong, Atera gives us live, real-time visibility into the health of your servers, computers, and key devices.

Here is how this upgrade directly benefits your staff and school leadership:

Lightning-Fast Remote Support: Whether a teacher is in the classroom, working from home, or moving between sites, Atera allows our engineers to connect directly to their device with a single click. This means instant, hands-on help right when you need it—drastically cutting down downtime and resolving tickets faster than ever before.

Proactive Issue Detection: Atera constantly monitors your server and internet connection in the background. It alerts our team to potential technical hiccups before they disrupt your school day, allowing us to fix issues behind the scenes before you even notice them.

Automated Security & Compliance: Protecting school data is paramount. Atera automates crucial software updates and security patches, ensuring your systems are continuously protected against the latest cybersecurity threats and Microsoft vulnerabilities (CVEs)—all without disrupting teaching time.

By keeping your systems secure, updated, and monitored around the clock, Atera helps ensure your classroom technology remains dependable, secure, and stress-free.

Census Dates:

Census Dates 26/27

Census dates

- Autumn Census - Thursday 1st October 2026
- Workforce Census - Thursday 5th November 2026
- Spring Census - Thursday 21st January 2027
- Summer Census - Thursday 20th May 2027

You can complete a Dry Run in Arbor for this Census via: School | Data | Export | Data Returns

Arbor's Census Help Guide can be found: <https://support.arbor-education.com/hc/enus/sections/115000046285-School-census>

PLEASE NOTE: The dry run for each Census will only be available in Arbor for 2 weeks before the return date.

Free School Meal Changes

From the start of the 2026-2027 academic year, all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit attending schools will be entitled to receive a free meal.

This is a legal requirement through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.

Going forward, there will be 2 categories of benefits-based free school meals:

Targeted FSM, which continues to be based on the existing threshold, covering pupils who are in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less.

Expanded FSM, a new category covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit.

Further DfE Guidance can be found

here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities/free-school-meals-guidance-for-local-authorities-local-authority-maintained-schools-academies-and-free-schools#arrangements-for-providing-meals->

Checking Eligibility

The Benefits Team are still conducting verification checks for all students and have confirmed that any students whose eligibility has not been re-verified before the start of the new academic year will continue to receive free meals until their verification check date.

Schools should regularly check students' eligibility to ensure they continue to qualify for free school meals, it is important that schools regularly review their entitlement records to ensure students are not claiming a meal under the assumption that it is free when they are no longer eligible. Failure to do so could result in charges being incurred for meals taken.

If you wish to request an up-to-date free school meal list, then please log a call via the [ICT Portal](#) or via [ERYC SmartICT - Contact Us](#)

Updating Arbor

For schools who use Arbor, you can check and update your free school meal data via: [School | Data | Data Quality | Students | Demographics | Bulk Update FSM](#)

Smoothwall Cloud

Smoothwall Cloud Filter – Update and Availability

We are pleased to announce that we are now accepting orders for the Smoothwall Cloud Filter. Smoothwall Cloud is a modern, cloud-based web filtering and safeguarding solution designed specifically for education. Unlike traditional filtering that only operates on the school network, Smoothwall Cloud provides protection wherever devices are used—in school, at home, or on the move—helping schools meet safeguarding and compliance requirements.

At present, our focus has been on schools that were previously unable to reliably identify users on Google Chromebooks. We're pleased to confirm that we now have a fully working solution available for schools to begin using, with successful deployments already in place across the local authority.

For schools using Google Chromebooks, Smoothwall Cloud integrates directly with Google Workspace for Education. This ensures users are correctly identified when signing in and that the appropriate filtering policies are applied. Importantly, Chromebooks remain filtered whether they are used on the school network or at home, always providing consistent safeguarding.

If your school would like to migrate to Smoothwall Cloud, please contact it.schools@eastriding.gov.uk and we will be more than happy to assist with the transition. Pricing information is available upon request.

Next Phase of Deployment – Windows Devices

The next phase of our deployment programme is the introduction of Smoothwall Cloud filtering for Microsoft Windows devices, including both staff and student devices.

What does this mean for you?

Once Smoothwall Cloud is introduced into your environment, any Microsoft Windows devices that leaves the school premises will continue to be filtered at home in exactly the same way as it is in school. This ensures consistent safeguarding, supports remote learning and flexible working, and reduces reliance on on-site filtering infrastructure.

In short, filtering follows the device—providing the same protection wherever it is used.

This project is currently with the IT Team for development and deployment and remains an active project.

Costs and Licensing

There is an additional licence cost associated with the Smoothwall Cloud Filter. This cost is generally based on:

- School enrolment numbers
- Staff numbers

Please note that this cost is in addition to your existing Smoothwall licensing through ERYC. We will make a further announcement once Smoothwall Cloud for Microsoft Windows devices is fully available for full deployment across the authority—please keep an eye out for updates. For further information or to discuss next steps, please contact it.schools@eastriding.gov.uk.

Microsoft Publisher discontinued

Microsoft Publisher will be discontinued and lose support on **October 13, 2026**. Microsoft 365 subscribers will lose access to the app and will no longer be able to open .pub files through the subscription.

Users with standalone, permanent (perpetual) licenses can still open the app, but it will receive no security updates or fixes therefore face vulnerability risks.

Please see official guidance from Microsoft on the link below -

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/publisher/microsoft-publisher-will-no-longer-be-supported-after-october-2026>

How to prepare for Publisher's end of life.

Open existing files and save or export them to PDF for future viewing or to copy the text/images over into an alternative program.

Alternative programs available: Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Microsoft Designer, Adobe InDesign. There are other providers also available with subscription fees.

Connectivity and Filtering Notifications

If your school purchases Connectivity & Filtering from us, you should be receiving daily notifications highlighting any inappropriate internet searches identified by the system.

Please take a moment to check that the relevant staff members are receiving these notifications. If any colleagues have left your school, changed roles, or no longer need to receive them, please let us know via: <https://eryc.haloitsm.com/portal> so we can keep your notification list up to date.

Thank you for your help in ensuring these important alerts reach the right people.

School Business and Admin Partnership Meeting

The meetings are open to all schools and Academies in the East Riding, Hull and surrounding areas.

Held at: East Riding Leisure Centre, Flemingate, Beverley HU17 OLT

Start 9am – 12:15pm

Upcoming Meetings:

Autumn 15.10.2026 - <https://hereforschools.co.uk/Event/277794>

Guest speakers TBC

If there are any areas of interest you would like to see Guest Speakers attending the meetings, then please contact us. We try to source all your suggestions and continue to welcome your ideas.

These meetings are purely to help you in your job role; to try and help reduce your daily burdens. If we can arrange Guest Speakers to provide the information you need to do this, please let us know. We welcome your ideas and suggestions drop an email to **it.schools@eastriding.gov.uk**

Please book your place at our next and future meetings to secure a place. If you struggle to book via the Here for schools portal, drop us a line and we will be happy to help you.

Training

To book any of our training courses please visit [HERE](#) for school and search for ICT Training.

Arbor

We offer various MIS training upon request. For all enquires please contact it.schools@eastriding.gov.uk or give the team a call on 01482 393333



Hybrid Cloud Implementation

Managing school budgets while keeping pace with technological change is an ongoing challenge. To support our partner schools, ERYC Smart ICT continues to focus on deliverable, cost-effective infrastructure solutions designed to reduce capital expenditure and align with industry standards.

Hybrid Cloud Implementation

A significant number of our SLA partner schools have successfully transitioned to our Hybrid Cloud model. By utilising existing Microsoft 365 tenancies -available largely free of charge to educational institutions - we migrate local data to secure cloud storage:

Personal Storage: User "My Documents" folders are migrated to Microsoft OneDrive.

Shared Storage: Administrative and staff shared drives are moved to SharePoint and Teams, allowing secure remote access from any device.

Full Cloud Development & Pilot Due to ongoing hardware supply constraints, the cost of replacing physical on-premises servers has risen sharply, with single-site replacements often exceeding £20,000 to £25,000. To eliminate these recurring hardware costs, ERYC Smart ICT is currently piloting a fully serverless, cloud-hosted environment. Built within Microsoft 365, this core infrastructure manages: Data storage and staff collaboration User authentication and device security Cloud-hosted print solutions Administrative systems management

Upgrade Path for Existing SLA Schools

Once the Full Cloud pilot is finalised, schools on our current Hybrid SLA will have the option to transition to the Full Cloud model with **no additional software license fees**, as this is covered under your existing agreement. *Note:* Minor on-site network adjustments may be required depending on your current hardware setup.

These requirements will be assessed on a site-by-site basis. For schools not currently on a Hybrid agreement, direct migration options to Full Cloud are also available following an initial site review.

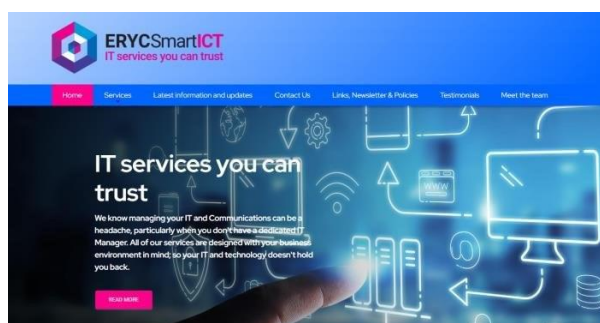
DfE Standards Alignment & IT Audits ERYC Smart ICT is aligning all supported schools with the Department for Education (DfE) Digital and Technology Standards. While some elements focus heavily on secondary settings, several key compliance standards apply directly to primary environments. To support this process:

Mini-Audits: Each school will shortly receive a concise IT audit detailing current operational strengths and areas for technical improvement.

5-Year IT Strategy: The audit results will form the foundation of a tailored 5-year technology plan, ensuring your school remains compliant with DfE guidelines while keeping long-term planning practical and budget-conscious.

If you have questions regarding your cloud options or upcoming IT audit, please contact our support team. We are happy to help.

ERYC Website



Please visit our website for all the latest updates from the team : <https://erycsmartict.co.uk>

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Please note that the DfE has published their standards on how schools & colleges should be working towards meeting their 6 core standards by 2030.

Please ensure that you read through the information and speak with your IT engineer to review how your school can plan to ensure these are met.



Please Note: Here at Schools IT, we offer various SLAs for Schools and Academies. **New Shorter SLA contracts are available on new SLAs**

- Full ICT Support (*including Admin, Staff, Curriculum, ICT Infrastructure and Network*) - Digital Pathway
- Connectivity & Filtering
- Central Backup storage solution
- Network & Server Storage
- MIS Support
- Schools On-Line Website
- Hybrid Solutions
- Wonde

Our 5-year SLA's bring stability and helps with your budget planning together with planning your 5year digital pathway and equipment refresh programme, which allows us to provide you with the best ICT service and digital footprint. Our 5-year terms include full discounts provided by our suppliers, which we pass on to schools.

We enable schools to plan their future ICT financial budgets, aligned to the recurrent ICT refresh programme.

We are aware some Academies are unable to authorise 5-year terms; therefore, we are introducing shorter term SLAs on new contracts to help Academies and schools.

Our customers achieve a digital footprint which not only promotes ICT advancement for staff and pupils, but it also gives pupils access to the necessary ICT skills and digital awareness to safeguard their future educational journey.

If you wish to discuss any of these services (or other services that you require) in more detail, then please contact Schools IT on 01482 393333 or visit our school website where you can leave a message or query on our Contact Us page.



We feel we need to inform you of recent price hikes for IT devices. We have received many quotes from our suppliers for routers, servers, switches etc and have been shocked by the leap in pricing.

Server pricing has experienced the most significant increase in recent months. For small to medium-sized schools, the cost of a typical server has risen from approximately £3,000 to around £8,000. For larger schools, prices have escalated from £4,000–£5,000 to more than £14,000. Router and Filter Server prices have also continued to rise steadily, with noticeable jumps in recent months.

We want to reassure you that we do not add any markup to hardware or licence costs; we simply pass on the supplier's price. All hardware pricing is tied to the US Dollar exchange rate, meaning costs can fluctuate daily.

Our suppliers report that these substantial increases are largely driven by global demand for memory and silicon, fuelled heavily by the rapid expansion of AI infrastructure.

To help mitigate these escalating costs, we are actively progressing towards fully serverless school environments, reducing reliance on on-premise hardware and improving long-term sustainability. If you need any further information on moving toward a fully serverless environment, please contact : Paul Foster. Technical Team Leader

P.Foster@eastriding.gov.uk