

# SecEd Guide to...

## Mobile Learning

### Key content

- What does a successful Mobile Learning programme look like and how should it benefit students?
- What are the main challenges to overcome when rolling out Mobile Learning?
- Making Mobile Learning work for your budget
- What questions must schools ask when purchasing Mobile Learning technologies?
- Advice, hints and tips for school technicians on rolling out a Mobile Learning programme

# GUIDE TO...

## Mobile Learning

“Traditionally we would spend half a million pounds on the school infrastructure: servers, cables, computer rooms, the furniture that goes in there, laptop trolleys.

“At the end of the day, when school finishes, that infrastructure would sit in school. What we wanted was to have something in place where that infrastructure, that investment, goes home.”

Abdul Chohan is a director at Essa Academy in Bolton, one of an increasing number of schools looking at ways of using mobile learning technology to raise academic standards and improve its standing in the local community.

Safety, mobility and collaboration are the three watchwords for mobile learning. If learning is becoming truly 24/7, with pupils doing much of their research away from the school buildings, then schools need to have a totally robust security system.

Essa Academy uses Lightspeed Systems’ Web-filter and Mobile Device Manager (MDM), which has a Rocket Web-filter appliance at the heart of the system.

These are fully operational both on and off site, a massive plus point for anxious parents. They use iPad Proxy settings, so filters apply whether you are using the iPads in the school’s science lab or in a shopping centre.

If someone tries to remove a profile from an iPad, the system will check the user, the serial number and contact the nominated parent or carer day or night to let them know that the device is no longer safe.

However, schools don’t want blanket policies. What they need is a management system which is fully integrated with a filtering system for what is known as “granular control and authentication”.

Put more simply, you need to know who is using a device and have different filtering policies for different age groups – for staff, for 6th-formers and for year 7 pupils.

### Teachers

Successful implementation of mobile technology means a seismic shift in schools’ approaches to learning. It is not just about refurbishing and updating the technology – it is a very different approach which will have a knock-on effect on learning.

“For me, it’s not about Apple or Microsoft or whatever. It’s about what is most effective, costs less, and is going to work

Darryl LaGace, executive vice-president for global business development at Lightspeed Systems, explained: “So often schools are deterred by ICT and see it as a barrier, so we work on tools and strategies to make things as simple as possible.

“My Big Campus is a global online learning platform with a very simple interface so it is much more intuitive than many virtual learning environments (VLEs). Students can see at a glance when assignments are due so the teacher does not have to nag them about deadlines.”

Mobile technology changes learning. Instead of homework taking place after a lesson and being about revising and consolidating, it is much more likely to take place before the lesson when pupils look at sources, materials and videos and then come to the class with ideas in their head ready to discuss and put knowledge into practice.

Pupils certainly seem to engage in this process, perhaps because they are going to be caught out if they are not prepared, but also because of the nature of the material.

Nature of the material. Easy access to resources, multimedia and

well-designed teachers' notes seem to motivate learners and there is peer group pressure when whole classes turn to their iPads at breaktimes.

Many schools are using iPads because of the wide range of inexpensive education apps in the Apple Store, but others have opted for Android, Windows or OS X. It is a mixed economy but the device is less important than the management system.

Mr Chohan's mantra is that the technology must be simple and reliable: "For me, it's not about Apple or Microsoft or whatever. It's about what is most effective, costs less, and is going to work."

One of the great advantages is the freedom that mobile learning gives teachers. At Essa Academy, the MDM means they can now walk round and see what learners are doing, instead of being a front-of-the-classroom teacher.

At the touch of a button, teachers can decide what pupils can access. Perhaps they come across a useful resource for algebra. Instead of spending precious time at the photocopier, click a button and that app will instantly appear on all the devices for a class, or perhaps just for the top set.

Differentiation is easier. Whereas in the past many schools just provided for three levels of differentiation in their classroom, relying on photocopied worksheets for the brightest and for those who needed extra support, there are now resources to suit all levels. Many apps have age range guidelines so teachers can target materials to specific groups, tailoring learning to individual needs.

This is one area which has proven especially useful at Essa Academy, as Mr Chohan explained: "We used to give every child the same textbook, but with the iPads they have interactive worksheets, videos, and a wider range of resources in richer formats. Our children speak 46 different languages and come from many countries. They start interacting using translation tools and communicating with others via the iPads from day one, and we see a rapid acceleration of their knowledge of English."

### Teacher collaboration

Developing staff confidence is important and

this has to go right across the board. There is no point having an enthusiastic senior management team if some departments are reluctant to use the technology – or to have a select few evangelist teachers if the learning support staff cannot use the devices.

Schools need to start with the pedagogy and think about how they want to use the mobile technologies to get children to be creative and work collaboratively, rather than simply being consumers of what is available

Often, schools start with one or two departments in the vanguard, testing the waters, trying out different approaches and resources.

However, Earnie Kramer, general manager for EMEIA at Lightspeed Systems, suggests other approaches that can yield good results: "Learning from others in the same school is not necessarily the best way forward. Sometimes you see teachers saying, 'yes, I can see how it would work for design and technology but what would I use it for in key stage 4 history? Teachers need to talk to other teachers who are teaching the same subject, the same age group."

To this end, Lightspeed Systems is training a small army of Mobile Learning Experts who will be going out into schools in the autumn showing what can be done. Social media also has a role to play and Mr Kramer suggests searching Twitter for mobile technology conferences and following the relevant hashtags: "We are finding that for every delegate who comes to one of our conferences, another 10 or 15 follow on social media."

Collaboration is important for the students,

too. Notre Dame RC School in Plymouth has 40 different feeder primary schools and some girls move up to secondary school on their own. It is important that they settle in quickly and make friends. On the induction day, the school introduced the girls to My Big Campus, the secure online collaborative learning platform that is part of Lightspeed Systems' Mobile Learning Essentials, and set up a discussion group.

Over the summer holidays there were 258 posts covering topics such as PE kit, rules and what to bring on the first day. Deputy head Gary Futcher said: "Some girls made really secure friendships and felt part of our community even before they started at the school."

### Budgets

Budgets can be a major stumbling block for some schools although this is not always the case. "The biggest surprise for us," said Mr Chohan, "was the amount of money we saved."

They found that they no longer needed to purchase class sets of text books and made considerable savings on software licences, photocopying and printing.

Some schools have opted to go down the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) route and Mr Kramer reports that this model is maturing: "In the early days, schools let pupils bring in whatever they had and tried to make it fit. Typically now a school will test a number of devices on the network and tell parents what is acceptable so they can buy it for Christmas."

It is vital that schools remember there are about five per cent of parents unable or unwilling to purchase a device and costings need to take this into account.

Academies and independent schools can sometimes find a sponsor willing to pay for a roll-out of devices across the school, while some enterprising local authority schools are forging good relationships with local businesses, who can help with funding or perhaps sponsor bags or device covers featuring their company logos.

However, increasingly schools are looking at a different BYOD approach whereby they enter into an agreement with a supplier who deals with finance and insurance. Many companies now offer

special deals and parents benefit because they get a high-spec device cheaper than they could buy on the high street, with the added security of a school's e-safety protection.

The school also benefits because all the pupils have the same device and they do not have to deal with losses, insurance claims or similar time-consuming, administrative tasks.

For schools thinking about buying tablets or looking at BYOD, Jan Webb, professional officer at NAACE, offers this advice: "If a school is going to use mobile technology to enhance, extend and transform learning then they need to start with the pedagogy and think about how they want to use the mobile technologies to get children to be creative and work collaboratively, rather than simply being consumers of what is available.

"To be really effective, a vision needs to be shared by the school staff, and then backed by professional development, classroom support (for example, by digital leaders), technical support and the infrastructure."

### Further information

- Lightspeed Systems' Mobile Learning Essentials combines the Mobile Device Manager, Web-filter and My Big Campus (VLE) – all designed specifically for schools: [www.lightspeedsystems.com/en-uk/products/mobile-learning-essentials/](http://www.lightspeedsystems.com/en-uk/products/mobile-learning-essentials/)
- How other schools are using Mobile Learning Essentials: [www.lightspeedsystems.com/en-uk/resources/customer-stories/](http://www.lightspeedsystems.com/en-uk/resources/customer-stories/)
- Request a demonstration or information about Lightspeed Systems: [www.lightspeedsystems.com/en-uk/demo/](http://www.lightspeedsystems.com/en-uk/demo/)
- The Tablets for Schools project: [www.tabletsforschools.co.uk](http://www.tabletsforschools.co.uk)
- Follow Lightspeed Systems on Twitter: [@lightspeedsysuk](https://twitter.com/lightspeedsysuk)
- Earnie Kramer's regular *SecEd* technology in education blog: <http://bit.ly/188vFUa>

# Case study: Samuel Lister

**Bec Osborne and Mark Ellis, principal and assistant principal at Samuel Lister Academy, describe the challenges and benefits of rolling out mobile learning**

Samuel Lister Academy opened in April 2012 and we were determined to have the infrastructure in place by the September. Our goal was quite simply to create a great learning environment with an emphasis on innovation and creativity.

Before we became an academy we were a mainstream secondary school with a basic Windows network built up over a number of years, plus broadband from the local authority.

We needed to refresh the network and quickly decided to move to an Apple-based school because of the extra creative possibilities. We felt that a one-to-one environment was the best chance to raise student achievement.

We wanted to make changes to the way teaching and learning went on in school and knew that this would affect staffing and budget. When we looked at provision we knew we wanted to “flip” the classroom so teachers could prepare lessons online and spend more classroom time working with individuals and small groups to improve attainment. We chose iPads because they work seamlessly with other Apple technology and our young people use these devices outside the classroom too.

Schools have a duty to prepare students for the world of work. These days there are no jobs where workers are sat at a desk with just a textbook and a piece of paper. It's a rich environment out there and they need to experience it in school and learn when it is appropriate to use technology and when they need to turn it off.

Parental buy-in is essential. Our school has a high proportion of Muslim students and there were concerns over them accessing unsuitable content. Some parents, for example, are not keen on Facebook, but they were happier when they realised that all the content and the social media elements would be filtered through the school. We anticipated

resistance but once we had addressed the safety issues there was a real breakthrough and parents could see the advantages.

Many young people had not had access to rich technology at home before. Now through My Big Campus they can access worksheets and video at home. Parents can see not just what their children have done but also what they will be doing in future lessons so they are much better informed.

My Big Campus has some of the functions of social media sites so it is very intuitive for learners. They might use chat in a lesson or join discussion boards. Here they will be exposed to different views on a particular topic so learning is much richer.

A recent advisory visit from an Ofsted inspector highlighted an improvement in students' attitudes to learning and a better lesson flow as learners now have everything at their fingertips and do not waste time waiting for resources to be handed out.

Teachers upload content and we find students are coming to lessons prepared because the whole package is available at home, so now learning is not just what happens in a lesson. It has changed the way students behave. When year 11 were doing their GCSE English we called them into the hall about half an hour before the exam and we saw nearly 200 young people all using their iPads, looking at resources posted by the English department.

We have noticed a great impact on our pupils' emotional health and wellbeing too. The iPads make them feel valued and trusted and they can see that tablets have more to offer than just playing games. Attendance is higher and behaviour is better, especially at lunchtime and breaktimes.

When we walk round school we see them sharing, playing games, looking at pictures or videos and discussing work in a way they never did when their school bags just contained exercise books.

- *Samuel Lister Academy in West Yorkshire uses Lightspeed Systems' Mobile Learning Essentials, including Web-filter, Mobile Device Management and My Big Campus.*

# Technician support

If your school is thinking of going down the mobile technology route, you might be feeling a little bit anxious. The stakes are high. If you get it wrong, the school will be saddled with an inappropriate system that is hard to use and could be out-of-date in a few years.

Whatever system a school chooses, teachers need to be confident that they can upload their content at home and everything will work in their lesson.

So often excellent teaching falls down because staff are jinxed by firewalls or software configuration. Technicians can be overwhelmed by requests to upload different software and websites and then find that some staff have limited ICT skills and need a lot of hand-holding.

Ravi Singdia, ICT technician at Featherstone High School in London, believes that a user-friendly interface that is intuitive is essential: "Staff find it easy to upload materials onto My Big Campus and pupils find it engaging, so it has become a social hub for learning."

Parents have issues with technology too, worrying that their children will be accessing unsuitable sites, but at Featherstone High they have found flexible filtering means they can have bespoke permissions for different groups – so younger pupils do not have the same freedoms as 6th-formers and everyone is kept safe, on and off the school site.

When you are talking to companies about a mobile technology system, it is important to go armed with a list of questions:

Ask about safety. Can you filter securely? Will filtering work inside and outside school?

Think about how it will be used in the classroom. Is it flexible enough for teachers to make changes on the fly? Can teachers freeze the devices so pupils pay attention to other aspects of

the lesson? Can staff permit or restrict access to different functionalities for individuals and groups?

Will it provide you with essential information such as custom reports for child protection and reports on individual and group usage?

"Plan, plan and then do more planning," urges Simon Eappariello, technical director at Lightspeed Systems.

He has seen some schools roll-out devices without adequate preparation only to find that they do not necessarily know where the devices are, who is using them, or have a clear overview of how they are being used.

He advises schools to dedicate time to the preparation and provisioning stage before roll-out so every device goes out with a standard set of apps or software, has asset tags for tracking, is enrolled onto the management system, and has a cover or carrying bag.

"If you get it right at this stage," he added, "you can hand over most of the control to educators."

## Mobile Learning: Hints and tips for technicians

- Go for a wireless system.
- Go for a whole solution rather than a piecemeal approach.
- Centralise the purchase of apps.
- Make sure the products integrate so that staff are not learning a new interface each time.
- Make sure that the system is robust so that as one teacher makes a change it doesn't have a knock-on effect on the rest of the system.
- Visit other schools, talk to consultants, research what is happening in other countries.
- Think about involving students – some could provide a basic level of technical support to staff, others might run a help desk to support other learners.