medhurst
making IT work

SCHOOL AND TRUST TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Autumn Half Term 2026

What changed this half term, with a simple next step for each item and how we can help.

November 2026

Prepared by: Medhurst Communications

Prepared for: Headteachers, trust leaders, business managers and governors

Version 1.0. Published 7 November 2026. Sources verified 7 November 2026.

A FIVE-MINUTE ROUND-UP FOR SENIOR LEADERS

Medhurst Communications Limited

17 Brunel Way, Segensworth East, Fareham, Hampshire, PO15 5TX. 01489 563000. sales@medhurst-it.com. medhurst-it.com

The specialist EdTech managed service provider and IT infrastructure integrator for UK schools, colleges and Multi-Academy Trusts.

October brought encouraging news for schools: fewer cyber incidents, and faster recovery when they do happen. It also brought a fixed date for the closure of the analogue phone network, closer regulatory interest in artificial intelligence (AI), and the renewal of the national buying routes many schools and trusts use for technology. None of this needs a rush of new spending. Most of it comes down to knowing where you stand, agreeing who looks after what, and planning the next step in good time.

Managed Services customers: if strategy and service delivery are part of your agreement, everything in this update is already covered. Your Managed Services team will walk you through each step in your regular service reviews, so there is nothing extra to arrange.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

20 November 2026
ICO call for evidence on AI closes
Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

31 December 2026
academy trust accounts due
to the Department for Education (DfE)

31 January 2027
analogue phone network closes
alarms, lifts and door entry included

Spring and summer 2027
new national frameworks
networks from March or April, devices from August (planned)

START HERE: YOUR SIX-POINT HEALTH CHECK

How many can you tick today?

- ☐ **Cyber recovery:** we have tested our recovery plan recently
- ☐ **Cyber cover:** we can evidence all four Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) conditions
- ☐ **Safeguarding:** our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) gets regular evidence that filtering works
- ☐ **Analogue lines:** we know which systems still use them, and the plan for each
- ☐ **AI and data:** we know which AI tools staff use and what data they reach
- ☐ **Contracts:** we know which renew in the next two years and how we will buy each

01 · CYBER RESILIENCE · 1 OCTOBER 2026

Schools are getting stronger. The next step is making sure leaders own the plan

Ofqual's survey of secondary teachers in England, published on 1 October, shows reported cyber incidents fell from 34% to 27% in two years, and 66% of schools that had an incident recovered immediately. Only 9% of teachers see senior leadership as primarily responsible for cyber security, so the gap now is ownership: leaders need to know the plan and have seen it tested. For trusts in the RPA, cyber cover depends on offline backups, National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) staff training, Police CyberAlarm registration and a written response plan. Devices still on Windows 10 now receive security updates only through Microsoft's paid programme.

Suggested next step: a short evidence pack, then a test

Ask your IT lead for a one-page summary of backups, training, the response plan and any unsupported devices, then schedule a leadership recovery exercise before the end of the spring term.

How we help: cyber recovery exercise and Cyber Readiness

A relaxed, hands-on recovery exercise with your leadership team in the room, and our Cyber Readiness assessment against the DfE standards and the RPA conditions.

02 · ONLINE SAFETY · 22 OCTOBER 2026

Your safeguards are doing the heavy lifting

Ofcom's first statutory report on content harmful to children found no significant change in what children see online in the nine months after the new duties took effect, so in-school filtering, monitoring and your safeguarding response remain essential. Social media services will not be offered to under-16s, with restrictions expected in early 2027. Mobile phone restrictions during the school day are statutory guidance, and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 applies from this term.

Suggested next step: a joint filtering and monitoring update

Ask your DSL and IT lead for a short joint report on how filtering and monitoring perform against the DfE standards, including how bypass attempts are detected, before the spring term.

How we help: Filtering and Monitoring assurance

Our assurance reviews give your DSL clear dashboards and an audit trail, so leaders and governors have evidence rather than reassurance.

03 · ANALOGUE SWITCH-OFF · 31 JANUARY 2027

The analogue phone network closes. Use the Christmas break

Openreach has confirmed that the analogue phone network closes on 31 January 2027 and that the date will not move again. The main phones are usually in hand; the lines most often missed are intruder and fire alarm signalling, lift emergency phones, door entry systems, card payment terminals and backup lines. The Christmas closure is the last practical window for work before the deadline.

Suggested next step: a list of every line on site

Ask your school business manager or estates lead to list every line, what it connects to and who supplies it, by mid-November, with a migration plan for each and any work booked for the Christmas break.

How we help: site survey and digital migration

We survey your site and move voice and alarm services to digital alternatives through our VoIP and Hosted Telephony service, planned around the school calendar.

04 · AI AND DATA · 8 OCTOBER 2026

Making the most of AI, safely

On 8 October the Information Commissioner's Office announced that ten major AI developers, including Microsoft, Google and Apple, had committed to changes in how they handle personal data, and opened a call for evidence on agentic AI that closes on 20 November. There is no new legal duty on schools yet, but AI features are now built into tools schools already use, often switched on by default, so this is a good moment to get ahead.

Suggested next step: a register of AI tools in use

Ask your data protection officer (DPO) and IT lead to list the AI tools and features in use, who approved each, which have a data protection impact assessment (DPIA) and what data they can reach. Review it as a leadership team this term.

How we help: Microsoft 365 data governance and AI readiness

Our reviews check access permissions to sensitive data and set sensible controls, so staff can use AI with confidence while pupil data stays where it should.

05 · BUDGETS · 28 OCTOBER 2026

Getting more from what you have

The Budget on 28 October set the wider funding context, but no new national funding ring-fenced for school technology was identified in October. The DfE published the schools budget support grant 2026 allocations on 14 October, and academy trust audited accounts are due by 31 December. The DfE's ambition remains for every school and college to meet its six core digital and technology standards by 2030, so clear priorities go a long way.

Suggested next step: a costed three-year technology plan

Ask your finance and IT leads to agree a plan showing replacement cycles, contract renewals and the gap to each standard, costed and prioritised by risk, ready for next year's budget setting.

How we help: standards gap assessment and Hardware as a Service

Our independent gap assessment shows where to focus spend first. Where it helps, Hardware as a Service spreads device costs evenly over the plan period.

06 · BUYING FRAMEWORKS · 2027

New routes to market from 2027

The Government Commercial Agency (GCA) is re-letting the two main public sector frameworks for buying technology: Network Services 4 (RM6377, award planned for March or April 2027) and Technology Products and Associated Services 3 (RM6398, go-live planned for August 2027). The dates are GCA estimates. Contracts renewing from mid-2027 may need to be bought through the new arrangements, and the suppliers on each route may change. A compliant route matters for trusts under the Academy Trust Handbook and the Procurement Act 2023.

Suggested next step: a 24-month renewal schedule

Ask your procurement or finance lead to list technology contracts expiring in the next 24 months, with the current route to market, the planned route and a decision date for each.

How we help: requirements and compliant routes

We help schools and trusts define what they need and identify suitable compliant buying routes, so renewals run smoothly.

TALK TO US

Book a 30-minute conversation

We will help you see where you stand against the six-point health check and what, if anything, to tackle first. Existing Managed Services customers can raise it at their next service review.

sales@medhurst-it.com
01489 563000
medhurst-it.com

SCAN TO VISIT

Sources, verified 7 November 2026: Ofqual cyber security survey (gov.uk, 1 October 2026); DfE Cyber Security Hub, Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) conditions; Microsoft, Windows 10 Extended Security Updates; Ofcom report on content harmful to children (22 October 2026); Growing up in the online world, government response (gov.uk, July 2026); KCSIE 2026; Openreach, analogue switch-off date; ICO announcement and agentic AI call for evidence (8 October 2026); HM Treasury, Budget 2026; DfE schools budget support grant 2026 allocations (14 October 2026); DfE update for academies (14 October 2026); Government Commercial Agency (GCA) agreement pages for RM6377 and RM6398. The full update, with links and a five-minute interactive summary, is at medhurst-it.com/insights-autumn-half-term-2026.html.