

Google: more than just a search engine

According to those in the know, the wonders of Google are yet to be fully realised by many SBMs and network managers. MATT BRITLAND, director of ICT at The Lady Eleanor Holles School in London, outlines what your students (and staff) might be missing out on



Matt Britland is director of ICT at The Lady Eleanor Holles School in London

Many schools have heard of Google Drive, but how many understand what it can offer to staff and students? It really is a powerful tool that everyone can take advantage of. Firstly, what makes it so great for education is that it's free. The application process is really straightforward and once your institution has been accepted you can begin using it. The school's IT team should be able to help set it up and manage the administration side; and each staff member and student can then access Google Drive for your school with usernames and access that

the administrator can specify.

Each user will get 30GB of cloud storage (at the time of writing) in Google Drive. You can store documents, images, videos and other files that are available online from laptops, smartphones or tablets with an internet connection. Not only are your files backed up but it means that you don't have to

work on the same document, online from any geographic location in real time.

Collaborators can see others adding to the document as it happens. You can even add comments to your own or other people's documents as well as add suggested edits, much like the 'track changes' feature in Microsoft Office. Docs

questionnaires and quizzes using Google Forms. If schools wanted to, they could also use Gmail for their school email.

But it gets even better... Google will soon release Google Classroom which works with Google Apps/Drive. Teachers can use this website to set, collect and mark work online which is all stored in Google Drive. The teacher is able to create classes, set assignments, and students and teachers can communicate on a shared wall that only individual classes can see. Google Classroom is new and will develop over time as Google begin to receive feedback from teachers. I've been lucky enough to have access to an early version and it really does have a lot of potential.

Along with Docs there are a variety of other apps you can use with Google Drive including, Gmail, Blogger, YouTube and Google Hangouts (video conferencing and live streaming to YouTube). The Google suite of applications is an incredible, powerful, free tool for any educational institution. What are you waiting for? Get involved! ■

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carry flash drives, which in my experience often get lost.

Along with Google Drive you also get Google Apps. The most powerful apps for me are Google Docs. Docs are an online office suite of apps that include a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation app as well as an app for creating forms. These tools enable schools to create and store documents in the cloud. They come with very powerful collaborative features that mean several people can

can be created or edited on multiple devices, which means you can start a document at home and continue to work on it on a tablet or smartphone. All documents you create are stored in Google Drive and can be organised into folders. These can then be downloaded onto a computer as a Word document or PDF. Documents can also be shared online with others, published online or embedded in websites or blogs, and users can create their own surveys,