Online Free School Meals

Cloud Computing   Information Sheet

What is Cloud Computing?

Cloud computing provides a way of delivering IT services online; documents, emails, user data and applications can be stored remotely and accessed over the internet through a web browser.

Cloud computing is made up of three basic elements:

- **Servers** located in data centres;
- **Services** provided over the Internet; and
- **User devices** (web-enabled).

Cloud computing enables users to access information over the internet; as all applications and data are stored remotely, the only requirements are a web-enabled device and an internet connection. Users can access services with smaller, cheaper devices, such as low-specification desktop PCs, laptops, netbooks, tablet PCs, internet-enabled TVs, PDAs or smart phones.

The Benefits of Cloud Computing

Cloud computing provides benefits to both clients and end-users:

Reduced Start-up Expenditure	Start-up expenditure is greatly reduced and may be classified as either capital or operational expenditure. Physical infrastructure may be provided by **SDA** – clients (and users) do not need to purchase expensive equipment for one-time or infrequent intensive computing tasks. Fewer in-house IT skills are required for implementation.
Faster Development	Existing infrastructure and software technologies enable applications (and continuing enhancements) to be delivered very quickly. Technology improvements and upgrades to local or universal standards are incorporated whenever available.
Increased Availability and Mobility	Users are able to access services using a web browser regardless of their location or what device they are using. As infrastructure is off-site, and accessed via the Internet, users can connect from anywhere. Access is not restricted to only those with medium-high specification computers and/or cable-satellite broadband.
Flexibility and Scalability	Resources and services are provided on demand. Use what is required, when required and no more.

Cloud for Education

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Shared Running Costs	**SDA** hosted services enable sharing of resources and costs across a large pool of users: • Property, equipment and utilities • Peak-load capacity management • Efficiency improvements • Environmental savings, especially energy costs
Better Resources	**SDA** services utilise high specification hardware and software, higher than can normally be afforded by single clients, and is subject to regular upgrading – clients do not need to budget and plan for an in-house upgrade cycle.
Automated and timely updates	Service updates are automatically delivered to all users in a single process without any major client involvement; client organisations are free to concentrate on core business and innovation.
Administration	All service administration tasks are taken care of by **SDA**, not the client. Most contracts will specify a minimum portfolio of management information for client organisations.
Performance Reliability	**SDA** constantly monitor system performance and take immediate action to deal with any potential outages or threats.
High Level Security	Offers access to levels of physical and systemic protection that would usually be out of the reach of many smaller organisations.
BUT	**Data security** is a significant issue for many users – especially as they are placing their trust in third-parties. **SDA** take this issue extremely seriously. Please read our ***Data Security Information Sheet*** to find out more about how you can be assured that we provide the highest possible level of security.

Cloud for Education

SDA have developed an exciting new suite of services to provide the benefits of cloud computing to its education service clients. These services collectively form our **Cloud for Education**. The **Online Free School Meal (OFSM)** service is part of this suite of services which also includes **Online Early Years Entitlement (OEYE)** and **Online Early Years Pupil Premium (OEYPP)**.

GOV.UK/Digital-Marketplace (previously known as "G-Cloud")

SDA are proud to have been selected as an approved provider of cloud services for the public sector. Now, as part of Government's **Digital Marketplace**[1], **SDA** are able to offer **OFSM**[2] for schools and a number of other cloud services to public sector organisations, including local authorities. These services include **SCROLL**[3] (Surveys and Collections for Research On-Line) and our flagship **InfoTap®**[4] Data Processing Suite.

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[1] https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/
[2] https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/service/5177406528684032
[3] https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/service/5671460911710208
[4] https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/service/4632371219398656