

A guide to preventing ICT theft in schools



Laptops stolen from Salford primary school on last day of term

16/09/2011 - Last updated 18:58 comments (0)

July 22, 2011

Laptops stolen from school in Preston

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POLICE are appealing for information following a burglary at a primary school in Preston.

A Salford school was burgled within hours of closing for the final time Thursday.

Sometime between 6pm on Friday 9 September and 7am on Monday 12 September, somebody has gained entry to Holme Slack Primary School and has taken two laptops.

Several laptops were stolen from Charlestown Community Primary on Lissadel Street, which had just closed its doors permanently after 37 years.

The school is surrounded by high fencing and it is believed the offender or offenders have scaled the fence in order to get into the grounds of school.

Police arrived at 2am after residents reported the building's alarms were going off.

The laptops are described as a charcoal grey 14 inch Hewlett and Packard laptop and a black 15 inch Acer laptop.

A police spokesman said: "Our inquiries are ongoing and we are working closely with the school."

Prior to taking the laptops it appears that there has been a failed attempt to steal lead flashing from a section of the roof.

PC Dave Senior said: "This is a despicable crime. An awful lot of work which was saved on the laptops has now been lost, leaving pupils and teachers incredibly upset.

The main staff will attend the new River View Primary

"I would appeal to anybody who may have seen anyone scaling the fence at some point over the weekend in question, or anybody on the roof of the school, to contact police."

Laptops stolen from school

Published on Wednesday 13 July 2011 13:43

POLICE are appealing for information after 12 laptop computers stolen from Skipsea School, on Main Road between 3.2 June 19 and 7.20am on Monday June 20.

The laptops, stolen from inside a shed on the school grounds, looking, silver Travel Mate 2410, made by Acer and Toshiba. One was marked with a permanent marker.

Today's Gazette: School's laptops stolen...again

8:58am Tuesday 25th October 2011

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A HEAD teacher has condemned burglars who stole pupils' computers for the second time in two months.

Raiders struck again at Millfields Primary School in Wivenhoe, stealing 20 laptops worth £12,000 that had just been replaced after a burglary in June.

Projector and laptops Misbourne school

Oct 4 2011 By Lawrence Poole



should contact me.

"I would also appeal to anyone who saw suspicious activity in the surrounding area on Thursday evening into Friday morning to come forward."

Anyone with information can contact PC Kong via the 24-hour Police Enquiry Centre on 0845 8 505 505. If you don't want to speak to leave your name, call the charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

Laptops Stolen From New School Site

Monday, August 29th, 2011 10:39

Three laptops have been stolen from the new school build site.

The theft occurred over a night and police say they but computers ng



The new school building site at Cam Gwael

Laptops stolen from schools

Two Schools Have Laptops Stolen.

By Ben News

Both schools were victims of a security breach that resulted in laptops both had insufficient security to prevent the information from being used for the thief's use. As these were educators laptops they contained names, age, address and potentially their health.

Holy Park School in Barnet, north London had a laptop stolen from a teacher's home. It is common practice for laptops to be encrypted the information contained was not

As put by Sally Anne Poole the acting ICO Head of Enforcement "putting people's personal information at risk unnecessarily". The ICO did not issue a fine to either school as the information was encrypted. The ICO did not issue a fine to either school as the information was encrypted.

PC Jonathan Kong, from Amersham police station, said: "Anyone who has been offered any of the above items

Headteacher resources that had been taken.

"A lot of the students have said how upset they are and how much they liked using them and I agree with them. It's so sad because we have only had them a couple of months and they were working out really well."

Three classrooms were forced open and 25 Dell laptops, with Sandy Upper School security stamps on them, were stolen from a security cabinet.

Bedfordshire Police are appealing for witnesses or anyone with information on the burglary to come forward.

Anyone with any information can ring PC Hamer in confidence on 01234 841212 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

Shocking headlines!

Introduction

Often large, open-plan and accessible schools, colleges and universities are prime targets for both organised and opportunist theft. Netbooks, laptops, iPads and iPod Touches are small and light, so they can be easily concealed and removed from a building if the effective security measures are not in place.

In this brief guide, we outline why ICT security should be an important consideration for you as an educator, and suggest some ways in which theft of mobile IT devices can be prevented. This booklet is by no means definitive, but it should provide a starting point to help keep your institution's mobile IT equipment safe.



Why is mobile ICT security so important for educators?

Although mobile ICT theft is a problem for many areas of business and society, when laptops and tablets are stolen from schools, colleges and universities, there can be devastating consequences.

Here are just some of the reasons why ICT security is so important:

- **Pupil safety** - Laptop theft can seriously endanger pupils if details or photographs of vulnerable children fall into the hands of thieves or blackmailers.
- **Disruption to learning** - Laptop theft causes significant inconvenience for both teachers and pupils. Although insurers may replace stolen ICT, sourcing quotations and waiting for new equipment can take a long time, meaning that pupils could be without laptops and other devices for some time.
- **Cost** - If you are forced to make an insurance claim to replace mobile ICT equipment, your premiums may increase.
- **Regulatory fines** - The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) now has the authority to issue monetary penalties of up to £500,000 to organisations in serious breach of the Data Protection Act, meaning that your school could face regulatory fines if it loses unencrypted laptops containing pupil information.
- **Organisational reputation** - Upholding a positive reputation is essential for all education institutions, especially those relying on fee paying pupils or commercial donations, but a school or college that loses its pupils' sensitive information is likely to be condemned by parents and potential investors.



How can educators safeguard their ICT?

Laptop theft can be both costly and dangerous, but there are ways that you can reduce the risk of it occurring within your school, college or university.

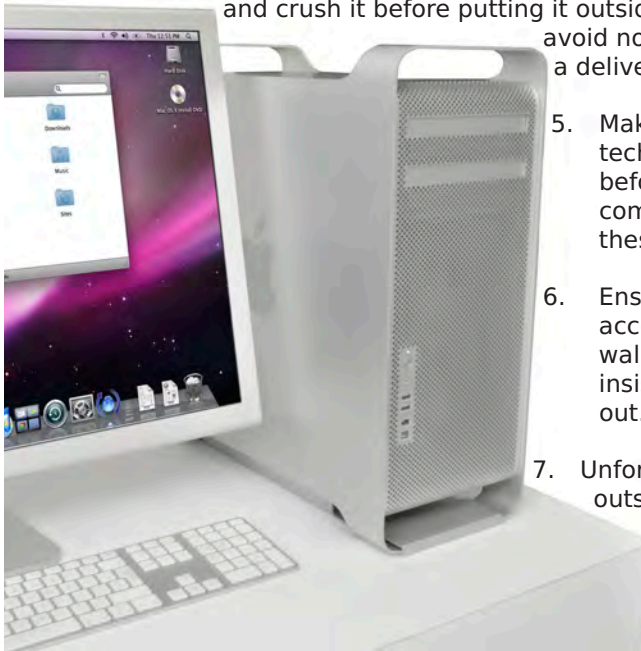
Minimal or 'zero' cost strategies

The good news is that many of these ways involve very little cash.

1. If it does not already, your existing security procedures should be altered to include guidelines for how ICT should be physically protected. This 'rule book' should cover both how equipment is used and stored within the building, and the directions staff and students should follow if they need to take laptops home with them.
2. Once the guide has been written, organise training to ensure that your colleagues understand exactly what they need to do to keep ICT safe. Educators can then pass on the relevant information to their classes. Training should be given at least annually, and the ICT security guide should be regularly reviewed to take account of any new equipment that has been purchased.
3. Take care to avoid accidentally advertising ICT assets on your institution's website and social networking sites. It is also a good idea to think twice about informing the local press when your institution has purchased a lot of new equipment.



4. When new equipment is bought, flatten its packaging, turn it inside out and crush it before putting it outside with the rubbish, to avoid notifying potential thieves to a delivery.



5. Make sure external ICT technicians present ID before they are taken to service computers, and ensure that these people sign in and out.

6. Ensure that visitors are accompanied when they walk around the building, and insist that all guests sign in and out.

7. Unfortunately, it is not always outside visitors that steal valuable equipment. If internal theft is a problem, use a deposit system when teachers issue laptops to ensure that equipment is returned, or use a

register to tick off students' names when laptops are put back into the storage cabinet.

8. When out and about, carry your laptop in an anonymous bag or case in order not to alert thieves to its contents.

9. If any of your institution's mobile IT is stolen, alert the police as soon as possible. The quicker the police are aware that confidential information has gone missing, the more likely it is that equipment will be recovered and that you will not have to seek a replacement.



**Remember:
Prevention is
better than
cure**

Millfields Primary School realises the importance of ICT security after laptop theft

Located on the outskirts of Wivenhoe in Essex, Millfields Primary School is situated next to open countryside, offering outstanding views across the river estuary. The school, open to children aged 4 to 11, is proud of its highly talented and motivated team of teachers and its strong links with the local community.

Unfortunately, the new school year began on a sad note for Millfields Primary School when its pupils learnt that their ICT equipment had been stolen. According to Headteacher Janet Meacock: "The night before our children returned from their summer break, thieves broke the locks on one of our windows, gained access to our two laptop trolleys, and made away with 34 of our laptops."

The laptop trolleys, neither of which was manufactured by LapSafe® Products, contained laptops worth a total of £15,000.

To make matters worse, just one month later, the school was burgled for the second time. As Janet explains: "After the first break-in, we followed the advice given to us by the police and increased our school's security. We reinforced our locks and moved the laptop trolleys away from the window. Sadly, the thieves still managed to smash a window, break the hinges off of our laptop trolley and take 20 brand new laptops; the ones that had just been replaced."

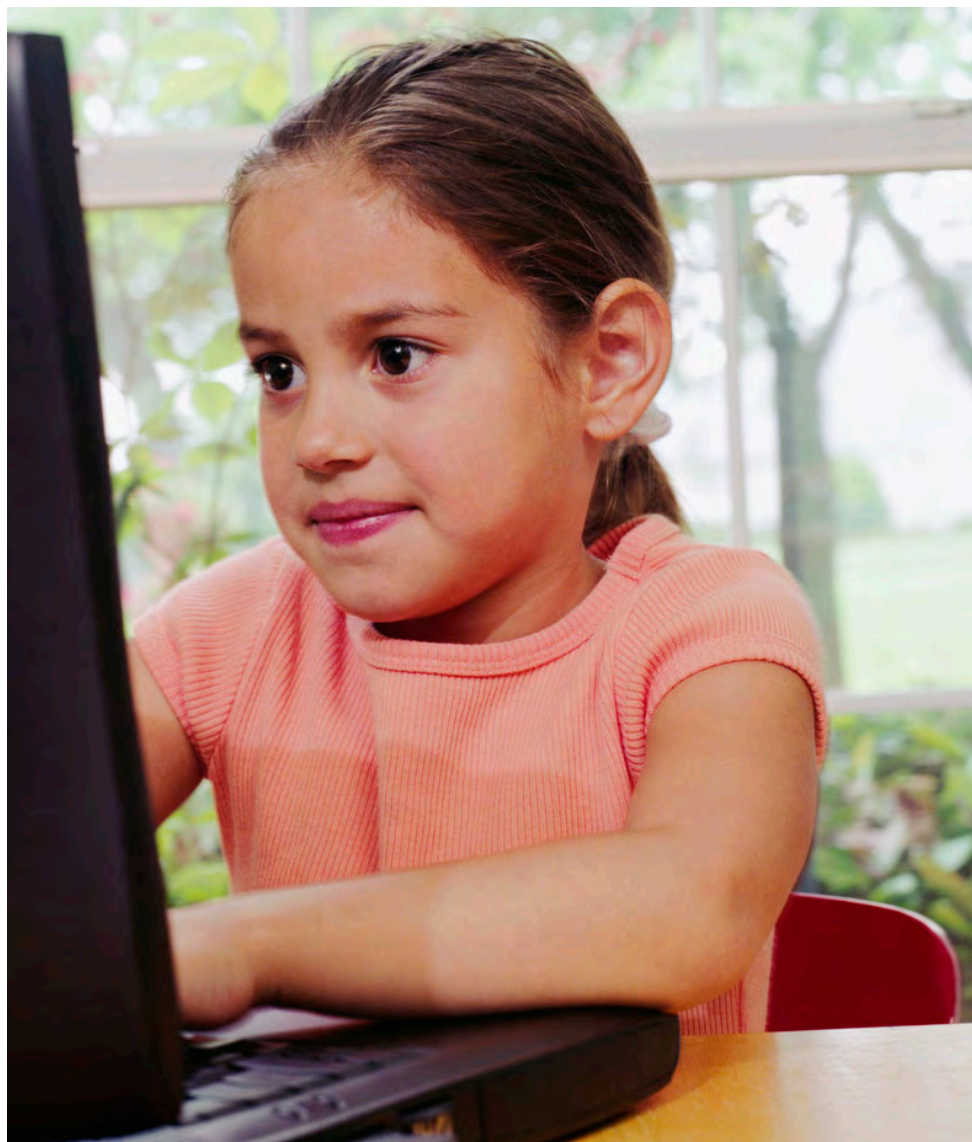


The dual thefts were not just inconvenient for Millfields Primary School. As Janet conveys, "Having to pay the insurance excess has obviously eaten into our budget and caused disruption to learning. Our ICT lessons are planned around the use of our laptops, so not having these resources for some time meant that teachers had to plan their lessons again."

"Our pupils enjoy using the laptops, so it was upsetting for them to be without their computers while we waited for our insurer to replace them. It was also very distressing for our youngest pupils to think that their school, which is usually regarded as a safe haven, had been broken into."

After reading about the thefts in the newspaper, ICT security expert LapSafe® Products, located just a few miles away from Millfields Primary School, was saddened to hear about the misfortune of a local school.

As Janet continues, “A representative at LapSafe® got in touch to explain that they were upset to read that our laptops had been stolen and wanted to do what they could to help us. LapSafe® is a local business to us, so they wanted to offer us a complimentary LapSafe® Mentor™ – a laptop trolley built with security in mind – to try and reduce the likelihood of our laptops being stolen again.



“When the LapSafe® trolley arrived, it was very different to the two laptop trolleys that we had been using previously. The new trolley was clearly far more secure than our existing laptop trolleys and constructed to a much higher specification. As the trolley is modular, our laptops are now encased within two layers of steel, making it very difficult for thieves to break into the unit without damaging its contents.

“The team from LapSafe® also fitted a docking station to our new trolley and helped us to set the motion sensor alarm on the cabinet. As a result, the trolley can now be attached to the wall overnight to prevent it from being wheeled away by thieves and features an alarm that is so loud that it would deter most thieves!”

Since the break-ins, Millfields Primary School has taken additional security procedures, in addition to their new LapSafe® trolley, to help keep its ICT equipment safe. As Janet explains, “We have bricked up the window of the room that was broken into and stepped up the school’s security. We are learning very quickly that criminals will make every effort to take what is not theirs, but we are fairly certain that our laptops will be safe inside the secure LapSafe®; we would be very surprised if anyone did manage to break into it!”

As a result of her school’s experience, Janet is urging all schools to think carefully about how they secure valuable ICT equipment. “When it comes to preventing theft, schools do not often think about the security of their laptop trolley, just the security of the room that it is locked inside. When we bought our two original laptop trolleys, we thought mainly of cost – both were second hand – believing that the school’s other security measures were sufficient to deter any thieves. I think that if we had bought a LapSafe® in the first place, our laptops may not have been stolen.”

Janet concludes: “I would urge all schools to increase their security measures and really think about the possibility of laptop theft when selecting a laptop trolley to charge them in. Prevention is certainly better than cure.”

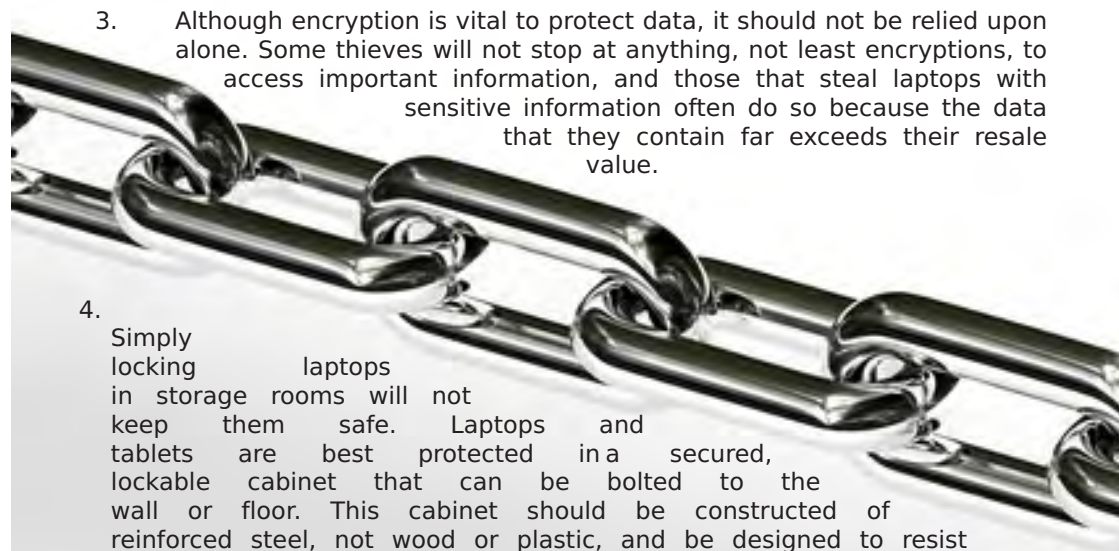


Mentor™ ChargeLine™ S30 trolley which was donated to Millfields Primary School

Strategies requiring financial investment

Although some deterrents can be implemented for little or no cost, your institution could also invest in physical restraints to make security measures more effective, and ICT resources less at risk of theft.

1. If your institution is located in an area with a high crime rate, or when pupils are working in open-plan areas, security cables and systems that lock laptops to desks can prevent equipment from being taken whilst it is in use. It is also a good idea to lock down your desktop computers and projectors because, although these are more difficult to move, a committed thief will certainly have a go.
2. Always install encryption software onto your mobile ICT devices. Encryption can protect students by scrambling data to make it difficult for unauthorised personnel to identify its meaning, often rendering it useless to thieves.
3. Although encryption is vital to protect data, it should not be relied upon alone. Some thieves will not stop at anything, not least encryptions, to access important information, and those that steal laptops with sensitive information often do so because the data that they contain far exceeds their resale value.
4. Simply locking laptops in storage rooms will not keep them safe. Laptops and tablets are best protected in a secured, lockable cabinet that can be bolted to the wall or floor. This cabinet should be constructed of reinforced steel, not wood or plastic, and be designed to resist crowbars, cutting equipment and lock-pickers. Mobile storage and charging trolleys and laptop lockers provide effective overnight storage for laptops, tablets and netbooks, and it is a good idea to select one with a motion sensor alarm to further deter thieves.
5. To state the obvious, alarms are only useful if staff remember to set them. Make sure that the last person to leave the building double checks that an alarm has been engaged.
6. Ideally, laptops and other mobile devices should never be left unattended in a vehicle because concealed areas like the boot or glove box will be the first places that thieves look. Laptops should always be accompanied by their owners and should never be left in a car overnight. It is far better to secure a laptop to furniture inside a building using a security cable.



7. If students need to issue themselves with laptops, you could consider investing in a charging locker that enables pupils to access devices via their existing smartcards – the ones that they use for the library or to buy lunch. As these cards link to your school's database, you should be able to monitor which laptop has been taken from the cabinet, identify its whereabouts if stolen, and spot which student may have damaged a laptop.





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