ADVANTAGES OF EMPLOYING A STANDARDIZED WINDOWS IMAGE/SOE FOR STUDENT DEVICES AT SHSC

Introduction:

In today's technologically driven educational landscape, schools are increasingly integrating digital devices into their curricula to enhance learning experiences and foster student development. However, with the benefits of technology come potential risks related to student safety, data privacy, and academic integrity. To address these challenges and promote a secure and conducive learning environment, St Helena Secondary College many years ago adopted a Standardized Windows Image or Standard Operating Environment (SOE) for student devices. This brief explores the numerous benefits of implementing a standardized Windows Image/SOE and highlights its role in enhancing cybersecurity, improving device performance, and fostering digital citizenship.

1. Enhanced Cybersecurity:

A primary advantage of employing a standardized Windows Image/SOE lies in its ability to significantly strengthen cybersecurity measures within the educational institution. By using a standardized configuration across all student devices, schools can apply consistent security protocols, ensuring that each device is protected against cyber threats. This allows It staff to be alerted when there are threats to students' devices and take action to protect the student and resolve the threat. We employ many tools to protect students' office 365 account and their device.

a. Reduced Vulnerabilities:

A standardized Windows Image/SOE enables schools to eliminate unnecessary applications, settings, and services that may introduce potential vulnerabilities. By removing unnecessary software and limiting

administrative privileges, the attack surface for potential cyber threats is reduced, making it more challenging for hackers to exploit weaknesses.

b. Centralized Security Management:

A standardized environment allows for centralized security management, where IT administrators can efficiently deploy security updates, patches, and configurations to all student devices. This centralized approach ensures that every device receives critical updates promptly, mitigating the risk of malware infections and cyberattacks.

c. Improved Endpoint Security:

With a standardized Windows Image/SOE, schools can implement robust endpoint security solutions, such as antivirus software, firewalls, and encryption tools, consistently across all devices. This uniformity ensures that each device is equipped with essential security measures to protect against various threats.

d. User Access Control:

The use of a standardized Windows Image/SOE allows schools to implement strict user access control policies. By defining and limiting user privileges, the risk of unauthorized access to sensitive data is minimized, enhancing data security and protecting student information. This also reduces the opportunities for students to load distracting applications that may impact on class time.

e. Secure Network Infrastructure:

A standardized Windows Image/SOE extends its benefits beyond individual devices. It helps in securing the school's network infrastructure by enforcing standardized security protocols across all endpoints, preventing potential breaches that could compromise the entire system.

2. Encouraging Digital Citizenship and Responsibility:

Employing a standardized Windows Image/SOE presents an opportunity for educators to instil principles of digital citizenship and responsibility among students. By teaching them to operate within a controlled environment and adhere to usage policies, students develop essential digital skills and an understanding of the ethical use of technology, preparing them for responsible digital citizenship in the future.

3. Consistent User Experience:

A standardized environment ensures a consistent user experience across all student devices. This homogeneity promotes ease of use, minimizes confusion, and enables educators to focus on delivering content and lessons without having to navigate various device configurations and software disparities.

4. Streamlined Technical Support:

Managing a standardized Windows Image/SOE streamlines technical support within the college. IT staff can familiarize themselves with the standardized environment, making troubleshooting and problem-solving more efficient. Additionally, device management and updates can be automated, reducing the burden on students and IT personnel and minimizing downtime for students.

5. Academic Integrity and Fairness:

A standardized Windows Image/SOE contributes to maintaining academic integrity and fairness during examinations and assessments. By restricting access to unauthorized resources, applications, and communication tools, the likelihood of cheating and academic dishonesty is diminished, ensuring a level playing field for all students.

Conclusion:

The adoption of a standardized Windows Image/SOE for student devices in schools offers numerous advantages, including enhanced cybersecurity, improved device performance, and a focus on digital citizenship. Additionally, standardized environments provide consistent user experiences, streamline technical support, and promote academic integrity, contributing to a safe and productive learning environment. Embracing such measures prepares students for the digital world while ensuring a secure and focused educational atmosphere that fosters academic excellence and responsible technology use.

The St Helena Secondary College SOE consists of Windows 11 Education, with all standard classroom applications pre-installed and configured (Office 365, Microsoft Teams, OneDrive preconfigured for auto backup, Microsoft Defender, Chrome web browser, Adobe Creative Cloud, image and video viewers and device management tools). The student does not have access to install applications on the device, however if the parents/guardians would like a specific application loaded onto the device there is a process to facilitate this (Refer to the school website https://sthelena.vic.edu.au/digital-learning-2/ "Family Request For Additional Software Install"). Students do have access to install device drivers, so adding home printers and other devices should not be a problem unless the device requires the install of an application, which the IT Helpdesk can assist with.

For technical support of student devices please email ithelp@sthelena.vic.edu.au or call (03) 9438 8510 for the IT Helpdesk between 8am and 4pm school days (IT are also available for part of the school holidays).

If you have any questions or concerns relating to cybersecurity at St Helena Secondary College, please email cybersecurity@sthelena.vic.edu.au

If you would like to discuss this policy with school leadership, please email askleadership@sthelena.vic.edu.au