



firefly

Firefly Cloud
for project leads

fireflylearning.com



Firefly works best in the Cloud, taking advantage of the greater reliability and security, as well as the latest feature releases.

Firefly has provided schools with Firefly Cloud hosting for over 4 years. Over this time and through to today, teachers have enjoyed a reliable service and more of the latest features which we are unable to provide on local installations.

Responses to our 'smiley faces' survey in Jan 2017 showed that our satisfaction score for teachers is 13% higher at cloud hosted schools compared to those on local installations.

Schools hosted on Firefly Cloud also enjoy greater peace of mind in regard to data security and business continuity, as well as saving money on servers, licensing and maintenance.

The tide has changed

Firefly has come a long way since its earliest iteration on a single server at Joe & Simon's school. In parallel, the web has evolved beyond recognition and we have always strived to remain at the forefront of each new wave of technology.

Many software providers are now focussed on offering cloud-based applications. For example, strategic partners such as Microsoft are incentivising schools to move away from on-premise hosting by offering their latest services and pricing in the cloud*.

Out of the hundreds of schools which have joined Firefly in the last few years, only a handful have opted to host Firefly locally. The result is that for some time now the majority of students, teachers and parents using Firefly have been doing so via Firefly Cloud.

There are huge benefits to being cloud-based. With updates automated, we removed the server, making us greener and requiring only MIS maintenance. Downtime has been non-existent and things are running faster. I wish we had used the cloud from the start.

John Walton, IT Department
Cokethorpe School



*To view references, please go to fireflylearning.com/cloud-notes





Data security

We've always been serious about data security and we know how important it is to schools. We've ensured our *self-certification statements with service and support commitments* is listed on the DfE advice for schools website* and we are working through all the steps required to comply with the GDPR in anticipation of May 2018.

We are intent on continuing to ensure that Firefly Cloud offers the most secure place for your information, with all data encrypted at rest and backed up hourly. We also manage all the patching and upgrading of underlying software ensuring you are always protected and up to date.

We can respond to incidents and deploy new code within minutes - a turnaround that just can't be achieved when hosted on-premise. Firefly Cloud is built on best of breed industry hosting platforms like AWS and Azure which gives us lots of benefits including physical security.

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Keep learning when school is closed

Wherever you are in the world, the ability to carry on the process of teaching and learning when school is closed is of great importance. Schools from Cairo to London are relying on Firefly Cloud to keep them operational even when no-one can make it in and without depending on the school's physical infrastructure or internet connection.

Performance

Our cloud is optimised by our infrastructure experts to be finely tuned to Firefly itself. As a result, page loading is fast and setting work is quick. We also know, for example, that most parents and students are active on Firefly between 7pm and 8pm when they are most likely not to be on school premises. Hosting in the cloud always offers a better experience at these particularly busy times. Firefly's advanced load balanced infrastructure means that peaks in demand can be managed which would otherwise cause a slowdown on a single local server.

Reliability

Our uptime figure in Q1 of 2017 has been 99.98%. This is a figure that is unachievable on a local server that is kept fully up to date with security updates and operating system patches.

Firefly Cloud is monitored and supported around the clock by teams based in London and Sydney and does not rely on your school IT support responding out of hours.

We are able to scale resources when schools are busiest, for example at the beginning of a new term or in exam season. We've prepared an accompanying document that gives more detailed information on how we ensure Firefly's reliability in the cloud in a way that just isn't possible in the local version of Firefly.

Achieve more with Firefly and cloud only features

Firefly Cloud offers our development team opportunities to use technologies that simply can't be supported locally. In fact, we have just released our first cloud-only features. Annotation, a core Firefly 6 feature that teachers are enjoying on Firefly for Teachers on iOS is now available in the browser for cloud schools.

Better integration

Your current MIS integration will continue to work with Firefly Cloud. Our next generation MIS integration, including writeback and analytics functionality is only possible on cloud.

We can test and deploy new code faster

We already have the ability to deploy bug fixes to the cloud in minutes. Once all our schools are in the cloud, we will be able to test and deploy new features more quickly as we remove the need to duplicate testing for installers and local configurations.

Moving to the cloud

Many schools have already migrated to Firefly Cloud. We will guide you every step of the way. Although there are some complexities, we are well practiced and will make it easy for you and your team. You need to pick a time when a small amount of downtime is acceptable and when your technical team are on hand. For your users, the only thing that will change is the URL.

What does this mean for you?

What does it cost?

The great news is that there is no extra charge to be hosted in Firefly Cloud. Your annual licensing will not necessarily change. In fact, in addition to the savings from Microsoft licensing, server and storage costs, some schools may additionally save money by moving to the cloud. There is a migration fee payable part in advance that covers all the work required to get you up and running quickly and smoothly.

We had concerns about how smooth this process was going to be and the impact on our end users. However with the management and support from Firefly, it all went far better than expected.



Thomas Bliss, ICT Manager
Cathedral Schools Trust



Learn more together

call us: **+44 (0) 20 7112 9362**

visit us: **fireflylearning.com**

follow us: **@fireflyteam**

email us: **support@fireflylearning.com**

write to us: **Firefly Learning Ltd
The Aircraft Factory
100 Cambridge Grove
London, W6 0LE, UK**