



NetSupport School

An unbeatable range of classroom management features and is, in many ways, the best of its kind on the market

Schools have a responsibility to provide pupils with ICT facilities that include IT-based teaching and their own personal learning space. However, managing IT resources and ensuring pupils have a secure environment in which to learn is a challenge. NetSupport School (NSS) offers an impressive range of tools for achieving these goals.

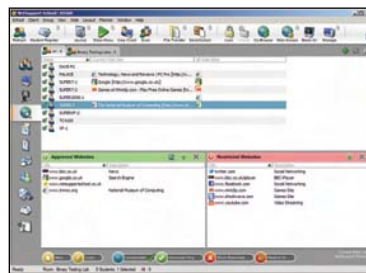
NSS goes much further than basic classroom management software, providing facilities for monitoring and controlling access to applications, along with internet and printing resources. It also has lesson-planning tools, a Test Designer and full remote control and viewing features.

Few schools have the luxury of a dedicated IT department, so deployment needs to be easy enough for teachers to do themselves. The installation process starts by loading a Tutor component on to the master system, which controls all other PCs in the classroom.

Pupils' PCs run a Student agent that allows them to be accessed, viewed and controlled from the Tutor system. Teachers can then monitor activities such as internet and application usage.

Teachers view and control all pupils' activities from the Tutor, with quick access to all key functions. On first contact, the Tutor scans the network and populates its main window with all systems running the Student component.

Systems can be placed in groups to represent classrooms, and custom layouts used to show physical locations.



NSS is unique in that it can monitor and control all classroom internet activity.

Teachers can publish classes to pupils, and a useful feature is the option to register each user by presenting a predefined form that asks for details such as name and student ID number.

When a pupil joins a class, the Student utility displays a status bar at the top of the screen showing the lesson title and teacher's name. A row of icons next to the title clearly show active Tutor monitoring functions along with options for requesting a chat with the teacher and other students or a request for help.

The Tutor also gets a status bar on the screen, which provides tools for controlling the PCs in the class. With one mouse-click teachers can mute audio, lock mice and keyboards and blank all screens to get their pupils' attention.

The Monitor window displays thumbnails of what's on each pupil's screen, and hovering the mouse pointer over one calls up an auto-zoom for more detail. The new audio-monitoring feature offers PC-based language lab facilities where the Tutor has direct access to



← The Tutor interface is very well designed and provides teachers with quick and easy access to all classroom PCs.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

PRICE
100-user pack, £22 exc VAT per machine

SUPPLIER
NetSupport Software
01778 382270

INTERNET
www.netsupportschool.co.uk

UPGRADE
Included in annual maintenance (20% of price)

REQUIREMENTS
Windows 2000 or above

audio-streaming tools, muting and options to listen to headphone and microphone activity on selected PCs.

The Test Designer module makes light work of automating examinations. Wizards aid the creation process, which can include tests such as combination or multiple choice questions, incorporating text, graphics, video and audio files.

Run as a separate component, the Test Designer stores tests in a database. Examination security is a big issue, but everything related to these is maintained independently of NSS and requires valid usernames and passwords for access.

Pupils are blocked from using any other applications when a test is running. A counter keeps them advised of the remaining time, and results are gathered into a printable table.

Schools are obliged to ensure internet access isn't abused and that pupils are protected from questionable content. Internet metering makes NSS unique: from the Tutor console teachers can see what sites pupils are viewing and enforce access restrictions.

Approved and restricted address lists control web access, and sites can be added to either list easily. For the strictest control you enable the approved list, and all access will be blocked to any site that isn't on this list.

Application control is almost identical in operation to internet control. You can see the applications running on each system and add them to approved or restricted lists. Conversations using instant messaging can be monitored and access-controlled as well.

Printer management shows details on all printers, including the number of print jobs and pages used by each pupil. When printing has been blocked, all subsequent jobs are held in a queue and selected jobs can be released or deleted.

Even the use of removable media such as DVDs and USB sticks can be controlled using NSS's device management. The Tutor offers a number of options where you can monitor usage, block all access and limit to read-only to stop files being copied from the PC, or you can allow full read and write access.

During testing we found the software very easy to use and were impressed by how well its myriad features have been integrated into a single, intuitive management interface. It's clear that NetSupport School is not simply a tool for teachers to spy on and control pupils, but a complete classroom management solution that can make learning a safe and productive experience. DAVE MITCHELL

EASE OF USE
★★★★★
FEATURES
★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★
OVERALL
★★★★★