

# Google tools enable SOPOGO Foundation schools to manage their own IT facilities

The SOPOGO Foundation believes that expensive management contracts for hardware and software should be a thing of the past. This is the reason why the primary schools opted for G Suite and its associated tools.

## Background

Since 2005, all public primary schools in the Goeree-Overflakkee region of the Netherlands – including a primary school for special needs – fall under the scope of SOPOGO. The foundation encompasses 13 primary schools with a total of 1500 pupils and 170 members of staff. ‘Every child has talent. Learning here is fun’ is the foundation’s motto.

## Challenge

All schools had installed a wired network with servers on location. However, the schools wanted a network that could be managed with less manpower.

This was particularly desirable as several teachers work at more than one school and the schools often had a different infrastructure and operating system from one another. The goal was for all schools to have the same, easy-to-manage infrastructure.



## Solution

Given the requirements, a cloud solution seemed the obvious choice. SOPOGO started with the educational requirements and then looked for the technology to support those. For instance, using more mobile devices in the classroom prevented pupils from having to sit with their computer in a corridor. In addition, the schools wanted to be more in tune with the pupils’ personal experiences. ‘At school, pupils should not see how things used to work but rather become acquainted with modern technology,’ ICT policy officer Ivo Maliepaard explains.

One of the secondary schools in the region had already started working with Google to their satisfaction. ‘The fact that a large percentage of pupils that graduate from our primary school go to this secondary school made it an even more logical choice to use Google.’

At the end of 2016, SOPOGO started preparing for a possible migration to G Suite. The migration started in 2017 and was implemented not only for the pupils but also for the teachers and other members of staff. After a pilot period of three months at two schools, the decision was made to proceed at full speed ahead.

## Advantages

### An affordable infrastructure that all schools can manage for themselves

'The schools had been dependent upon an expensive supplier for a long time,' ICT policy officer Ivo Maliepaard explains. 'We used to spend tens of thousands of euros each year on aspects such as network management, spam filtering, online backups, and firewall management. Simply things to keep the system up and running. We have now curbed these expenses and can now spend money on technology in the classroom.'

It is precisely because the foundation manages almost everything in-house that it saves a great deal of money.

### Pupils gradually get used to modern teaching methods

A number of enthusiastic pupils in the final year of primary school and their teachers are already working with Google Classroom.

It is a great investment for the future, given that it is already being used to the full in secondary schools. Having your own account and being able to handle your own password – in short, becoming aware of your own digital identity – is also important nowadays.

### Simpler teaching

At the same time as the migration to the Google environment, the foundation conducted an evaluation of its digital presentation methods. The interactive whiteboard and projector combinations have been replaced by touchscreens. The teacher operates these touchscreens by means of a Chromebox (a computer with Chrome OS, the same operating system as that used by the Chromebooks). The touchscreen works in the same way as the Chromebook but has a 'slightly' larger screen. 'We have made a conscious choice to spend as little as possible on maintenance,' explains Remco van Kouteren, ICT employee.

## What did they want?

- A truly cost-saving single ICT infrastructure for all schools that they can manage themselves
- Aids to accompany lessons that are in tune with the pupils' personal experiences

## What did they do?

- Implemented G Suite and associated Google tools
- Provided classes with Chromebooks

## What did they achieve?

- A significant reduction in costs as almost all ICT facilitates can be managed by the schools themselves
- Pupils become aware of digital opportunities and challenges from the youngest year groups
- Teachers can focus all their attention on the content of the lessons instead of having to deal with the technology

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