

# Fife Council chooses Chromebooks to bring digital tools to more students, while reducing device management and maintaining Office 365 access

## About Fife Council

Scotland's Fife Council is the nation's third largest authority by population, with 367,000 residents. Fife's 140 primary and 18 secondary schools educate over 53,000 nursery, primary, and secondary students.

## An opportunity to equip students with their own devices

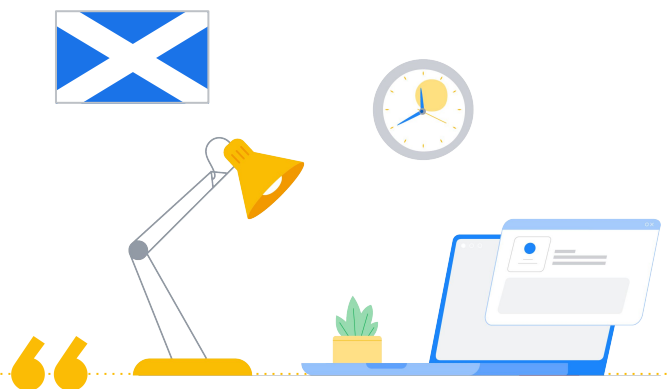
For nearly a decade, Fife's schools have been using Windows devices and Microsoft Office 365 to deliver digital options for learning and classwork. While it's a system that has worked well, recently trends and events converged to expand both the use of technology within the learning sphere, and an increase in the number of devices the council needed to provide access to all students. Thus, an opportunity was presented to reassess what had worked and what hadn't, and to make new plans for future technology adoptions.



Fife is quite a mixed estate. And we have somewhat of an attainment gap, where the more affluent pupils already have technology and so are a bit ahead of the less-affluent ones. Providing a one-to-one deployment was the biggest part of our strategy to close this gap.”

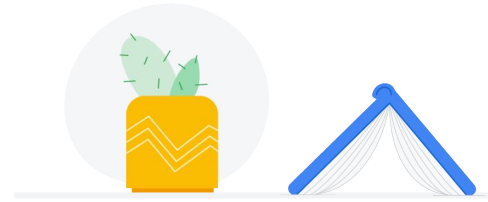
Scott Greer, Technical Specialist for Fife Council.

The other factor driving a need for more devices came up suddenly—and that was the COVID pandemic. Providing devices became a make-or-break decision for all of the pupils who lacked computers to use at home. The quickest solution was to install the CloudReady operating system on existing PC laptops. CloudReady, which is based on Google's Chromium OS, delivers a Chrome OS experience on existing devices.



We needed more devices quickly but cost and availability were an issue in the case of Windows devices. Also, we had a lot of older Windows devices that were set to be discarded. Then, we learned about Chromium and CloudReady, and we knew we had a cost-effective yet pupil-friendly solution to our access challenges.”

Scott Greer, Technical Specialist for Fife Council.



## Relying on the cloud for easier management and lighter devices

With the CloudReady devices on hand, the council's technology experts began to see how Chrome OS would be an improvement over the Windows operating system.

The CloudReady devices were all enrolled and managed via Chrome Education Upgrade and the Admin console, and were ready for students to use—greatly reducing the workload for Scott and his team.



The biggest issue we had with the Windows devices was how difficult it was to manage updates. The devices have a lot of heavy updates and patches, and we didn't have enough control over them to prevent interruptions for students. It was a huge headache, answering requests from people who couldn't log in because their device was in the middle of a big update."

Scott Greer, Technical Specialist for Fife Council.

Compounding the problem, Scott added, was the way that applications were bundled in Microsoft Endpoint Configuration Manager (formerly SCCM), Microsoft's systems management solution.

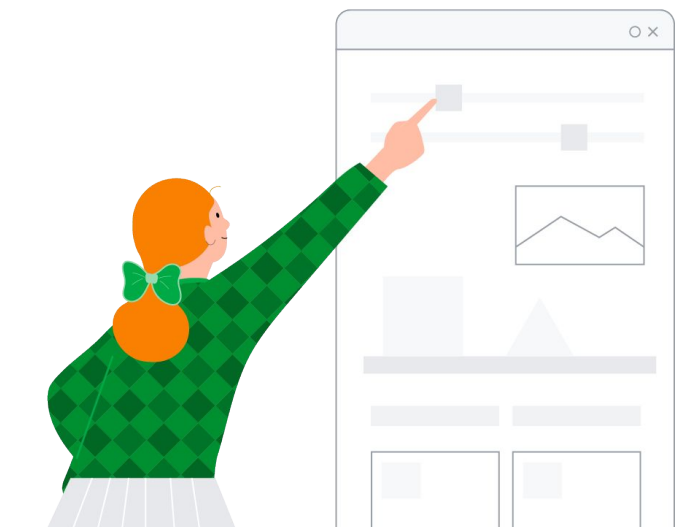
## Managing existing solutions with a cloud approach

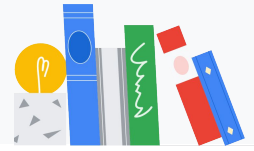
Given the cost and complexity of Windows devices, and the council's success with CloudReady, Scott and his colleagues conducted some high-level planning about where their future hardware investments should be made.



We began to think that a lighter, more cloud-based device might be a better choice for us going forward. With our impending expansion of the device pool, we knew we needed cost-effective devices that were also easy to manage. And while we knew we wanted to continue using Microsoft apps like Office 365, those apps could be used on the web, meaning we could pick the device we wanted."

Scott Greer, Technical Specialist for Fife Council.





### Managing existing solutions with a cloud approach

Around this time, Education Scotland made a large purchase of Chromebooks on its own, for distribution to all schools.



We certainly weren't going to pass that up. We were excited because this meant we could provide a brand-new machine to children who were most in need."

Scott Greer, Technical Specialist for Fife Council.



What we wanted was a device that was a lighter lift from an ICT maintenance standpoint, and without the management overhead. With Chromebooks, we have devices that work on the web, allowing us to keep using our choice of software."

Scott Greer, Technical Specialist for Fife Council.

With Education Scotland supplying some Chromebooks, the council purchased an additional 10,000 Chromebooks, achieving a 1:1 deployment for students at primary year 3 and older.

Moving into the future, Fife Council is considering whether to remain with a tenancy on Glow, or to switch to Google.

"We have the management advantages of Chrome on the OS side, while still using Office 365 integrated into our GLOW tenancy," Scott says.

