

# Microsoft ending support for Windows 98

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Problems as it ends lifespan



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#### **Executive summary:**

Microsoft have announced that they will be discontinuing support of Windows 98. This means that Microsoft will no longer be releasing security patches or hot fixes for this operating system or indeed any further development to ensure its compatibility with 3rd party software, hardware drivers and anti-virus protection. This poses a potential threat to the CCN network and in the event of incurring a virus or potential security breach could result in your school being disconnected from the network as per CCN guidelines. Summary of Windows 98 issues include:

- No security built in to Windows 98
- Vulnerable to Security breaches and virus attacks
- Incompatible with newer model printers, scanners and hardware peripherals for example digital cameras.
- Incompatible with newer software packages
- Cannot configure to use centrally managed policies with Windows 2000 File server and network infrastructure

#### **Report:**

Schools still running Windows 98 risk facing un-patched Internet threats as Microsoft puts the operating system out to pasture at the end of January 2004.

The largest potential risk to schools and indeed CCN users using Windows 95 and 98 is the probability of an Internet-based security exploit being discovered after January that can affect a Windows 95|98 PC. The biggest issue here is that Windows 98 is being dropped from hot fixes. Windows 95|98 are potential security problems for every school that uses them; they weren't built with encryption of data in mind. A lot of information, for example passwords, is transmitted in clear text over your network. They are a sure way to allow a virus onto a network or allow it to be hacked, it then becomes an issue for machines connected to the Internet. Windows 95|98 systems can become the Typhoid Mary of the school/CCN network, the back door for hackers.

Windows 95|98 computers can be infected by viruses. Viruses written for the Windows 95|98 operating system and macro viruses exploiting programs commonly used on Windows 95|98 computers are very common. Viruses of all types can be spread either on media (e.g. floppy disks or CDs) or over a network (e.g. the Internet or a LAN). Documents produced with widely used applications (e.g. Outlook, Word, Excel) are also prone to infection.

Why upgrade to Windows 2000 Professional rather than XP?

Windows 2000 Professional's design enables schools to standardise on a single operating system on both desktop and laptop PC's. Windows 2000 (currently on service pack 6) has proven to be very reliable and stable; it is compatible with all the newer curriculum software and is also the County Council's preferred desktop operating system. This makes it the most complete, cost-effective foundation for teaching and learning for schools of all sizes in Cambridgeshire.

ICT Service evaluation of Windows XP in a Network environment has found the system to be unreliable and not stable enough for recommendation or general adoption as the schools preferred operating system, an opinion generally supported by the Schools' Technical Consultancy Group.

Microsoft have announced they will not be releasing service pack 2 for Windows XP explaining that they are currently in the early stages of building the next version of Windows, codenamed "Longhorn", which would resolve the need for XP service pack 2. Microsoft Windows XP is built on the same technology (NT kernel) as Windows 2000 which Microsoft says all future Windows versions will be based on including Longhorn.

A more detailed technical analysis is available on the portal by visiting [icttid.ccceducation.net](http://icttid.ccceducation.net) and following the links > [Advice and Guidance Documents](#)

### **Recommendations:**

1. Make sure that all PCs, regardless of the operating system, have the latest security fixes from Microsoft installed and the latest Sophos Anti protection.
2. Schools should carry out a hardware audit of all Windows 95|98 based machines to assess whether they comply with the minimum hardware specification for upgrading to Windows 2000.

| <b>Recommended Minimum Hardware for upgrading and build for Windows 2000 Professional:</b>   |
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| CPU: 266 MHz Pentium II or higher  |
| Memory: 128MB minimum  |
| Hard drive: 4GB minimum  |
| NTFS File System   |
| Service Pack 4 ( <a href="http://ictsecurity.ccceducation.net">Anti-Virus &amp; Security</a> ) <a href="http://ictsecurity.ccceducation.net">http://ictsecurity.ccceducation.net</a> |
| Adobe Acrobat  |
| WinZip   |
| Internet Explorer 6 sp1  |
| Java VM installed and enabled  |
| Latest Flash plug in for IE  |

3. The ICT Service can carry out a full hardware audit including an analysis of which of your school computers are capable of being upgraded including costs for upgrades, new kit and Windows 2000 migration and rollout project advice and guidance. The costs for such a hardware audit are a ½ day @ £100 and full day @ £200 depending on the size of the school and the amount of equipment involved. For further details contact the Helpline on 01480 376650.
4. Machines not capable of being upgraded could still safely run the older operating system but should be isolated from the Internet as standalone machines and could for example be used for word processing and keyboard skills.