

A PRACTICAL CHECKLIST · DfE WI-FI SPECIFICATION

School Network Compliance *Checklist.*

A six-part self-assessment for IT managers, business managers, and senior leaders in UK schools and multi-academy trusts.

FOR SCHOOL IT TEAMS

*Six sections.
Thirty-eight controls.
One working register.*

DfE Wi-Fi Spec

Connect the Classroom

Ofsted Readiness

Network Security



A working review, not a *policy document*.

This is a six-part self-assessment covering the areas of DfE Wi-Fi specification compliance that sit directly within your school's IT remit. Built to be used as both a working register and an audit trail — designed for the team that actually owns the infrastructure.

01

WHAT THIS IS

Six sections covering the IT-owned surface of DfE Wi-Fi compliance: network coverage, security architecture, monitoring, hardware standards, documentation, and governance. Thirty-eight controls in total.

02

WHO IT IS FOR

IT managers, network leads, and senior leaders in UK schools and multi-academy trusts. Useful whether you are preparing for a DfE audit, applying for Connect the Classroom funding, or simply getting a clear picture of where your network stands.

03

HOW TO MARK IT UP

For every control, mark whether the position is **In place**, **Partial**, or a **Gap**. Use the notes column to record the owner, the system involved, or the action needed to close the gap.

04

HOW TO KEEP IT USEFUL

Review annually as a minimum — and whenever infrastructure changes. A completed, dated copy is credible audit evidence and a useful basis for governor or Ofsted conversations.

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SECTION 01 · OF SIX

Network Coverage & Capacity

6 CONTROLS

The foundation of the DfE specification. Coverage gaps and capacity failures are the most frequently cited reasons for non-compliance.

Consistent, reliable Wi-Fi coverage across all teaching and learning spaces is the starting point for everything else. Without it, no other control has meaning.

#	CONTROL	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	Wi-Fi coverage mapped across all teaching and learning spaces <i>A current site survey or coverage map confirming no dead zones.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2	Access point density sufficient for current device-to-student ratios <i>Account for one-to-one device programmes and simultaneous streaming.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3	Bandwidth allocation reviewed and sufficient for peak demand <i>Including video streaming, cloud platforms, and assessment tools.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4	Coverage reviewed following any building changes or classroom reconfigurations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5	Guest or visitor network segmented from school network <i>Separate SSID with appropriate bandwidth throttling.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6	Network performance tested under peak load conditions within the last 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

In place — operates as documented **Partial** — exists but not fully operational **Gap** — absent or unverified

WHERE THIS IS COMMONLY MISSED

Schools that passed a coverage survey three or four years ago often assume the position is still valid. It rarely is. Device counts increase every year, and an access point that handled 15 devices adequately in 2021 may be the bottleneck for 30 devices today. Re-survey before assuming compliance.

SECTION 02 · OF SIX

Security Architecture

7 CONTROLS

The most consequential section for safeguarding. A misconfigured network is not just a compliance failure — it is a vulnerability.

The DfE specification requires appropriate segmentation, encryption standards, and content filtering that meets safeguarding and Prevent duty obligations.

#	CONTROL	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	Pupil, staff, and administrative traffic separated by VLAN or equivalent segmentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2	WPA3 or equivalent encryption standard applied across all SSIDs <i>WPA2 may be acceptable in limited circumstances; document the rationale.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3	Content filtering solution in place and reviewed against current safeguarding guidance <i>Including Prevent duty requirements.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4	Filtering reviewed and updated within the last 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5	Remote access to network infrastructure secured with MFA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6	Firewall rules documented and reviewed within the last 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
7	Wireless intrusion detection or equivalent anomaly monitoring active	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

In place — operates as documented
 Partial — exists but not fully operational
 Gap — absent or unverified

PRACTITIONER NOTE

Content filtering is the area most likely to have drifted since initial deployment. Filtering vendors update their category lists, but the categories your school has enabled may not have been reviewed in years. The DfE expects filtering that reflects current guidance — not the guidance from when the system was first configured.

SECTION 03 · OF SIX

Network Management & Monitoring

6 CONTROLS

Ad hoc, reactive maintenance is no longer sufficient. The DfE expects a managed, documented infrastructure with clear audit trails.

Schools must be able to demonstrate active monitoring, fault detection, and reporting. If your current setup cannot produce a network performance report on demand, that is a gap.

#	CONTROL	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	<p>Network monitoring tool active and configured for the school environment</p> <p><i>Alerts on outages, degraded performance, and security events.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2	<p>Monitoring coverage includes all access points, switches, and core infrastructure</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3	<p>Network performance reports available on demand</p> <p><i>Including uptime, throughput, and incident history.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4	<p>Documented change management process for network modifications</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5	<p>Incident log maintained with fault descriptions and resolution times</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6	<p>Monitoring reviewed and alert thresholds adjusted within the last 12 months</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

In place — operates as documented **Partial** — exists but not fully operational **Gap** — absent or unverified

WHERE THIS TRIPS SCHOOLS UP

Many schools have monitoring tools installed but not actively managed. An alert that goes to an unchecked inbox is not monitoring. Confirm that alerts reach a named person, are reviewed on a defined schedule, and that the escalation path is documented and tested.

SECTION 04 · OF SIX

Hardware & Software Standards

6 CONTROLS

Consumer-grade or end-of-life hardware will not satisfy DfE requirements. Vendor support status is assessed — not just functionality.

Equipment must meet current enterprise-grade standards. This includes access points, switches, controllers, and cloud management platforms. Vendor support status and firmware currency are both assessed.

#	CONTROL	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	Full hardware inventory maintained, including age and vendor support status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2	All network hardware currently within vendor support window <i>End-of-life hardware that is no longer receiving security updates must be flagged and scheduled for replacement.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3	Firmware and software on all network devices current and patched	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4	Cloud management platforms used are enterprise-grade and under active vendor support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5	Hardware replacement programme in place for end-of-life equipment <i>With governor or trust-level budget sign-off where relevant.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6	Hardware inventory reviewed and updated within the last 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

In place — operates as documented **Partial** — exists but not fully operational **Gap** — absent or unverified

A USEFUL QUESTION TO ASK

For each access point and switch on the inventory: what is the vendor's published end-of-support date, and is it on your hardware replacement plan? This information is almost never surfaced automatically — it requires a deliberate check. A standing diary entry to review vendor support pages annually is a small habit with significant audit value.

SECTION 05 · OF SIX

Documentation & Compliance Records

7 CONTROLS

Absent or incomplete documentation is one of the most common DfE audit findings. Good infrastructure poorly documented is still a compliance gap.

Schools must be able to produce network diagrams, asset registers, and audit trails on demand. If the documentation does not exist, the control cannot be evidenced.

#	CONTROL	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	Current network diagram available and accurately reflects the live environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2	Asset register maintained for all network infrastructure <i>Including location, model, firmware version, and support status.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3	Data flow documentation covers network-related data processing <i>e.g. filtering logs, monitoring data.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4	Previous audit or survey reports retained and accessible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5	Change log maintained for all material network changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6	Supplier and vendor contracts retained and accessible <i>Including SLAs for managed services.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
7	Documentation reviewed and updated following any significant infrastructure change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

In place — operates as documented **Partial** — exists but not fully operational **Gap** — absent or unverified

WHERE THIS TRIPS TEAMS UP

Documentation that was accurate at the point of a previous survey quickly becomes stale. Every time an access point is added, a VLAN is reconfigured, or a supplier changes, the documentation should be updated. A diagram that shows what the network looked like 18 months ago is not a compliance document — it is a historical record.

SECTION 06 · OF SIX

Governance & Ongoing Review

6 CONTROLS

Compliance is a process, not a destination. Governance controls ensure the position does not drift between formal reviews.

DfE compliance is not a one-time exercise. Infrastructure that met the specification two years ago may no longer do so. These controls establish whether governance mechanisms are in place to maintain compliance over time.

#	CONTROL	IN PLACE	PARTIAL	GAP	OWNER / NOTES
1	Named owner for network compliance defined at IT manager or senior leader level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2	Annual compliance review scheduled and diarised <i>Including coverage, security, hardware, and documentation.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3	Governors or trust leadership briefed on network compliance position <i>At least annually, or following any material change.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4	DfE specification version in use is current <i>Check for updates when applying for funding or preparing for inspection.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5	Staff responsible for network management aware of DfE compliance requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6	Compliance review findings documented and action plans maintained	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

In place — operates as documented **Partial** — exists but not fully operational **Gap** — absent or unverified

THE GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLE

The schools that handle DfE compliance best are not the ones with the most documentation — they are the ones that have stopped treating it as a periodic scramble. A named owner, a diarised review, and a governor-level briefing once a year is a simple governance structure that keeps the position defensible between formal audits.

Operationalising the *checklist*.

The schools that manage DfE Wi-Fi compliance most effectively are not the ones with the newest hardware — they are the ones that have stopped treating compliance as a once-every-few-years project.

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i SET A REVIEW CADENCE

Annual works as a minimum for most schools; more frequently if you are preparing for a funding application or inspection. Diary it as a recurring fixture.

ii ASSIGN OWNERS

Every gap needs a named owner, not just a flag. Use the notes column to record who is accountable for closing it and by when.

iii KEEP IT LIVING

Update the checklist when access points are added, vendors change, or the DfE specification is updated. A snapshot from 18 months ago is worth less than a current register with a few marked gaps.

iv USE IT AS EVIDENCE

A completed and dated checklist demonstrates the operational discipline that auditors, governors, and Connect the Classroom assessors look for. Treat it as part of your audit trail.

ABOUT DMS

Here if a second opinion helps.

DMS supports IT managers and senior leaders in UK schools and multi-academy trusts with network infrastructure and DfE compliance. This checklist is a self-assessment tool you are welcome to use on its own. If, having worked through it, an independent view on a particular area would be helpful, the details below are here to use.

CONTACT

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