10 QUESTIONS
you need to ask when you consider implementing Boarding School Software.

Automating your boarding school activities with a software product can deliver excellent benefits in efficiency, control and record keeping for you and your staff. Removing paperwork alone can save you many work hours each month in paper sorting and filing.

We get a lot of enquiries from members asking what systems are best and what we should be considering so we have created a top 10 list of what you should consider.

What are the important questions for you to answer when considering Boarding School Software for your school ? What separates the good from the great products and how can you ensure that you identify the software product that can provide the greatest benefit for your school ?

Here are ten questions you should ask any supplier to help you get the most capable and flexible system.

1 What is data security like ?

This is your first question because it's the most important. Securely handling and storing the private data of students and parents at your school should be a mandatory requirement for any system.

As a starting point you require a system that stores and handles data to meet the Federal and State Personal Data Privacy laws of your region and also meets any particular rules that may apply for your individual school campus.

2 Where is it hosted ?

For some schools there may also be internal school policies that regulate and limit the storage of student personal data to on-campus, school managed servers only.
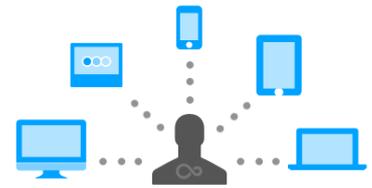
Some systems will offer Cloud only hosting and some will offer both Cloud or self-hosted environments. If your IT Department or school has on-campus data storage requirements then a Cloud based system will not be suitable for your school.

3 Can the system be used on multiple devices ?

The world is mobile and so are your staff, students and parents. What you need is a system that can work with your mobility requirements. Gone are the days where your software needs you to be sitting at a desk to operate it. The ideal systems will provide you with multi device operation (PC, tablet, smartphone) and multi-platform functionality (iOS, Android, Windows, Blackberry, etc).

Be mindful that the largest user population for your system will be your parent community and without their engagement then the system will likely provide your school with limited benefit. So look for systems that offer coverage cross all operating platforms so you can accommodate the broadest possible population of users.

4 Can the system provide single sign-on with your school systems ?

Do you need yet another username and password to remember ? Good systems will be able to integrate with your existing school protocols and provide a single-sign-on capability. This means your staff, parents and boarders can can use their existing school login/password details. This simplifies the management of your system for users and administrators.

The most common help request for practically all software with large user populations is for username and passwords. Keeping them aligned with your school sign-on details will ensure that parent and boarder user help requests are reduced to a minimum.

5 Can the system integrate with your existing school database ?

Running separate databases for your Boarding School Software and your main school database can be inefficient and problematic. Which database do you keep accurate ? Which database do you operate as the primary "source of truth" for your school ?
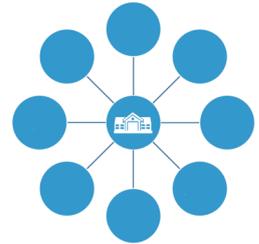
Better quality systems will be able to link directly to your main school database to access direct data feeds of important information for your students, parents and staff. This way only one database needs to be maintained making it easier and more efficient to ensure the accuracy of your record keeping.

6 Can the system help you to manage all of your activities or only some of them ?

If you are going to invest in a tool to provide you with efficiency and control benefits it makes sense that it covers as many aspects of your daily operations as possible.

Systems that help you manage boarder leave only mean that you have to maintain roll call records, or student movement records, or boarder notes on separate systems. This can fracture your record keeping procedures and create additional work for you to keep multiple recording systems operating.

7 Can the system provide you with quality reports ?

Reducing your paperwork and gaining operational efficiency is only one of the benefits of automation. The other great benefit of digitising your business processes is data capture and pay-off from data capture is an ability to recover data rapidly and produce quality reports.

Good systems will enable you to tap into your data for a wide range of reports that you could only have dreamed of prior to automation.

The great thing about being able to produce a range of quality reports is that they can provide tremendous insight into your business and play a vital role in your management and continuous improvement programs.

8 Does the system allow you to work on more than one task at a time ?

Let's face it, your work day is about juggling multiple tasks at any point in time so it is sensible that any new system can do the same.

Some systems will allow you to work on multiple tasks simultaneously and others will force you to operate one task at a time.

Multi-tasking is where you can really maximise the efficiency gains with the automation of your boarding school.

Systems with a robust and flexible back-end architecture will allow you to run multiple tasks and screens at once.

9   Does the system allow you to work off-line ?

What happens in times when you cannot connect ? Even on-campus there will be times where your school's systems are unavailable, wifi access is limited or unavailable. Perhaps there are zones on campus where wifi does not function or you may want to use your system to take a roll-call in a remote location.

Systems that can allow off-line reading and/or transacting removes the boundaries for use.

10   Can you customise the system to suit your campus ?

Every campus is different so look for systems that recognise this and provide you with the ability to customise and configure the settings and workflows to suit your campus.

Being able to configure a new system to fit in with your campus will make implementation a whole lot easier and ensure that there is minimal disruption for your staff, student and parent communities.

There is no doubt that implementing Boarding School Software offers significant benefits for the management of risk and improving efficiency in boarding schools.

Its ability to deliver safe, efficient and accurate record keeping with rapid and flexible data recovery for reporting purposes can provide schools with new levels of insight to important management information about your boarding school.

In addition, Boarding School Software that functions across multiple devices and platforms can provide your school with a marketing tool that engages your parent community and delivers great convenience for them, whilst bolstering your own procedures and efficiency at the same time.

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