

London Schools Ahead of National Average for Broadband Connectivity

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Equinox and London Grid for Learning Enable Schools Achieve 80 Per Cent Target

London schools are ahead of the national average to meet UK government broadband targets for technology in education, thanks to Equinox Converged Solutions -- broadband specialists to the education and public sector -- and the London Grid for Learning. Leveraging the foundation of Equinox's London-wide fibre network, the two organisations have already reached the initial Department for Education and Skills' (DFES) milestone target of 80 per cent broadband connectivity of the 2600 schools in the capital -- a stepping stone to ensure the schools are on track to achieve the national deadline of complete broadband connectivity by 2006.

Keith Holder, head of ICT and schools and strategy development for London at the DFES said: "The government targets for ICT in education are in place to ensure schools have the technology in place to transform teaching and learning and to raise standards of attainment in England's schools. The Equinox/LGfL team is driving this forward in London by providing safe, robust, high volume broadband connectivity to its schools."

Broadband access in the classroom allows teachers and students to access, share and communicate vital educational content for a multitude of sources in a safe and secure environment, creating a true virtual learning community. For example, through the Equinox/LGfL network, the education community can:

- Share resources across London through videoconferencing classes
- Expand the learning environment through virtual field trips
- Address school security issues through broadband enabled CCTV

As a result of the continuing success in connecting London schools, the LGfL has renewed its contract with Equinox through 2007 to sustain the delivery and expansion of broadband services and to ensure the final target of 100 per cent connectivity for schools is met on time.

Brian Durrant, CEO of LGfL, said: "Achieving the DFES target for broadband is a testament to the collaboration of London Councils and the success of the ongoing partnership we have with Equinox. Together we are committed to connecting the London boroughs to bring technology to the classroom."

Angus Merelie, CEO of Equinox, added: "Equinox is committed to bring new opportunities to the education community via our broadband network. We look forward to continuing to work with the LGfL to make this happen in London, and ensure the capital continues to surpass government technology targets."

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Notes to editors:

About Equinox Converged Solutions, Ltd.

Equinox provides high capacity broadband connections and a wide range of managed services to education and the public sector, connecting learning and public services communities. Equinox designed, built and

operates a major fibre optic metropolitan area network in London. The network extends across the capital, giving wide coverage over the Greater London area. As well as high capacity broadband, the network provides flexible WAN management, enhanced managed telephony and fixed pricing across London. The technology that underlies the network is designed for connecting communities of users that require a secure and reliable environment for sharing sensitive information and highlights the advantages of a common infrastructure to deliver public services.

Equinox customers include 33 London Local Education Authorities, Independent schools, and over half of the London Borough Councils also use Equinox services for libraries, CCTV monitoring and other corporate ICT requirements. The company has around 80 employees, is backed by Apax Partners Funds, and is headquartered in Farnborough, Hampshire. www.equinoxsolutions.com

About London Grid for Learning

The London Grid for Learning Trust has been established by the 33 London Local Education Authorities to foster and manage the establishment and development of a pan-London broadband learning grid to connect and serve all London schools.

The network currently serves over 2000 school sites already connected to the Grid at 2Mb, 5Mb, 10Mb or 100Mb. The network also serves most of London's 600 libraries by direct connection, or indirectly via council corporate networks. LGfL network, which to ensure ample headroom and future proofing, is entirely constructed using fibre optic cable, is understood to be the largest metropolitan Ethernet network in the world. The bandwidth of connected edge sites currently totals less than 20Gb, a small fraction of the 320Gb switch fabric capacity which is already available and operational in the network core.

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