New York school signs up for parents' night software developed by Glasgow entrepreneurs

Marcus Fields, left, and Robbie Beattie

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TWO young businessmen who devised software they say takes the hassle out of organising parents' nights at schools have clinched their first sale in the huge US market.

The School Cloud Systems business developed by Marcus Fields and Robbie Beattie sold a licence for their meeting scheduling tool to a school in New York City.

The sale comes amid signs the company could find there is significant demand in the US for technology the founders started developing when they were pupils at Mearns Castle High School in East Renfrewshire.

Mr Fields said school districts in Chicago are trialling the system and School Cloud Systems is in

talks with other potential buyers in the USA. The system has achieved strong interest stateside since the company attended a key educational fair in Philadelphia in the summer.

Glasgow-based School Cloud Systems funded the trip using some of the £50,000 it won after scooping the Best Enterprise title in last year's Bank of Scotland Enterprise Awards. Mr Fields said the money has also helped the firm move into a number of other overseas markets including Singapore.

The company has won a big following in the UK for a product which helps schools tackle a challenge that vexes parents and teachers alike. Its parents evening system can automate an exercise that for many schools involves fixing hundreds of appointments between parents and teachers on one evening.

"Rather than schools sending out letters that get lost at the bottom of a school bag parents can make bookings on line, on their mobile phones," said Mr Fields.

He added: "There used to be people in school offices taking days to figure out the schedules."

The company has 2,000 schools using its products, which also include a room booking system.

The number of customers has increased by one third this year.

Most of the schools are in England, with around 150 in Scotland and a similar number overseas.

School Cloud Systems is recruiting ahead of a big drive to increase sales overseas.

It expects staff numbers to increase by two thirds in coming months, to 10 from six.

The company has the potential to build a significant business given the fact that schools around the world face similar scheduling problems.

The two founders, both 25, could generate a healthy return on the modest investment they made in starting the business as school boys.

They had the idea for developing a booking tool as 16-year-olds after their computing teacher at Mearns Castle suggested they do a project that could benefit the school.

The duo started their venture using £100 the school paid in order to use the first system. It remains a customer of School Cloud Systems.

"We made sure that the first sale we made was for a licence rather than for the product," joked Mr Fields.

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