



The use of ICT in
Primary Schools
Joint Oireachtas
Committee on
Education and
Social Protection

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1 INTRODUCTION

IPPN views the use of ICT in Primary schools as an extremely powerful vehicle for the implementation of the Primary Curriculum and supporting government objectives to raise attainment levels in numeracy and literacy, including digital literacy

We envisage increased opportunities for Irish children to collaborate with other classrooms around the world through video conferencing and networking.

The streaming of videos, plays, movies, animation, documentaries, concerts, presentations, speeches, webinars, podcasts etc. can now be seamlessly and vividly incorporated into day to day teaching practice. Therefore, ICT is an accelerator to achievement.

ICT can help to support delivery of a **differentiated curriculum programme** for children and especially enhance the educational experience for those with extra learning needs. Cloud computing can provide increased access to specialised expert tuition, E-Books and individual learning pathways thus promoting **self-motivated learning**.

There are also opportunities for the further development of web-based support and digital media to enhance the delivery of Continuous Professional Development for teachers and school leaders.

2 WHAT ARE OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE?

It is essential that children understand how to utilise technology to locate, select, filter and evaluate information; to learn, reason, make decisions and solve problems. Collaborating and working in teams are also essential skills in our rapidly changing world. We expect the Department of Education and Skills to support schools to ensure that all pupils have regular, structured access to a range of ICT related supports which will enhance their learning experiences, thereby ensuring that pupils gain the skills necessary to succeed in the digital age in which we live.

We expect there to be increased use of ICT to support **creative and collaborative teaching and learning** and further development of differentiated learning programmes for children. Many are already being widely used to support teaching and learning of special needs children and those with learning difficulties.

We expect schools will continue to have autonomy in terms of how they utilise ICT resources in the school. (let that be the **Bring Your Own Device model** or the **computer station** in the classroom, the **computer room** or the **mobile computer trolley**)

The production and dissemination of high quality interactive digital content for all age groups and in every curricular area will continue to develop as will the availability of professional development for schools focusing on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning. Teachers, nationally and internationally are to be commended for their generous sharing of best practice and **user generated online digital resources**.

However these expectations will only be achieved if digital hardware is regularly serviced, renewed and updated which requires ongoing funding from the DES which was been lacking to date.

3 THE CHALLENGES FOR OUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Challenges vary from school to school as each school is unique and is at a particular point on the spectrum of ICT usage. Therefore, a one-fits-all approach is not appropriate. Every school needs **high capacity broadband** as a matter of urgency. All schools need a budget to replace ageing infrastructure. Many schools need a mechanism to acquire appropriate technical support. The reality for many schools in 2015 is that they can only afford to replace IT equipment with reconditioned units in most cases donated by industry and they don't have adequate funding to pay for the required technical and maintenance support to ensure the system is fit for purpose. Teachers and pupils must have access to computers, networks and software applications which are dependable, reliable and up to date. Lack of funding in general has led to a situation whereby it has become difficult for schools to plan effectively for the integration of technology.

The **moratorium on posts of responsibility** is a serious impediment to the development of ICT curriculum leadership and expertise in schools.

NCTE has been subsumed into PDST. Schools will receive support regarding the incorporation of ICT into the different curricular areas but will they receive adequate support in terms of developing the schools ICT infrastructure?

4 OUR PRIORITIES

Firstly, to secure **multi-annual funding**. Schools must be afforded the opportunity to plan strategically with government committing to clearly defined multi annual grants. There must be a consensus and commitment to short and long term objectives so that schools can plan and budget accordingly.

All schools must have access to a consistent and **reliable Broadband** service. The 100Megabite Broadband rollout must extend to primary schools.

Increased availability of **differentiated professional development for teachers** and curriculum leaders to promote and support the integration of ICT across the curriculum. The type of support required differs from school to school. Consideration should also be given to creative ways by which the leading schools and those achieving 'Digital School Status' can articulate and demonstrate the successful incorporation of ICT across the curriculum in their schools. Any planning around ICT usage into the future must be closely allied with appropriate SPHE content on responsibilities around, and consequences of social media use.

Finally, the **moratorium on posts** should be removed. We need designated staff members to lead the ICT aspect of teaching and learning in schools and we need a support structure for these leaders to help implement and sustain the incorporation of ICT into all aspect of teaching and learning.

5 OUR SUCCESS CRITERIA SHOULD BE MEASURED UPON

The use of ICT as a **core methodology** in teaching and learning across the curriculum in all schools with adequate funding, reliable broadband and continuous professional development tailored to the needs of individual schools.

Secondly, the development of **ICT leadership** in each curricular area in all schools or in local school clusters and finally that there would be **equitable access with no social digital divide**.