

## The use of ICT in primary schools.

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*Joint Oireachtas  
Committee on  
Education and Social  
Protection*

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## 1. CONTACT DETAILS

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## 2. OPPORTUNITIES

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- ❖ 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
- ❖ IPPN envisages 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. 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 may provide increased access to specialised expert tuition, E-Books and individual learning pathways thus promoting self-motivated learning.
- ❖ There are 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.

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### 3. EXPECTATIONS

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- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Increased use of ICT to support creative and collaborative teaching and learning.
- ❖ The 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. (BYOD / computer station in the classroom / computer room / mobile computer trolley)
- ❖ Increased production and dissemination of high quality interactive digital content for all age groups and in every curricular area. Teachers, nationally and internationally are to be commended for their generous sharing of best practice and user generated online digital resources.
- ❖ Differentiated professional development for schools focusing on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning in all aspects of the curriculum.

For these expectations to be achieved it is essential that digital hardware is regularly serviced, renewed and updated. This requires ongoing funding from the DES which has been lacking to date

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## 4. CHALLENGES

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- ❖ 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 some supports re the incorporation of ICT into the different curricular areas. Will schools receive adequate support in terms of developing the schools ICT infrastructure?

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## 5. PRIORITIES

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- ❖ Securing Multi annual funding. Schools must be afforded the opportunity to plan strategically with government committing to clearly defined multi annual funding. There must be 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 100Mbps Broadband rollout must extend to primary schools.
- ❖ Differentiated professional development for teachers and curriculum leaders to promote and support the integration of ICT across the curriculum based on a clearly defined national strategy. The type of support required differs from school to school
- ❖ The moratorium on posts should be removed. We need designated staff members to lead the ICT aspect of teaching and learning in schools – we need a support structure for these leaders to help implement and sustain the incorporation of ICT into all aspect of teaching and learning.
- ❖ Consideration should 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.

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## **6. SUCCESS CRITERIA**

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- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Developing ICT leadership in each curricular area in all schools / the local school cluster
- ❖ Equitable access - no social digital divide.