

Irish Primary Principals' Network



***PUBLIC CONSULTATION
DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR SCHOOLS***

***DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION &
SKILLS
December 2013***

The Department of Education & Skills wish to seek the views on interested parties on the role of ICT in teaching and learning in primary and post primary schools. These views will be taken into account in the development of a digital strategy for schools. Please note that submissions received may be published

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Please limited your response to 500 words for each question

<p><i>What is your vision or expectation for the use of ICT in supporting teaching and learning in schools for the coming 5 years?</i></p>	<p>IPPN expects;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Education and Skills to support schools and 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 necessary skills to succeed in the digital age. Understanding how to utilise technology to locate, select, filter and evaluate information; to learn, reason, make decisions, solve problems, and to collaborate and work in teams will be essential abilities for our rapidly changing world. • A continued rise in the use of ICT to support creative and collaborative teaching and learning. • ICT to be increasingly used to develop differentiated learning programmes for children especially those with learning difficulties.
<p><i>What opportunities do you feel ICT in primary and post primary education can offer?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPPN views the use of ICT in Primary schools as an extremely powerful vehicle for the implementation of the fundamental principles of the Primary Curriculum, supporting the Numeracy and Literacy Strategy and government’s objectives to raise attainment levels and build a digital society • IPPN envisages increased opportunities for Irish children to collaborate with other classrooms around the world through video conferencing and networking
<p><i>What do you think the priorities for schools in relation to ICT should be?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development for schools who have not achieved ‘Digital School Status’ to help them achieve same. • Differentiated professional development for curriculum leaders to promote and support the integration of ICT across the curriculum based on a clearly defined national strategy. The level of support required differs from school to school • Securing multi annual ICT budgets. • Securing an adequate (100Mb) broadband service.

What do you see as the challenges for ICT implementation in 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 the most appropriate strategy. 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 technical support. The reality for many schools in 2014 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 that can be depended upon to work.
- Lack of funding in general has led to a situation whereby it has become impossible for school principals to plan effectively for the integrated deployment of technology. It has also led to the dissipation of teachers' motivation and goodwill towards technology (a massive percentage of whom have undertaken in-service professional development in their own time) due to the unavailability of modern, reliable infrastructure in their schools
- The moratorium on posts of responsibility is a serious impediment to the development of ICT curriculum leadership and expertise in schools.

What strategies should be deployed to improve the impact of ICT in teaching and learning?

- IPPN recommends that schools achieving Digital School status be suitably rewarded for their efforts. Consideration should be given to creative ways by which these leading schools can articulate and demonstrate the successful incorporation of ICT across the curriculum in their schools.
- 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 long and short 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.
- 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 the national strategy for ICT incorporation into all aspect of teaching and learning.
- Increased differentiated professional development for schools focusing on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning in all aspects of the curriculum.
- The production and dissemination of high quality interactive digital content for all age groups and in every curriculum area, especially those areas unique to the Irish curriculum.

<p><i>What do you see as the critical success factors in the integration of ICT in teaching and learning i.e. the elements that are vital for the integration to be successful?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of ICT as a core methodology in teaching and learning. • Adequate annual funding • Adequate broadband • Differentiated professional development. • Developing ICT leadership in each curricular area in schools
<p><i>What key actions do you think should be undertaken to ensure ICT integration is achieved in schools?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development for schools who have not achieved 'Digital School Status' to help them achieve same. • Differentiated professional development for curriculum leaders to promote and support the integration of ICT across the curriculum based on a clearly defined national strategy. The level of support required differs from school to school. • Securing multi annual ICT budgets based on school population and a clearly defined national strategic plan IPPN suggests that it is most welcome given the repeated emphasis on the centrality of planning at school level by the inspectorate that the DES engages in the same process and provide leadership for schools through a clearly defined national strategic plan. • Securing an adequate (100Mb) broadband service for all primary schools. . • Remove moratorium on posts. To maximize the benefits going forward we need designated staff members who are supported through professional development to lead the incorporation of ICT at school level.
<p><i>Other Comments/Suggestions</i></p>	