ICT: essential guides for school governors

Becta
ICT Advice

The DfES has commissioned Becta to produce a series of documents for school governors. This guide focuses on current policy directions that form part of the Government's e-learning vision and has three sections:

• **The Policy Framework – the main directions from Government that affect ICT**

• **Support and Review – support arrangements that are in place for schools**

• **Resources for ICT – an overview of available resources.**

The next guide will focus on informing and encouraging governors so they can contribute to a vision for learning and teaching for the e-confident school.

"My vision is one where schools are confidently, successfully and routinely exploiting ICT alongside other transformational measures. By doing so, they will be delivering an education that equips learners for life in the Information Age of the 21st century."

Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP,
Secretary of State for Education and Skills, June 2003
Fulfilling the Potential: Transforming Teaching and Learning through ICT in Schools

The policy framework

In May 2003, Education Secretary Charles Clarke launched 'Fulfilling the Potential', a booklet setting out the directions that schools should be taking with Information and Communications Technology and e-learning – the blending of traditional and ICT-based forms of learning and teaching.

The booklet invited schools to develop their use of ICT in the context of broader Government strategies for primary and secondary education and for school workforce reform. If your governing body has not yet read and discussed this important document, you will find it helpful to do so.

The publication of the booklet marks the latest stage in the transformation of our schools following the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) programme which was launched in 1998.

The NGfL programme achieved a great deal, but the need now is to ensure that using and applying ICT becomes an integral part of the learning process. As Charles Clarke stressed at the BETT 2004 conference, "ICT itself has no more value than a quill pen, the value lies in the way the equipment is used."

The aims for the next stage of development will be to ensure that in all schools:

• ICT makes a significant contribution to learning and teaching across all subjects and ages, within and beyond the curriculum

• ICT is used to improve access to learning for pupils with a diverse range of individual needs, including those with special needs or disabilities

• ICT is used as a tool for whole-school improvement

• ICT is used as a means of enabling learning to take place more easily beyond the bounds of the formal school organisation and outside the school day

• ICT capabilities are developed as key skills essential for participation in today's society and economy.

The Leadership Agenda

This is a challenging programme for all schools and it is essential that the governing body, working with the headteacher and with staff, looks at how they can embed ICT effectively across the School Development Plan.

Using ICT in an integrated and holistic way can offer great benefits to governors and school managers, including:

• greater awareness of the educational potential of ICT including access to excellent teaching (particularly in shortage subjects) and an improved curriculum when qualified teachers are absent

SLICT is jointly organised by Becta and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL)

Make SLICT part of your headteacher's continuing professional development (CPD)

The Strategic Leadership of ICT (SLICT) programme is available to support headteachers

Designed by headteachers for headteachers

Evaluating leadership and management implications

Focusing on key strategic issues

Stimulating a clear vision

- enabling networks that support specialisation and enhanced professional collaboration, both with school leaders across the country and across cultures and sectors

- more opportunities to reflect on their practice and continually develop their vision for e-confident schools in order to exploit new technologies for learning and teaching as they emerge

- better informed decision-making and more efficient information flow within and between schools, and with other organisations such as LEAs and the DfES

- more effective tracking of pupils' performance, attendance and behaviour, and of children at risk

- simpler co-ordination of support for children through improved links to other organisations and agencies in the local community

- enhanced and more dynamic communications with parents and the wider community.

ICT and the five-year strategy for children and learners

The DfES' 'Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners', issued in July 2004, outlines directions and plans to give schools greater freedom to deliver a personalised learning experience for all. ICT is both explicit and implicit throughout the document, not least in offering

- integrated systems to facilitate better information sharing to assess children's needs

- assessment and support to individualised learning and teaching.

Schools for the Future

A number of initiatives have the common aim of ensuring that school buildings provide excellent educational facilities for staff, pupils and the wider community. These initiatives include the Schools for the Future publication and design guide, Classrooms of the Future, Building Schools for the Future investment programme and Exemplar Designs for Schools.

"Every secondary school to be refurbished or rebuilt to a modern standard over the next 10 to 15 years. The 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, made possible by a sevenfold increase in the schools' capital budget since 1997, will give every school the buildings, facilities and information technology it needs to succeed. It will also drive reform in each locality, including the expansion of popular schools, the closure of failing schools, and the establishment of new schools and sixth forms."

For details of the BSF programme and 'Schools for the Future' see the Teachernet site [**http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/ management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/ schoolbuildings/sbschoolsforthefuture/**]

"ICT can make a significant contribution to teaching and learning at all stages and across all areas of the curriculum. ICT should be embedded in all our education institutions and in the teaching that takes place there. As the Government's lead agency for ICT in schools and the learning and skills sector, Becta has a critical role to play in ensuring that ICT is a key element in education in these areas."

Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, June 2003

Support and review

The ICT in Schools Division

Within the Department for Education and Skills an ICT in Schools Division has been established since 2003. Its mission is to help all children achieve their full potential by supporting every school to become a centre of excellence in the use of ICT for learning and teaching and for whole-school improvement.

A Strategic Role for Becta

Becta is the Government's lead adviser on ICT in education. It works in strategic partnership with local education authorities and other agencies to assist schools in maximising their use of ICT. Alongside the ICT in Schools Division, Becta has been given a broader remit.

ICT and Ofsted

Ofsted school inspection regimes have moved on. What used to be an involved investigation of a school's educational practices is becoming much more a self-evaluation by the school, including the governing body, followed by a short sharp inspection, except where there are already identified areas of weakness. A particular focus is on the governors' management of ICT in the school, where ICT is generally reported upon, both as a subject and as an embedded cross-curricular tool. Over the last 10 years there has been an increasing evaluation of, and comment upon, ICT.

Ofsted, working with Becta and the DfES, is currently trialling a Common Evaluation Framework for ICT in around 40 schools. The Framework is designed as a tool for senior management and governors to assess the extent to which ICT is embedded across the curriculum and as a tool for whole-school improvement. The aim is for the framework to be available more generally in 2005.

Resources for ICT

ICT in Schools Funding

Funding for ICT in Schools, formerly termed NGfL funding, in 2004-5 embodies a more flexible approach, recognising that local solutions are often best suited to meeting local needs. Schools are now able to invest their devolved capital money in ICT equipment and LEAs are well placed to advise them on how to achieve best value while ensuring that they take account of the national priorities set out in the Standards Fund guidance. Details of these can be found on the DfES site [**http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ictinschools/funding/subject.cfm?articleid=626**].

Curriculum Online – spending eLCs

The Government has set aside substantial funds for your school to spend on multimedia resources in the form of eLearning Credits (eLCs). This is money that is distributed from central Government via LEAs to individual schools, which decide locally how to spend it. Governors may wish to recommend to the head that the school considers pooling some or all of their allotted eLC money in order to make larger purchases for shared use. Schools can authorise their LEA or Regional Broadband Consortium (RBC) to spend eLC money on their behalf – for example, to obtain a greater diversity of products or to make bulk purchases.

Grants are delegated for distribution by LEAs to all eligible schools with schools receiving a fixed sum plus an amount per pupil. Each year's funding must be spent by 31 August of the following year. The grant is ring-fenced, insofar as it can not be spent on anything other than software materials as contained within the Curriculum Online catalogue [**http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk**]. The website is a definitive catalogue of all the multimedia resources that your school can buy with its eLC money. All the resources are geared to the subjects taught in schools in England. Governing bodies are advised to monitor the selection and purchase of this and any other software in anticipation of their next Ofsted inspection.

Broadband

LEAs have been working with RBCs and now over 60 per cent of schools (98 per cent of secondary) have broadband internet access compared to just one in eight two years ago. The latest evaluation evidence demonstrates that broadband is essential in the effective use of a range of complementary ICT. The provision of a fast, reliable and stable connection through broadband has helped increase enjoyment, motivation and interaction amongst teachers and learners. A report containing evidence from the field has been published on the Becta site [**http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?section=1&id=3304**].

Building a National Educational Network

The National Educational Network will be a secure network that will allow a coherent system for safe information and service access across education. It will enable easy access to a wide range of high-quality online applications at a value-for-money (VFM) cost and without being subject to the vagaries of the open internet.

Becta is leading the strategic development of all aspects of network management in schools and is working with United Kingdom Education and Research Networking Association (UKERNA), the UK's education and research network manager, the RBCs and the DfES to ensure that the services schools will require can be delivered over the national network.

Governors should note that DfES Broadband funding is generally retained by their LEA to work with their RBC in providing broadband infrastructure to every school by 2006. A small number of authorities are not affiliated to an RBC. These authorities are also obliged to provide access to the National Network and to digital learning resources available only over this network.

Laptops for Teachers (LfT)

This national initiative, now in its third year, concerns the provision of suitable laptop computers for teaching staff to use at home and school. Schools can be flexible in their determination of priorities but the Government target for 2006 is that two thirds of teachers should have access to a personal laptop [**http://www.lft.ngfl.gov.uk/**].
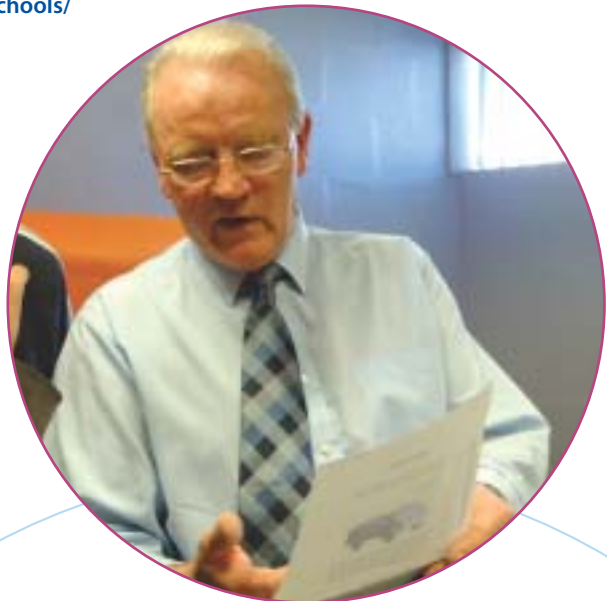
Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) Scheme

Schools may choose to spend a proportion of Devolved Capital Funds or their ICT Standards Fund grant on new technologies such as IWBs which provide teachers with an effective teaching aid capable of exciting and engaging pupils of all ages. Additional funding (£50m over two years) has already been made available for primary and secondary schools to purchase these new technologies. All LEAs have been encouraged to join the primary National Whiteboard Network which aims to provide support to schools in the effective use of IWBs [**http://www.nwnet.org.uk**]. For further information on the Interactive Whiteboard programme see the DfES site [**http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ictinschools/ict_active/subject.cfm?articleid=509**].

Hands on Support (HOS)

This is a joint DfES, Primary National Strategy, KS3 and KS4 project which will provide teachers with the opportunity to disseminate good practice in using ICT to enhance learning and teaching. Funding is available for HOS from April 2004 through Standards Fund Grant 31a. Your LEA should already have been consulting with schools regarding the most appropriate mechanism for delivering Hands on Support in your school [**http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ictinschools/ict_teaching/subject.cfm?articleid=199**].

Technical Support

In order for school staff – teaching and administrative – to have confidence in ICT systems, it is vital that effective technical support provision is in place. Technical support can be delivered in a number of different ways and most LEAs will offer a service that schools can buy into, as will commercial suppliers. Schools may also choose to employ a technician directly. The DfES, with Becta, has been working to develop advice and guidance for schools which includes competencies to be used when drawing up job descriptions [**http://www.becta.org.uk/techcomp**].

National workforce agreement/remodelling project

The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group has produced two governors' information packs about workforce remodelling. They can be downloaded from the Remodelling site [**http://www.remodelling.org/governors_resources.php**].

In 2003 thirty-two Pathfinder schools were tasked to learn more about how schools can remodel their workforce. Case studies are available on the Remodelling website [**http://www.remodelling.org/case_studies.php**].

A 'Remodelling with ICT' pack, containing a CD-Rom and case studies showcasing ideas and experiences from six of the schools, is available free from the Becta site [**http://www.becta.org.uk/leaders/leaders.cfm?section=4&id=3097**].

ICT and Inclusion

'Removing Barriers to Achievement' sets out the Government's vision for providing children with special educational needs and disabilities the opportunity to succeed. It recognises the need to embed inclusive practice in every school and early years setting and acknowledges the role that ICT can play in realising that aspiration. The intention is to develop comprehensive advice, guidance and training for teachers and teaching assistants on how ICT can be used effectively in the classroom to support children with different types of special educational need. This will complement existing resources such as the Inclusion website which details useful resources and has an advice forum for teachers. It emphasises the value of ICT to help plan and manage learning in school and the home for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and also to manage information in a way that enables smooth transitions between schools.

Removing Barriers to Achievement: the Government's Strategy for SEN [**http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/senstrategy/**]

Inclusion website [**http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk**]

Managing Special Needs [**http://www.becta.org.uk/leaders/display.cfm?section=6**]

Useful information

Where can you go for further help regarding ICT?

Your own LEA team, particularly the ICT adviser, should be your first contact for advice on LEA policy decisions and directions regarding e-learning. Your LEA's Governor Training section may be able to direct you to support.

Becta
http://www.becta.org.uk/
Becta is the Government's lead agency for ICT in education.

Sources of Funding
http://www.becta.org.uk/leas/leas.cfm?section=5_1&id=1252
An overview of some of the sources currently available in the UK and Europe for ICT training, content development, and the purchase of computer hardware and infrastructure.

Becta's Inspection Site
http://www.becta.org.uk/leas/display.cfm?section=20
Information and guidance for inspectors of primary, secondary and special schools in England on dealing with ICT in school inspections. Governors may find it useful in pointing out areas that the visiting inspector will be assessing.

Department for Education and Skills
http://www.dfes.gov.uk

DfES, 'Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners'
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/5yearstrategy/docs/DfES5Yearstrategy1.rtf

The e-learning strategy team
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/elearningstrategy/index.cfm

GetConnected
http://getconnected.ngfl.gov.uk/index.php?s=rbcon
This website includes information on RBC developments.

National College for School Leadership
http://www.ncsl.org.uk/
The College provides career-long learning and development opportunities, professional and practical support for England's existing and aspiring school leaders.

NCSL/Becta SLICT programme
http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageid=1dev-strategic-slict-index
This national programme has been developed to help headteachers focus on their strategic role in leading ICT in their schools.

Ofsted
http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/

TeacherNet
http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/bsf
This section provides additional details regarding the Building Schools for the Future programme.

This document is one of a series, published during Autumn 2004, by Becta to support school governors. Each guide, together with supporting material, will be made available for downloading in the Governor Support area of Becta's website [**http://www.becta.org.uk/leaders/display.cfm?section=13**].

department for
education and skills

Becta
British Educational Communications and Technology Agency

Becta is the Government's key partner in the strategic development and delivery of its information and communications technology (ICT) and e-learning strategy for the schools and the learning and skills sectors.

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