ICT: essential guides
for school governors

Becta
ICT Advice

This is the final publication in this current series of guides to ICT for school governors. Previous documents have shown how ICT has a major role to play in almost every aspect of learning, teaching and management in schools and how, because technology infrastructure is a major investment, sound planning is essential. Used appropriately and confidently, ICT enhances learning and teaching, administration and information management,

so it can also contribute significantly to the overarching goal of whole-school improvement.

Individual governors may take responsibility for different aspects of school life such as: finance, personnel and curriculum matters. Each aspect has a contribution to make towards the performance of the school as a whole. The key consideration for all school governors is 'What can we do to improve our whole-school performance in the future?'.

School improvement

School improvement is about being involved in a continuous cycle of self-evaluation and review in order to perform even better. As part of the Strategic Leadership of ICT (SLICT) programme, developed by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and Becta, headteachers consider the cycle of vision, review and implementation shown below. [**http://www.ncsl.org.uk/slict**]

Leadership teams need to develop a vision of where they wish to go, audit where they currently are in this journey, plan activity to implement this goal and then review this after time to ensure they are achieving what they wanted.

A key factor in the drive to raise standards in schools has been the increased provision and use of ICT resources and facilities to both support and enhance teaching and learning together with management practices. Major resources have been allocated to schools for hardware and software through Standards Fund grants; many schools have adopted integrated learning systems and more recently e-learning. Newly qualified teachers are now expected to have considerable ICT competence on entry to the profession.

The effective use of ICT can pay dividends in many ways; it has an impact on learning and teaching, on inclusion and school ethos, on pupil and school performance, on school planning and management and on communication and community links.

As governing bodies look ahead, there is little doubt that ICT will be a key driver of educational development and of school improvement. Until recently most governing bodies have not taken a leading role in the development of ICT policy and long-term planning. ICT has been seen as a separate area of activity, the preserve of experts and technicians. This is changing as we move to a more ICT-literate society with ICT pervading all aspects of life including learning and teaching. As governing bodies address the role of ICT in their school they need to be both proactive and ambitious.
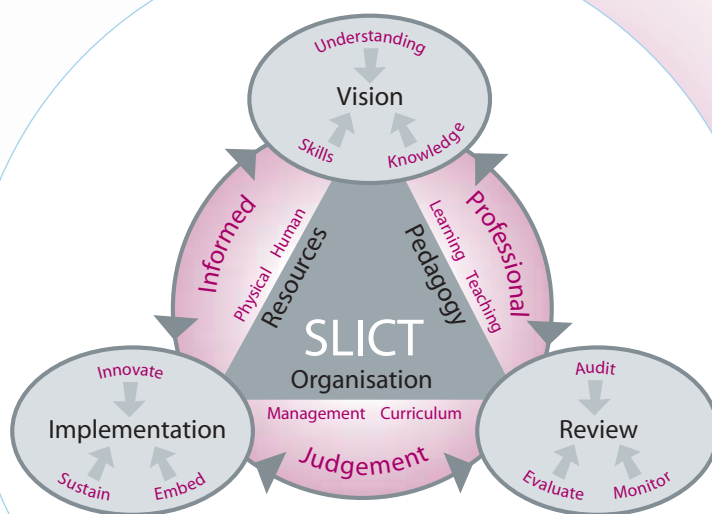
Governors and schools can find a number of tools to help them in planning and review, including the Leadership Team Toolkit and the Common Evaluation Framework.

Leadership Team Toolkit

The Primary National Strategy has produced a Leadership Team Toolkit which draws together a range of key resources to assist the Leadership Team in developing a vision for ICT development that is unique to their school. It provides Leadership Teams with ideas, practical help, examples of current practice, and links to a wide range of other resources to support the embedding of ICT across the curriculum. Copies of the toolkit are available from **dfes@prolog.uk.com**.

The Common Evaluation Framework (CEF)

This has been developed across government departments and agencies and relates to the evaluation of the whole-school impact of ICT. As well as Ofsted, the DfES, QCA, Becta, NCSL and the national Primary and Secondary Strategies have all been party to this work. The framework has been developed to become the standard tool for school self-evaluation, external inspection and support work by various agencies.

Schools in an initial pilot were encouraged to appoint a member of the senior management team to lead and co-ordinate the school's evaluation of its own performance against 25 criteria.

Full details of the CEF together with guidance and pilot materials are available [**http://www.becta.org.uk/ leaders/school_leaders.cfm**].

Communicating with other schools

The introduction of broadband technology to Hagbourne Primary School in 2003 has resulted in an entirely new approach to all aspects of school life. Teaching across the entire curriculum has been enhanced and the school administration system has been streamlined. Hagbourne is part of an international network of schools, known as Eco-Schools. The network promotes environmental awareness in a way that links to several curriculum subjects, including citizenship and education for sustainable development. The broadband connection helps enhance communication and the exchange of information between Hagbourne and other Eco-schools, including one in Australia.
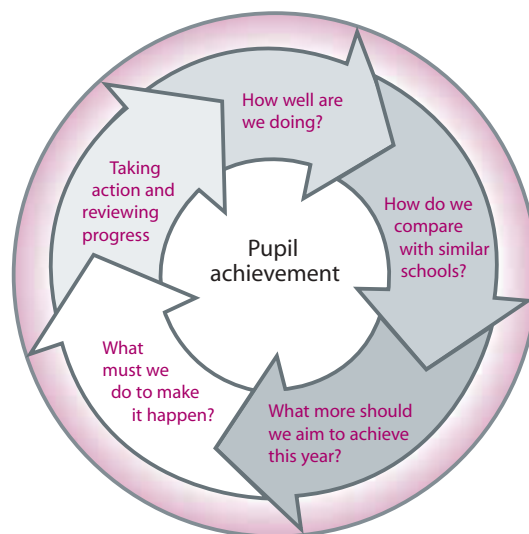
[**http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/casestudies/ casestudy.cfm?id=357&subcatid =108&catid=107**]

Factors on which schools need to evaluate their ICT performance

- Leadership and vision
- Curriculum
- Teaching and learning
- Assessment
- Professional development
- Resources
- Standards**.**

A cycle for school self-improvement

In the white paper, Excellence in Schools, the Government set out its plans to involve pupils, parents, headteachers, governors, teachers, LEAs and the Government itself in a concerted drive to raise standards. For this to succeed schools must take responsibility for their own improvement. For most schools, development planning already leads to a 2- or 3-year forward plan including details of the main goals, actions, resources and responsibilities involved. The DfES Standards Site [**http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/otherresources/ cycle/index**] provides advice on focusing on a five-stage cycle of improvement concentrating on pupil performance. By following the five stages shown in the diagram, school leaders can ensure that year on year work is focused on achievement and that longer term plans lead to real gains. The use of ICT in this process is invaluable owing to the large amount of data which needs to be collected, analysed and then used to inform improvements in learning and teaching. Governors need to play an active role in this cycle.

How well are we doing?

How do we compare with similar schools?

Pupil achievement

Taking action and reviewing progress

What must we do to make it happen?

What more should we aim to achieve this year?

A five-stage cycle for school self-improvement

Questions governors should be asking about school improvement

- Are you involved in and contributing to, the auditing/review processes most schools undertake annually?

- What is the school doing well in terms of ICT use, both for enhancing teaching and learning and supporting the management procedures of the school?

- Are you aware of the areas for development the school has identified as part of the annual audit and review?

- What are your school's priorities for the coming year?

- Do you know what the school's ICT plan includes for the next year?

- How does your school's ICT provision compare to other schools?

Pupil profile systems to manage discipline and monitor attendance

St Benedict RC Secondary School identified a need to streamline its records of non-academic achievements and disciplinary events. The school's processes for recording disciplinary events were largely manual, time-consuming, distributed across the school and difficult for staff to access. The school invested in the development of a single, accessible pupil profile containing a full range of information. This school management system is accessible to all class teachers, heads of year, heads of department and members of the management team, enabling teachers to access a complete pupil profile. Individual teachers can record disciplinary and other events electronically and have no need to make paper records.

[**http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/ casestudies/casestudy.cfm?id=101**]

How well does your school use ICT to improve whole-school performance?

- Is ICT used for learning and teaching in all subjects? What evidence is there?

- Are all pupils able to access the internet to support their work?

- How easily can pupils choose to use ICT when they feel they need it to support their learning?

- How is technical support provided in your school? Are teachers being burdened with this role?

- Are staff able to share and adapt electronic resources and planning tools?

- Is assessment data stored and shared with staff electronically?

- Do staff use email or web-based forums to communicate with each other?

- Where pupils have special needs, does ICT enable them to access the curriculum?

- Is ICT used for management processes such as recording attendance and performance data?

- Is ICT used to communicate with parents and the community via a school website or email?

Improving assessment recording techniques

Ridgeway Infant School changed the methods by which it recorded pupil data and found that it could free up teacher time and improve relations with parents. The school uses assessment to gather reliable and systematic information about a pupil's progress, giving teachers an insight into how a pupil learns, any learning difficulties experienced and informing the planning of subsequent teaching input.

The school was using a system of recording information via an Optical Mark Reader which was providing very useful data but taking a great deal of teacher time to produce. The information requirements of the school's Local Education Authority added a further complication.

The school addressed these issues by:

- purchasing a software package to complete Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) information

- getting the school clerk to process much of the information

- requesting an overall analysis and report of baseline and Key Stage 1 SATs data from the LEA.

[**http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/casestudies/ casestudy.cfm?id=50**]

Using ICT to enable the school's self-review process

A variety of tools and computer programs are available to help schools identify strengths and weaknesses and to plan and prioritise the actions that will lead to consistent and sustained improvement. Any processes used should also take into account current guidance on workforce reform and should reduce rather than increase the administrative burden on teaching staff.

The Matrix, a free online tool developed by NCSL and Becta, facilitates self-evaluation and action planning. The Matrix can be used to review your current position against a set of levelled statements. There are exemplars available that place the statements into helpful scenarios and context. [**http://matrix.becta.org.uk**]

Additional software purchased by the school for the purpose of analysing existing data should be able to be integrated with the school Management Information System (MIS) – accessing the data from this system without creating undue extra work. Before a school purchases any additional software of this type it is important to analyse what you want it to do and whether or not existing software such as the school's MIS combined with the Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) software provided by the DfES provides the functionality required. PAT allows schools and LEAs to import and analyse their own pupil performance data against national performance data published in the Autumn Package.

The Becta website for School Leaders lists some of the commercial products available for self-evaluation and review. [**http://www.becta.org.uk/ leaders/display. cfm?section=3_3_14**] Outputs from such systems should be able to be used to inform other processes such as statutory self-assessment forms or the documentation for quality marks such as Naacemark. This has been developed by Naace, in association with Becta, as an award which recognises a school's success in developing and implementing a strategic approach to ICT. It provides a framework for using ICT to enhance teaching and learning and provides opportunities for the school community to develop ICT capability. [**http://www.naace.org**]

What the Research Says

Becta's 'What the Research Says' series includes reports which summarise the research on clearly identified topics. The publication on ICT and whole school improvement summarises findings relating to the effect that ICT can have on:

- raising pupil motivation
- improving pupil behaviour
- enhancing communication both within and between schools
- enhancing assessment methods and their impact
- reducing teacher workload
- increasing efficiency in school management.

[**http://www.becta.org.uk/page_documents/ research/wtrs_ws_improvement.pdf**]

Inclusion

ICT can support teachers in the creation of an accessible and motivating learning environment and provide opportunities for all pupils to participate fully in all aspects of the life of the school. Crucial to moving the whole school forward is ensuring that teaching and learning is accessible for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs or learning disabilities, gifted and talented pupils, or those for whom English is an additional language. ICT can be an essential tool in helping schools to do this. ICT can be used to create and deliver accessible, engaging and appropriate resources. It can also be used to communicate effectively with parents and the wider community, including other mainstream and special schools and to involve all, including those with individual learning needs. [**http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk**]

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 regarding whole school improvement with ICT. Your LEA's Governor Training section may be able to direct you to support.

Becta

Becta leadership web pages for guidance on all aspects of leadership of ICT in school
http://www.becta.org.uk/leaders/school_leaders.cfm

DfES

Whole School covers the issues and initiatives within the National Primary Strategy that cut across key stages and curriculum areas.
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/wholeschool

ICT Across the Curriculum (ICTAC) forms part of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy's support for whole-school improvement. It should be used flexibly to suit local circumstances and, if your school has chosen ICT across the curriculum as a whole-school priority, it will be supported by the local Key Stage 3 LEA lead consultant for ICTAC.
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/respub/ictac

Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT)
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance/pat

ICT Register

The ICT Register is a database run by the Specialist Schools Trust which captures ICT and e-learning expertise in cutting-edge primary, secondary and special schools across the nation.
http://www.ict-register.net

Local government

LEA websites often offer resources for school improvement; see for example those on the Essex County Council grid for learning **http://www.e-gfl.org**

National Foundation for Educational Research

The NfER publication *50 websites for school improvement* provides details of 50 of the most useful websites supporting school improvement.
http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/downloads/SEM.pdf

Governors may be interested in school improvement information provided for LEAs themselves by such organisations as the Local Government Association [**http://www.lga.gov.uk**], Education Management Information Exchange (part of NFER) [**http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/default.asp**] and The Education Network [**http://www.ten.info**]. An example is *Making data work*, a short publication which includes a variety of good and innovative practice in LEAs to challenge and support schools in the use of data to raise pupil achievement [**http://www.ten.info/pdf/Dataguide.pdf**].

This document is one of a series, developed 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.

Millburn Hill Road
Science Park
Coventry CV4 7JJ

Tel: 024 7641 6994
Fax: 024 7641 1418

Email: becta@becta.org.uk
URL: http://www.becta.org.uk