

Schools

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Becta leading
next generation
learning



Harnessing Technology funding 2010–2011

Guidance for schools

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Guidance for schools

This document advises schools on how to use the Harnessing Technology grant to support improvements in the use of technology in schools. This is considered in the context of other funding to schools, both capital and revenue.

It replaces previous Harnessing Technology funding guidance published in early 2009.

This document offers broad guidance. Where schools are uncertain about whether the grant can be used to purchase specific products or services, particularly in relation to capital/revenue criteria, they are advised to consult their local authority finance team.

1. Introduction

The use of computers and the internet is now an everyday feature of most young people's lives and those of citizens generally, including most parents. In this context, there are exciting opportunities to harness technology to improve and develop services in response to the needs of children, young people and parents. This is what Harnessing Technology funding is intended to support.

Where technology is used well, evidence demonstrates significant benefits for children and young people and for school improvement.¹ Various sources of funding available to schools for technology (including, for capital investments, the Harnessing Technology grant) are important in supporting developments that will deliver real benefits.

All schools need a good understanding of how technology can be used to support improvement of children and young people. Becta has a Self Review Framework to help them understand where they are and where they need to do next.



¹ Evidence on the impact of technology on learning and educational outcomes, Becta 2009
www.becta.org.uk/research/reports/impactoftechnology

² Becta Self Review Framework www.becta.org.uk/selfreviewframework

2. Harnessing Technology investment priorities

Technology can support better professional practice, enable good access to learning resources, engage children and young people in learning and underpin effective learner and performance management in schools.

Technology-based strategies play a central role in school improvement and development. Schools, teachers and local authorities are increasingly recognising benefits in terms of:

- Greater flexibility and choice among learning options – using technology to offer differentiated curricula and learning experiences which help meet children’s and young people’s needs and preferences, and allowing partnership delivery for 14–19 diplomas.
- Tailored and responsive assessment – both formative (for example, more immediate feedback on learning, better information about progress) and summative (for example, flexible end-of-stage assessment).
- Engaging learning experiences – for learners of all abilities, in all contexts, including children and young people who are hard to reach.
- Strengthened relationships between families, schools and learners – with an emphasis on integrated information systems and use of online tools to provide information and improve parental engagement.

In support of this, Becta has worked with local authorities and schools to identify a set of priorities for local investment which, guided by schools’ own self-assessment, represent guidance for schools when considering how to invest the Harnessing Technology grant. Schools are advised that as the Harnessing Technology grant is a capital grant, it should be used to *invest in development* of these areas.

- Learning services: learning platform services, email services, personal storage areas for learners and staff and the infrastructure to access these services. Services need to support the safeguarding of learners, be available for all users inside and outside educational institutions including users’ homes and must be available outside core school hours.
- High-quality digital learning resources in line with Becta’s quality principles, taking advantage of national and local collaboration opportunities.
- Integration of learning and management systems at institution, local authority and – where appropriate – regional level so that data is available securely when and where it is required.



- Parental reporting: online access to reporting systems and information. Schools should provide timely, meaningful and manageable information to parents through appropriate and secure use of management information systems, learning platforms, managed learning environments, messaging services and other suitable online reporting systems.
- Broadband infrastructure to provide services, appropriate to need and safety, with sustainable plans for further development of local and regional networks to ensure that the necessary capacity and services are available.
- Simplified sign-on for users: establishing authentication and authorisation infrastructure capable of granting individual learners with secure anywhere/anytime access to educational resources – must be implemented in conjunction with the UK Access Management Federation using Shibboleth, with the local authority or Regional Broadband Consortium acting as identity and service provider.



Guidance has been issued by the DCSF recommending that local authorities and schools make plans in case of emergency school closure to ensure effective communication and to support continuity of learning during closure. Used effectively, technology makes a vital contribution to learning, teaching and management. It also supports effective communication across and beyond the school. Once established it becomes a valuable tool to maintain communication and continuity of learning in the event of an emergency school closure.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/flupandemic/index.html



3. Sources of funding for technology

The Harnessing Technology grant

The Harnessing Technology grant is the principal source of capital funding for technology in schools, with £639.5 million being distributed through this funding stream between 2008–11.

The Grant is allocated to local authorities using a formula that takes account of pupil numbers, the level of deprivation and population sparsity factors. Details of allocations to individual local authorities can be found on the TeacherNet website.³

Local authorities are able to retain up to 25 per cent of their allocation centrally to undertake collaborative purchasing on behalf of all schools where improved value for money can be achieved. Local authorities can retain a further proportion of the funding with the agreement of schools in their area (for example through consultation with the Schools Forum), where there is evidence that this will achieve efficiencies from collaborative approaches to procurement.

The following types of schools are eligible for Harnessing Technology funding:

- Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled, Community and Foundation Primary Schools
- Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled, Community and Foundation Middle Schools
- Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled, Community and Foundation Secondary and Upper Schools
- Maintained Special Schools
- Non-maintained Special Schools
- Maintained Nursery Schools
- Academies, City Technology Colleges, Pupil Referral Units
- Maintained boarding and hospital schools

Individual local authorities will determine the basis on which funding is distributed to eligible schools. This arrangement is intended to give local authorities the flexibility they need to meet local priorities most effectively.

³ www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/capitalinvestment/guidanceindex/harnessingtechnology/

There is not currently a requirement for local authorities to provide matched revenue funding for the Harnessing Technology grant, but it is recommended that they identify revenue funding in line with previous years or consult with their schools about the use of school revenue budgets for connectivity (and other technology services that the local authority provides which involve revenue costs).

Harnessing Technology grant funding allocated in 2010–11 must be spent by 31 August 2011.

Capital versus revenue funding

Maintaining and developing technology involves both capital costs (for example for investment in new hardware, software and systems) and revenue costs (for example for technical support, broadband licensing and other ongoing services).

The Harnessing Technology grant is a capital grant. It can be used to purchase computer software and digital learning resources provided that the resource being paid for can be treated as capital in accordance with normal accounting rules. This can apply to both one-off purchases of software resources, also licenses, depending on the terms of the contract.

Subscriptions to services that provide digital curriculum resources on an ongoing basis would normally be treated as revenue, unless the service includes the creation of a capital asset owned by the purchaser. That is, ownership passes to the school or local authority at the end of the service period; or the school or local authority receive a licence to use the resource for a specified time period longer than one year.

Schools are able to use a number of different sources of funding to cover such costs, including:

Other sources of funding for technology

Devolved Formula Capital (DFC)

Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) is an amount allocated each year to primary and secondary schools to be spent by them on their priorities in respect of buildings, ICT and other capital needs. It may be combined with capital funding from other sources, pooled with DFC allocated to other schools, and saved up to fund larger projects.

The Harnessing Technology grant and Devolved Formula Capital are forms of capital funding and as such can be used to support purchases of ICT infrastructure and equipment or upgrades, as well as software and digital curriculum resources *where these count as capital expenditure*. For a precise definition of what is classified as capital, advice should be provided by local authority accountants who interpret accounting principles and guidance.

4. Related programmes

Home Access funding

Home Access is the government programme which will help ensure that more children in state-maintained education in England have access to technology at home to support learning. Within the programme, parents apply to a central body for a Home Access grant and, if eligible, use their grant to buy a compliant package consisting of a computer, internet access, service and support from an approved supplier. Packages include assistive technologies to support learners with specific needs.

There is no mandatory requirement for schools to take part in Home Access. However, schools can help support learners and their families take advantage of Home Access. For example, schools can:

- help promote the offer, including assistive technologies, to parents in conjunction with Becta
- run parents' evenings to help the families of grant recipients improve their own ICT skills
- consider pedagogical changes, including increase the content on their learning platforms.

Becta will make available a suite of material for schools on Home Access later in the year.

In addition, schools will have the opportunity to run an aggregation scheme where parents 'opt-in' and elect the school to manage purchasing of a package on their behalf. (Equivalent arrangements are in place for local authorities to aggregate purchasing.) Running an aggregation scheme provides schools with the opportunity to deliver a package from a choice from approved suppliers and negotiate additional connectivity.

Schools may also wish to incorporate other funding sources to help families in need who are not eligible and thus increase the take-up of Home Access. Schools will be contacted later in the year about aggregation opportunities.

Capital programmes

In addition to the funding sources already outlined, schools that are involved in one of the capital building programmes (e.g. Building Schools for the Future and the primary capital programme) will have access to funding for technology through these initiatives. Schools in such a position will be working closely with their local authority to ensure that investment in technology meets the requirements associated with the funding stream in question.

For detailed financial advice regarding the use of these various funding sources to cover specific types of purchasing, schools should consult the local authority school finance team and their accounting procedures.



5. Determining your priorities and accessing support

Becta offers a range of advice to schools on technology-related priorities, providing helpful advice and support to make life easier for schools. Links to further advice and support are included below.

Improving your school through technology and managing your technology well:

At the heart of effective whole-school improvement should be a leadership vision for using technology, and the drive to translate this strategy into effective action.

All schools are encouraged to actively commit to exploiting ICT to ensure they provide Next Generation Learning opportunities.⁴

The Next Generation Learning Charter that supports progression in the eight key areas of leadership and management: Curriculum; Learning and teaching; Assessment; Professional development; Extending opportunities for learning; Resources and Impact on outcomes. It has four stages of progression:

- **Commitment:** all schools are encouraged to make a public commitment to provide Next Generation Learning for all their learners.
- **Recognition:** when a school has reached the nationally agreed standard in three elements of the framework, including Leadership and Management, it can apply for recognition that it is progressing through the Charter.
- **Accreditation:** the prestigious ICT Mark⁵ is awarded to schools that have reached the nationally agreed standard in all eight elements of the framework.
- **ICT Excellence Awards⁶:** these awards offer further recognition for schools that demonstrate evidence of excellent practice above and beyond the levels of the ICT Mark.
- **Becta's Self-Review Framework** helps schools progress through the Charter. This online tool gives access to a wide range of resources and advice and is available free of charge to schools. It has already been used by over 15,000 schools.

Schools are strongly encouraged to adopt Becta's Self-Review Framework to support their long-term evaluation and planning of technology development. Schools can register online to use the self-review framework.

⁴ Becta Next Generation learning www.becta.org.uk/nextgenerationlearning

⁵ Becta ICT Mark www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/en/ICT-mark-schools/

⁶ Becta ICT Excellence Awards www.becta.org.uk/excellenceawards

Meeting the expectations of parents for online information and reporting:

All schools are encouraged to exploit technology to improve parental engagement. Secondary schools should aim to offer parents secure online access to information about their children's learning by September 2010 and primary schools by September 2012. Schools moving towards online reporting are encouraged to:

- Target investment to deliver improved communication and access to information for parents – about their children's learning progress, positive and challenging behaviour, attainment, special educational needs and attendance.
- Ensure that technology systems used for parental communication, such as email, websites and SMS text messaging are robust and fit for purpose and that other processes are in place to manage communication effectively and efficiently.
- Ensure that systems used to support learning, such as learning platforms, can be integrated and used as a source of information for parents online.
- Consider how information held within Management Information Systems is best communicated and made accessible and understandable to different groups of parents.
- Consider the following principles put forward by Becta:
 - Extend what is already good parental engagement practice.
 - Make best use of what is already in place and available.
 - Develop efficient and effective practice (enter once, use many times).
 - Develop sustainable approaches and processes for recording and reporting.
- Consider areas in which capital investment will make an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of recording and reporting processes and practice.
 - For example, establishing the need, or business case, for technologies enabling: e-registration; cashless catering; access control systems; behaviour management systems; reward systems; e-assessment; electronic report writing; managing special educational needs; providing home access to staff and learners; mobile recording and reporting; etc.

Schools moving towards online reporting have used the Becta parental engagement toolkit to support their progress. This includes a self-review *Framework for Online Reporting* to support schools in developing in four areas:

- a) Recording and reporting
- b) Parental dialogue and engagement
- c) Workforce involvement
- d) Exploiting technologies

This toolkit together with a 'Getting started guide to online reporting' is available on the Becta website at www.becta.org.uk/engagingparents

Making sure that technologies are able to work together, including supporting effective communications and maintaining continuity of learning in the event of emergency school closure.

- Compare the functionality of your current management information system with Becta's functional requirements for information management.
- Use Becta's functional specification for institutional infrastructure to help decide what you want your technology to achieve.
- Use Becta's self-review framework to help evaluate your current position.
- Review your current needs and anticipate your future needs for information management by using Becta's information management strategy framework.
- Contact your local authority to find out about any personal online learning space it offers your learners, and any aggregated learning platform procurement which the local authority or regional broadband consortium (RBC) has implemented.
- Use Becta's e-learning guide for diploma delivery which provides both strategic advice and practical support for partnerships supporting consortia delivery. All Diplomas involve a range of learning providers. Partnership working presents a challenge to ensure that the best learning opportunities are accessed by all learners in an efficient manner. Specific challenges presented by the Diplomas include:
 - the need for learning to be delivered by a number of providers who are geographically spread out, particularly in rural areas
 - problems of travel
 - the need to track the location of learners
 - the need for access to workplace experience
 - difficulties supporting small cohorts of learners
 - the need for access to specialist experts.

www.becta.org.uk/feandskills/diplomadelivery

Integrating your technology within your whole approach to making learning personal:

- Use your vision for the school to focus on the outcomes for learning, teaching or management to ensure how you deploy and use your learning platform reflects on the priorities, needs and context for your school and achievement of benefits for children and young people. www.becta.org.uk/schools/purchasinglearningplatforms
- Ensure sufficient and sustained resource to support development of staff and seek opportunities through collaboration between colleagues and other schools.
- Use technology to create and share quality resources and learning materials. Many schools are already benefiting from this collaborative approach in financial terms but this can also result in time savings for your workforce.
- Work towards increased integration between your MIS and learning platform to increase efficiency, productivity and new requirements such as online reporting. Appropriate data, information and resources should be securely available within and beyond the school to allow for increased opportunities for learners, flexibility for teachers and greater engagement opportunities with parents and carers.
- Use EU-compliant buying arrangements for learning platforms underpinned by functional and technical specifications developed to meet educational needs. These enable schools and local authorities to choose from approved suppliers who have been selected on their capability to deliver high quality, standards based, ICT solutions and managed services specified to meet educational needs.

Ensuring learners and staff are safe online:

In order to give children, young people, staff and parents maximum benefit of technology it is crucial that as a school you have policies and practices in place to minimise exposure to risk. It is incumbent upon schools under their 'duty of care' responsibilities to have appropriate measures in place so that everyone is able to enjoy the benefits of using technology safely and responsibly.

Becta recommends a whole school approach to safeguarding children in a digital world which addresses both technical and educational approaches. Guidance for this crucial area of work can be found on the Becta website (see Annex for links).

- Develop an acceptable use policy⁷ that staff, parents and students are aware of (this is a minimum requirement for all schools). The policy should outline what is and what is not acceptable and highlight the sanctions for breaking the guidelines set out in the policy. This policy should be reviewed, monitored and updated to ensure effectiveness. www.becta.org.uk/publications/aupsincontext
- Ensure that your networks are as safe and secure as possible and use a Becta accredited internet service provider and/or a Becta accredited software product – for example, a filtering or monitoring product.
- Further information on Becta's accreditation schemes can be found here: www.becta.org.uk/schools/accreditedinternetsuppliers
- Teach children and young people about the potential dangers and how to empower themselves in the online world. Staff and parents also need to understand the risks and issues and how to support children and young people. Signposts to safety: Teaching e-safety at Key Stages 1 and 2: www.becta.org.uk/publications/signpoststosafety
- Signposts to safety: Teaching e-safety at Key Stages 3 and 4 www.becta.org.uk/publications/signpoststosafety
- Ensure that you have appropriate reporting mechanisms in place should an e-safety incident occur. It is essential that schools make links with their local authority and or their Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to ensure consistency and coherence. www.becta.org.uk/publications/safeguardingchildrenlscb

⁷ Becta Acceptable use Policies www.becta.org.uk/publications/aupsincontext

- The leadership team in the school should take the lead on embedding e-safety across the school and continually evaluate the effectiveness of all policies and practices.
www.becta.org.uk/publications/aupsincontext
- Find out what your school should be doing to protect personal information and minimise the risk of data being misused.

Obtaining best value – purchasing technology through collaborative approaches:

Schools wanting to meet the best standards in technology, at the best value can:

- Use buying arrangements that meet Becta's service requirements.
- Consider whether a 'managed service' (incorporating implementation, support, maintenance etc.) rather than a simple equipment purchase might be the right option for your school. Becta's technical and functional specifications and framework agreements have been developed to support this approach and the suppliers have been rigorously evaluated.
- Establish if the local authority is planning any collaborative purchasing that will save time and effort and deliver better value. The LA may have suitable procurement arrangements for you to consider. Look at opportunities to focus valuable school resources on teaching and learning rather than managing and supporting ICT.
- Consider collaborating with other schools to aggregate purchasing requirements. Becta recommends that purchasing should be done by a larger group, preferably at local authority level, to achieve best value. Many schools are already benefitting from this collaborative approach.
- Access up to the minute, best practice advice for procurement at:
www.becta.org.uk/schools/procurement

This link is a gateway to a range of purchasing frameworks which schools and local authorities can use for **infrastructure, consultancy, learning platforms, software licences, internet services** and **managed services**.

Last year over £60 million of cost savings were achieved through collaborative buying activity. A useful guide to saving money 'Getting best value from your investment – a guide for school leaders' can be found at: www.becta.org.uk/publications/bestvalueschools

In line with Cabinet Office policy, procurement decisions should be made on the basis of the best value for money solution to the business requirement. This should take account of total lifetime cost of ownership of the solution, including exit and transition costs, after ensuring that solutions fulfil minimum and essential capability, security, scalability, transferability, support and manageability requirements:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/government_it/open_source.aspx

Procurement should be based on specifications that use open standards and require solutions to comply with open standards. Schools are advised to refer to Becta's functional and technical ICT standards and specifications which cover connectivity, data services, infrastructure services and learning services: www.becta.org.uk/industry/techstandards

Becta continues to support the use of open source software in schools and has commissioned the Open Source Schools community to raise awareness across schools about the alternative choices to proprietary software: <http://opensourceschools.org.uk>

- Follow best practice in IT Technical Support by implementing a structured management process such as Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) or Becta's Framework for ICT Technical Support (FITS) www.becta.org.uk/schools/fits

Making sure that technologies are able to work together including supporting effective communications and maintaining continuity of learning in the event of emergency school closure. Schools are advised to:

- Compare the functionality of your current management information system with Becta's functional requirements for information management.
- Use Becta's functional specification for institutional infrastructure to help decide what you want your technology to achieve.
- Use Becta's self-review framework to help evaluate your current position.
- Review your current needs and anticipate your future needs for information management by using Becta's information management strategy framework.
- Contact your local authority to find out about any personal online learning space it offers your learners, and any aggregated learning platform procurement which the local authority or regional broadband consortium (RBC) has implemented.

Ensuring technology solutions are sustainable and meet the environmental agenda:

The National Framework for Sustainable Schools has a target to make schools more environmentally friendly by 2020. It introduces eight 'doorways' through which schools may choose to initiate or extend their sustainable school activity:

- Energy and water
- Food and drink
- Travel and traffic
- Purchasing and waste
- Buildings and grounds
- Inclusion and participation
- Local well-being
- Global citizenship

www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools/framework/framework_detail.cfm

The new inspection framework now assesses sustainable development, such that a school's grades will be adjusted according to its performance on sustainable development.

Schools wanting to ensure their technology solutions are environmentally sustainable are advised to:

- Engage with the local authority if part of a capital building programme, to ensure that your requirements are fully considered. Ensure that designers and construction contractors base their proposals for new and refurbished buildings on the school's vision for transforming learning and delivering improved outcomes.
- Plan and consult fully if you are part of a capital building programme. Building Schools for the Future (BSF) provides a very high level of capital funding for technology – equivalent to £1675 for every pupil place provided in the new and remodelled schools. Schools then commit to providing ongoing revenue funding (this cannot be met using the Harnessing Technology grant) to maintain this managed service. www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk/library/ict.jsp

Academies which are being built as part of the BSF programme are expected to join in the area-wide managed service. Where there is no BSF managed service available, academies and one school pathfinders are expected to use the Becta Infrastructure Services Framework to procure their infrastructure, equipment and supporting services.

Technology is an integral part of the primary capital programme, however (unlike in BSF) there is no specific budget for it. Local authorities should ensure that a suitable proportion of primary capital funding is allocated to technology in order to ensure that their primary schools are equipped for Next Generation Learning.

Further information on the Primary Capital Programme can be found at www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/Primary_Capital_Programme

- Ensure that you consider sustainability /environmental issues when preparing and implementing technology plans, giving due consideration to your requirement to become an environmentally sustainable school. www.becta.org.uk/schools/environmentalsustainability
- Take account of the environmental costs involved, before purchasing individual technology items. These costs can be 'upstream' (manufacture, packaging and supply), 'operational' (such as waste management and consumables) and 'downstream' (disposal or re-use). The Buying Solutions Greenticks initiative highlights products that meet the specification set out in *Buy Sustainable – Quick Wins*. www.buyingsolutions.gov.uk/aboutus/sustainability/sustainable-solutions/quickwins
- Put measures in place to monitor your technology-related energy use. The Zero-Carbon Task Force for Schools recommends the installation of 'display/smart meters' in every school which does not already have them in place. www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/13709/ACF8895.doc

Becta has produced a simple ICT electricity-use comparison tool which can help schools and LAs compare the energy required by potential purchases of ICT or check the consumption of existing equipment, and thereby gain an initial overview of their school's ICT carbon footprint. www.becta.org.uk/schools/carbonfootprint



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