



**Circular 0039/2024**

**To: The Managerial Authorities, Principals and Teachers of Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.**

## **Grant Scheme for ICT Infrastructure**

### **Introduction and Purpose**

The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 is underpinned by an investment of some €200m included in the National Development Plan 2021-2030. The first tranche of funding of €50m under the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 issued in respect of the 2021-2022 school year in December 2021.

€50m is issuing now in the form of a grant payment to all eligible schools.

Information on the background to this scheme, the rates and eligibility for this funding, is set out below. This payment will be issued to school bank accounts. **Schools do not have to apply for this grant funding.**

Schools should put in place Digital Learning Plans, which will underpin the utilisation of the ICT grant funding provided. This will also help to optimise this support and inform training and support needs. Future issues of grant funding for ICT infrastructure may require submission of these Plans. Further information on Digital Learning Planning is provided below.

### **Digital Strategy for Schools**

The Department's policy on the embedding of digital technologies in education is outlined in the [Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027](#), the successor to the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020.

A key objective of the strategy is to continue to realise the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students and to help them to develop key digital skills to facilitate their participation in society and the economy as well as the transition to further and higher education and to the world of work.

Realising this objective will require the provision of funding to support schools to invest in and maintain their ICT infrastructure which will continue to be a priority of the Strategy.



## Features of the Grant Scheme

### Planning:

- The ICT Grant scheme will issue over the period of the Strategy, based on €200m committed under the NDP.
- Each school must have a Digital Learning Plan, based on a whole school approach and taking account of its context and circumstances. The plan should outline the vision of the school for the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment and incorporate targets and actions for improvement and development.
- The Digital Learning Plan should be reviewed and updated, at least annually, and used to guide the expenditure of this grant funding to embed digital technologies effectively in a phased and coherent approach to improve learning outcomes.

### Funding:

- Funding can be used for the purchase of infrastructure including, but not limited to, teaching devices, devices for learners, including shared devices, projectors, networking equipment, cloud-based tools, learning platforms, software and education applications, and other equipment designed to support teaching and learning in the school. Further information concerning items that can be purchased with this funding is contained in Appendix A.
- Funding can also be used to provide digital technologies to support differentiated and personalised learning.
- The funding can also be used assist schools in the implementation of new and revised specifications and curricula at primary and post-primary levels. It can also be used to assist with the implementation of STEM learning activities.
- A standard funding formula incorporating both a flat rate lump sum and a per capita amount for each student enrolled has been used to calculate the grant due to each school.
- An enhanced per capita rate applies to students enrolled in DEIS and Special schools and to pupils in mainstream special class primary settings.
- All students following primary and post-primary programmes are included, for per capita purposes, in recognised primary, special and post-primary schools.
- Fee-charging post-primary schools will receive funding at 50% rate.
- The scheme will be supported by the provision of technical and procurement guidance and information for schools and their leaders.



- Funding must be used for the purchase of ICT equipment and schools are required to use established public procurement arrangements. Further information on appropriate equipment, and procurement issues, including relevant links, are outlined in Appendix A.
- Records of expenditure and supporting documentation must be retained and be available for inspection if required.
- Schools must ensure compliance with Circular: 13/2014 Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds.
- In the context of the current situation in Ukraine, and Ireland's humanitarian response to the crisis in taking in refugees, this funding can also be used by schools to support the needs of Ukrainian children arriving in Ireland through access to digital technology infrastructure. This can include loaning devices to Ukrainian children in the school if needed, as well as providing appropriate software, apps, and tools to support their learning.

### **Additional Information/Queries**

Detailed information is outlined in the Appendix attached to this Circular.

Queries in relation to the operation of this grant scheme should be addressed to [ictpolicy@education.gov.ie](mailto:ictpolicy@education.gov.ie).

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## **APPENDIX A:**

### **GRANT SCHEME FOR ICT INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **Grant Funding, Management and Compliance**

- 1) Grants under the ICT Infrastructure Scheme will be paid directly into the school bank account, based on the eligibility criteria outlined. Schools are not required to apply for this funding. As with all exchequer grant-aid, school authorities must be able to provide detailed records on how funding, provided under this scheme, was spent. All expenditure in connection with the scheme must be vouched and schools must be able to prove that expenditure was used on digital infrastructure allowed under the scheme. Invoices and receipts must be retained in the event of an audit inspection by the Department and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General. It is necessary for schools to keep details of quotations received, invoices, receipts and any other relevant records in respect of all expenditure for a period of seven years. Schools, on request, must provide the Department with a written statement of the expenditure of the grant and any remaining balances and other relevant information. If a school closes permanently, any balance held in the account must be surrendered to the Department on the date that the school ceases operation. The Department reserves the right to withhold future payments to schools for non-compliance with any of the terms of this Scheme.
- 2) The ICT infrastructure selected for purchase must be in compliance with the broad list of authorised infrastructure as set out at Section 3 in this Appendix.
- 3) Schools must ensure compliance with Circular: 13/2014, Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds. Please refer to: [DPER-Circular-13-14-Guidance-Note-and-Reporting-Requirements-1.pdf](#).

#### **FSSU (Non-ETB sectors)**

All recognised Primary, Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive schools are required to submit accounts to the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) annually. This satisfies the requirement under Section 18 of the Education Act 1998 for schools to make available their accounts for inspection by the Minister. Schools may be subject to audit by the FSSU as part of its ongoing programme of work in supporting schools on financial governance matters and enabling them to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1998 in terms of accountability, transparency and financial responsibility for State funds.



## **ETB Schools**

The Annual Financial Statements of the ETBs are audited by the C&AG and are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, while the Internal Audit Unit for the ETB sector provides assurance to the Audit Committee of the ETBs that the system of internal control as implemented by executive management is adequate and operates effectively.

## **Funding allocation model applying to the ICT Infrastructure Grant**

1. All schools, primary, post-primary and special schools, will receive a lump sum of €2,000 (€1,000 in respect of fee-charging schools) per school.
2. A per capita amount will be paid as follows:
  - a. €39.73 per mainstream pupil on the rolls on the 30th September of the year prior to the issue of the grant, in mainstream primary schools,
  - b. €47.67 per special needs pupil on the rolls on the 30th September of the year prior to the issue of the grant, in special classes attached to mainstream schools, and per pupil in special schools.
  - c. €43.70 per pupil on the rolls on the 30th September of the year prior to the issue of the grant in DEIS category primary schools.
  - d. €47.67 per student on the rolls on the 30th September of the year prior to the issue of the grant in post-primary schools.
  - e. €52.44 per student on the rolls on the 30th September of the year prior to the issue of the grant in DEIS category post-primary schools.
  - f. €23.84 per student on the rolls on the 30th September of the year prior to the issue of the grant per student in fee-charging schools.

## **2. Implementation of the Digital Strategy in schools**

The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 will build upon the achievements of the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, for the continued embedding of digital technologies in Irish schools with the vision to “Empower schools to harness the opportunities of digital transformation to build digital competence and an effective digital education ecosystem so as to develop competent, critically engaged, active learners while supporting them to reach their potential and participate fully as global citizens in a digital world.”

Pillar 2 of the Strategy highlights the role of ICT infrastructure in supporting teaching, learning and assessment practices in schools.



### **School Context and Planning:**

- Every school is unique and as such needs to consider its own specific situation in planning for the use of digital technology, including objectives and priorities.  
Schools should ensure that their Digital Learning Plan is monitored regularly and reviewed at least annually to ensure that it reflects progress made and any changes in priorities in terms of the use of digital technology in teaching, learning and assessment.

### **The following ‘school self-evaluation’ review questions should assist schools in the process:**

1. What is our school’s vision for the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment?
2. Does our digital learning plan reflect our school’s vision and current priorities for the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment?
3. What are our strengths in terms of the embedding of digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment?
4. What are our areas for development in terms of the embedding of digital technologies into teaching learning and assessment?
5. How is our digital learning plan aligned with whole-school planning and other policy areas? Can we identify achievable and time-bound priorities in our Digital Learning Plan?
6. What are the targets identified for this year as outlined in our school’s current digital learning plan? What technologies (i.e. ICT equipment and ICT Infrastructure) can support the school in achieving our vision?
7. What digital technology related advice and supports can we access to help us, and who is responsible for these?
8. How will our digital learning plan be monitored and reviewed?

### **3. Guidance for the Equipment and Infrastructure that may be purchased under the ICT Grants Scheme**

- Teaching Computing Devices: These may include desktop PCs, laptops, tablets or hybrid devices (to note, a direct drawdown mechanism for schools for the purchase of Desktop PCs, laptops and hybrid devices is available at [www.spu.ie](http://www.spu.ie) to make the process more streamlined and accessible. These can include equipment for the provision of DCG.
- Computing Devices for learners: These may include desktop PCs, laptops, tablets or hybrid devices. These can include equipment for the provision of DCG.
- Projectors including short throw or ultra-short throw, long throw, interactive, or interactive flat screens (IFS).



- Networking equipment (e.g. fixed and wireless networking, and including cabling, switches and installation).
- Cloud based tools and applications to support learning.
- Learning platforms – these are generally cloud based applications used to support the teaching and learning process.
- Local software, apps, tools and equipment to support learning, including differentiated and personalised learning.
- Other ICT Equipment: This can include relevant and fit for purpose ICT elements to be used to support teaching, learning and assessment. An indicative (though not exhaustive) list includes audio visual equipment such as still and video cameras, speakers, interactive presentation technologies, visualisers, and equipment including mobile laptop/tablet trollies, printers and a school server.
- The funding can also be utilised to provide for maintenance and repair of equipment purchased with this funding.

#### **Classrooms or other teaching areas:**

- Teachers in classrooms need to have access to a suitable teaching computer, and a digital projector or interactive flat screens (IFS)
- The choice of teaching computer is one for the school, but can include PCs, laptops, tablets, hybrid devices or combinations of these.

#### **Computer Rooms (if applicable):**

- Each computer room should be equipped with a teaching computer, student computers (desktop PCs, laptops, or tablets), printer and a digital projector or interactive flat screens (IFS).
- The choice of student computer is one for the school. Schools may use PCs, laptops, tablets or combination of these.

#### **Tender Procedures and Record keeping**

All purchases must be in compliance with Public Procurement Procedures. Existing ICT purchasing Frameworks should be engaged with and taken advantage of as they simplify the process of purchasing ICT equipment for schools. Instructions to assist schools in ordering using the Framework mechanism are contained in OGP Guides. Schools should contact the Schools Procurement Unit for further information and support as required at [www.spu.ie](http://www.spu.ie). Care should be taken to ensure that identical technical specifications are presented to all vendors at the time of request for written quotations.

The OGP, in consultation with the Schools Procurement Unit, the ETBI, and Oide-TiE, has established a direct drawdown mechanism for schools to





purchase Desktop and Laptop computers, and Hybrid Devices, meaning schools do not have to obtain quotes. Further information available at [www.spu.ie](http://www.spu.ie).

Information on current ICT Frameworks is available at [www.spu.ie](http://www.spu.ie). In order to access links on the OGP site, schools should register as buyers on the OGP Procurement website [www.ogp.gov.ie](http://www.ogp.gov.ie).

When purchasing equipment for which no ICT framework exists, schools are advised to contact the Schools Procurement Unit to seek further advice and information. Also, schools should refer to the OideTechnology in Education advice in respect of their technical requirements: <https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/technology-infrastructure/>, then seek best value for money by sourcing written quotes in accordance with public procurement rules.

**Schools should refer to the School Procurement Unit Guidance for Schools on Good Procurement Practices** document available on the SPU website [www.spu.ie](http://www.spu.ie) and the Office of Government Procurement information at [www.ogp.gov.ie](http://www.ogp.gov.ie).

### **Role of Board of Management**

The Board of Management must establish a set of procedures governing purchasing and should set out the arrangements for tendering and buying of goods, payment of invoices and maintenance of accounting records. These rules are clearly set out in the Guidance for Schools on Good Procurement Practices available to download from this link - <https://www.spu.ie/publications-2/procurement-guide/>.

### **Support and Information**

#### **Digital Learning Planning**

- Information on Digital Learning Planning for schools can be found at <https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/projects-initiatives/planning/> (and through the dedicated <https://www.dlplanning.ie/> website, dlplanning.ie which has been developed to support schools to embed digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment).
- If schools have specific queries in relation to Digital Learning Planning, they can raise them via <https://www.dlplanning.ie/contact/>

#### **ICT Guidance and information**

- ICT advice on suitable technologies can be found at <https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/technology-infrastructure/>.
- If schools have specific queries in relation to ICT advice these queries can be emailed to [ictadvice@oide.ie](mailto:ictadvice@oide.ie).





## Resources for teachers using digital technologies for teaching and learning

- The Department's official Portal for Irish education ([www.Scoilnet.ie](http://www.Scoilnet.ie)) provides in excess of 23,000 high quality digital resources aligned with the primary school curriculum and the post primary subject specifications which can be used by teachers for teaching and learning.
- Videos demonstrating good practice in the use of digital technologies to support a number of teaching approaches and methodologies are available at <https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/videos/> If you would like to share videos of good practice in the embedding of digital technologies in teaching and learning in your school, send a brief email outlining your practice to [technologyineducation@oide.ie](mailto:technologyineducation@oide.ie)
- Information, advice and free education resources addressing a range of internet safety issues and concerns, for young people, teachers and parents are available at <https://www.webwise.ie/>.

## TPL

- Information relating to professional development on the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment can be accessed at <https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/courses-practice/>, <https://teachercpd.ie/>, <https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/courses-practice/schoolsupport/> through your local education centre [www.esci.ie](http://www.esci.ie) and the relevant social media channels of these organisations
- Further professional development on the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment will be developed and made available over the period of the Strategy.

## Other websites

There are other websites that provide helpful advice and information on the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment:

- <http://ncse.ie>
- <http://www.ncca.ie/en/>

**End**