


INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) FOR INCLUSION

United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)

1. Policy Frameworks

This information was provided by Sharon Lawlor (Head of Curriculum Support Team, Department of Education).

1.1 Policies that impact on ICT for inclusion in the compulsory school sector

It is the Department of Education's policy to provide a fully supported set of ICT services to all schools in Northern Ireland. Schools can then use their delegated budget to supplement these services, by purchasing PCs, laptops or tablets, for example, if they have surplus funds to do so. Some schools have purchased new tablets, for example.

A new contract for the managed ICT service in schools, called Education Network Northern Ireland, commenced in April 2012 and the various elements are being delivered to schools on a phased basis. The new contract includes significant broadband enhancement, an Education Cloud environment (with new software, including a pupil portal called 'My-School' tailored to different age groups, a new learning platform and Wi-Fi) and access to an extensive range of educational resources.

The focus of our policy is to provide a set of ICT services that will support the delivery of the Revised Curriculum, which includes ICT as a cross-curricular theme.

1.2 Current policy on ICT for inclusion in relation to the main project themes

1.2 (i) ICT as a tool for promoting equity in educational opportunities.

Equality in all aspects of school life is very much central to our thinking here in Northern Ireland. Indeed, 'equality' is one of the reasons for ensuring a key set of ICT services is provided to every school.

1.2 (ii) Access to appropriate ICTs as an entitlement

All children in our grant-aided schools have, and will continue to have, access to key ICT services. This includes primary, post-primary and special schools.

1.2 (iii) Training of educational staff in the use of general and specialist ICTs

Starter training in key aspects of the new contract will be delivered to teaching staff in the next two years, but the new services will include the provision of online training as and when it is needed (so-called training 'nuggets'). The training programme will include training for ICT staff and eLearning staff.

1.2 (iv) The promotion of ICT research and development requiring a multi-stakeholder approach

The new ICT contract was put in place by C2k, an organisation which is part of our Education and Library Board services. C2k has just established a new group, the 'Innovation Forum', which will include industry leaders, with a focus on learning about how to improve future ICT provision in our schools.

1.2 (v) Data collection and monitoring in the use of ICT in inclusion

C2k collects significant amounts of data on the use of ICT in relation to both the old and new contract. For example, it monitors the use of the broadband service and schools will



be allowed to increase their bandwidth in the future, if they reach certain levels of use. This increased provision will be at no cost to the Department, as it is an integral part of the new contract.

1.3 Strategic plans for implementing policy on ICT for inclusion

All ICT services are provided to all grant-aided schools. The Department sets the policy and C2k takes it forward. C2k involved schools in the development of the Statement of Requirements which drove the latest contract. Schools can add to the C2k provision and, if they wish, they can put in their own non-C2k services, although they must pay for the latter out of their own budget.

1.4 Monitoring and evaluation of policies or strategic plans relating to ICT for inclusion

C2k keeps records of use across the system and, where necessary, expands to meet needs, e.g. out-of-school providers have recently got access to ICT in order to maintain an inclusive approach and access to the curriculum.

1.5 Main policy developments in ICT for Inclusion that have taken place since 2000

Since 2000, C2k has taken forward and implemented a number of key contracts to put in place an extensive set of ICT services.

1.6 Current issues in relation to ICT for Inclusion

Moving towards an eLearning environment within our Area Learning Communities (ALCs). The Education Network contract provides a virtual learning environment that can support collaboration across all sectors and ALCs. There is also a central resource area, called Equella, where resources can be shared within a school, across several schools or across the Northern Ireland education sector. These will facilitate inclusion.

1.7 Important short and long-term developments in ICT for Inclusion

Improved connectivity across schools and sectors, including special and mainstream.

2. Country Practice

This information was provided by Sharon Lawlor (Head of Curriculum Support Team, Department of Education).

2.1 Main developments in practice in ICT for Inclusion since 2000 in relation to the main project themes

2.1 (i) ICT as a tool for promoting equity in educational opportunities

ICT is now part of the Revised Curriculum and is a cross-curricular theme. ICT is used much more in the classroom nowadays than in 2000. We use ICT for key assessments in the classroom (called Computer-Based Assessments).

2.1 (ii) Access to appropriate ICTs as an entitlement

The introduction of intuitive software helps all learners. C2k offers a range of accessibility options in both the current and new service.

2.1 (iii) Training of educational staff in the use of general and specialist ICT

The 2010-12 *Chief Inspector's Report* found wide variations in the use of ICT: despite significant investment, it remains a priority area for improvement.



2.1 (iv) The promotion of ICT research and development requiring a multi-stakeholder approach

ICT use in the special school sector is of a high quality and is used very well to promote learning and access to the curriculum.

2.1 (v) Data collection and monitoring in the use of ICT for inclusion

The recently published *Chief Inspector's Report* available on the Department of Education and Education and Training Inspectorate websites gives full details.

2.2 ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

2.2 (i) Country-based networks to support teachers in using ICT to promote inclusive learning

ICT provides a common platform of access to the curriculum and to ICT accreditation. It is used to ensure that lessons enhance the learning of all pupils, particularly those with a stronger visual learning style.

2.2 (ii) Initial teacher education in using ICT to promote inclusive learning

It is used extensively in initial teacher education, both as a tool and for presentation and display purposes; shared discussion platforms on Special Educational Needs (SEN) are evident and common.

2.2 (iii) Practical support in classrooms to help teachers' use of ICT to promote inclusive learning

ICT is evaluated in all inspections, as considerable investment has been made in this area and a training programme is ongoing.

2.2 (iv) Important information sources about new developments, hardware and software products and ideas for using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

C2k supports schools in this development.

The Department has developed a Resource File for SEN in mainstream education and this is online and available to all schools. It includes a number of disseminated conferences which were filmed and put online with advisory support from a dedicated ICT staff member.

Some special and mainstream schools are carrying out joint learning activities for pupils in both sectors, using ICT as the medium for shared learning.

2.3 Current obstacles to using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

Realising the potential and need for this area to be prioritised at a whole-schools level to support teaching and learning rather than as a research tool distinct from learning/teaching.

2.4 Factors that support using ICT to promote learning in inclusive settings

Access to training and ongoing support at a whole-school level.

eLearning and discussion platforms to discuss and share common issues.

Use of ICT to support differentiated teaching and individual access to learning.



2.5 Perceived short and long-term developments that will have an impact on ICT for Inclusion practice

Ongoing training and access to hardware and software; the use of iPads is growing and is well used to include learners of all abilities.