



Circular 0077/2020

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

## **GRANT SCHEME FOR ICT Infrastructure – 2020/2021 SCHOOL YEAR**

### **Introduction and Purpose**

As part of the implementation of the *Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 Enhancing Teaching Learning and Assessment*, grant funding of €210m for ICT Infrastructure will be distributed to schools over the five years of the Strategy. €160m has issued over the lifetime of the strategy to date, with this representing the final tranche of funding.

€40m is issuing now in the form of a grant payment to all eligible schools.

A further €10m in grant funding is also issuing now, based on criteria outlined below.

Information on the background to this scheme for the €40m, and the €10m additional funding, the rates and eligibility for this funding, is set out below. Both the €40m grant and the €10m additional funding element will be processed as one payment issued to school bank accounts. Schools do not have to apply for this grant funding.

Schools can prioritise spending plans for this grant, if required, to address ICT needs identified in the context of the current public health crisis. This can include the purchase of ICT devices that can be shared with students who do not have access to devices to enable the continuity of learning during the public health crisis.

The Department recently issued [Circular 0074/2020](#), requiring schools to put in place a communication and learning platform that supports schools to respond in the event of a partial or full school closure in the future. This funding can be utilised to support the implementation of the requirements of that circular.

### **Digital Strategy for Schools**

The Department's policy to achieve the embedding of digital technologies in Education is outlined in the [Digital Strategy for Schools 2015 to 2020 Enhancing Teaching Learning and Assessment](#), published in October 2015.

This Strategy sets out a clear vision that is focussed on realising the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students by helping them become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens who participate fully in society and the economy.

The Strategy sets out a plan to embed the use of Digital Technologies in teaching, learning and assessment through an ambitious programme of work for the period 2015 - 2020 across a number of headings:



- Theme 1: Teaching, Learning and Assessment Using ICT
- Theme 2: Teacher Professional Learning
- Theme 3: Leadership, Research and Policy
- Theme 4: ICT Infrastructure

A series of actions and targets under each theme has been developed to progress the embedding of digital technologies over the lifetime of the Strategy. Key stakeholders including the Department and its agencies, Teacher Education providers, school communities and teachers have particular responsibilities to progress these actions.

The provision of funding to support the updating and renewal of school ICT infrastructure is one of the priority actions.

### **Priority Actions under the Strategy**

Priority actions in progress at the moment include

- A Digital Learning Framework is available to help teachers and school leaders to embed digital technologies into teaching, learning and leadership and management practices. The DLF complements the School Self Evaluation (SEF) process and supports curriculum reform. Supports to assist schools in the implementation of the DLF continues to be available from the PDST. Further information is available at

<https://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Planning/>

- As provided for under the Digital Strategy, it is Department policy that all revised and new curricular specifications include clear statements of learning that focus on developing digital learning skills and the use of digital technologies in achieving learner outcomes.
- Digital Learning Planning Guidelines are also available to assist schools in the development of their Digital Learning Plans and in the implementation of the DLF. More information is available at [www.dlplanning.ie](http://www.dlplanning.ie)
- Information, guidance and CPD opportunities is made available to schools by the PDST (PDST-TIE) and other support services as appropriate.

### **Features of the Grant Scheme**

- The scheme took a five year approach, based on the €210m made available over the period. This approach facilitates multi-annual planning by schools.
- Each school must have a Digital Learning Plan, based on a whole school approach and taking account of its context and circumstances. The plan will outline the vision of the school for the embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment and incorporate targets and priorities for improvement and development.
- The Digital Learning Plan should be reviewed and updated, at least annually, and will guide the use of the grant funding to embed digital technologies in a phased and coherent approach to improve learning outcomes for students.



- Funding can be used for the purchase of teaching computers, student shared computers, projectors, networking equipment, cloud based tools, learning platforms, software and education applications, other equipment designed to support the teaching and learning in the school. In the context of the current COVID-19 public health crisis, schools can prioritise this funding to support efforts for continuity of learning. Further information concerning items that can be purchased with this funding is contained in the appendix.
- The funding can assist schools in the implementation of STEM subjects, and of new and revised subject specifications at Junior and Senior Cycle, and the changes to the primary curriculum, where the use of digital technologies enables the delivery of same.
- 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 Special and DEIS schools and special classes
- All students following primary and post-primary programmes reckon for per capita purposes in recognised primary, special and post-primary schools
- Fee charging schools receive 50% of the rate applying to schools in the free education scheme.
- All schools which opened prior to the 2017 calendar year, or are in schools buildings built prior to the 2017 calendar year, will be eligible for this funding.
- 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 the Appendix.
- 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.

### **Additional Information/Queries**

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

FAQs on the scheme will be available on the PDST-Technology in Education website, and will be regularly updated based on queries and feedback from schools.

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

Chris Kelly  
Principal Officer  
Teacher Education Policy – Digital

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## APPENDIX A:

### GRANT SCHEME FOR ICT INFRASTRUCTURE– 2020/2021 SCHOOL YEAR

#### **1. Automatic Issue of €50 ICT Grant funding**

- 1) This grant 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 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. This *Appendix* contains details of the nature of records to be maintained. 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: <https://govacc.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/DPER-Circular-13-14-Guidance-Note-and-Reporting-Requirements-1.pdf>.

#### **Grant Rates Information and criteria applying to €40m grant funding**

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. €30.25 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. €36.30 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. €33.28 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. €43.26 per student on the rolls on the 30th September of the year prior to the issue of the grant in post-primary schools.
  - e. €47.58 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. €21.63 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.



3. All schools which opened prior to the 2017 calendar year, or are in buildings built prior to the 2017 calendar year, will be eligible for this funding.

### **Grant Rates Information and criteria applying to €10m grant funding**

A portion of the €50m funding, €10m, will be distributed in a lump sum based on school size, with €3m to issue to primary schools, and €7m to issue to post-primary schools. All recognised primary and special schools will receive this funding with no exclusions. All Post-primary schools in the free education scheme, will receive this funding in relation to the students enrolled and undertaking post-primary programmes. The funding will issue based on school size, as outlined in the below tables:

#### **: Post-Primary**

<b>Enrolment ranges</b>	<b>Non-DEIS rate</b>	<b>DEIS Rate</b>
≤249	<b>€2,600</b>	<b>€2,900</b>
250-499	<b>€7,100</b>	<b>€7,900</b>
500-749	<b>€13,250</b>	<b>€14,600</b>
750 plus	<b>€17,300</b>	<b>€19,100</b>

#### **Primary and special primary schools**

<b>Enrolment Ranges</b>	<b>Non-DEIS rate</b>	<b>DEIS Rate</b>
≤99	<b>€550</b>	<b>€600</b>
100-249	<b>€950</b>	<b>€1,000</b>
250-499	<b>€1,400</b>	<b>€1,500</b>
500-749	<b>€1,900</b>	<b>€2,100</b>
750 plus	<b>€2,700</b>	<b>€3,000</b>

This funding is particularly focussed on assisting schools to address ICT needs identified in the context of the current public health crisis. This can include the purchase of ICT devices that can be shared with students who do not have access to devices, essential learning platforms and other ICT infrastructure to support the provision of remote learning. Second level schools are asked to focus on state examination students who may not have access to devices in the first instance. All devices purchased remain the property of the school and schools are advised to put in place an agreement with students/parents/teachers receiving these devices to provide for the use of the device for a stated period, and to make arrangements for the return of those devices.

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

The Digital Strategy for Schools (2015-2020) highlights the vision for the embedding of digital technologies in Irish schools 'to realise the potential of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning and assessment so that Ireland's young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens to participate fully in society and the



economy'. It also highlights the role of ICT infrastructure in supporting teaching, learning and assessment practices in schools.

- Every school is unique and as such needs to consider its own specific situation, including objectives and priorities.
- Schools should first review their current teaching, learning and assessment objectives.
- The Digital Learning Plan (previously eLearning Plan) should consider how the school can strategically use the funding, over the 5 years in a phased and coherent approach to incrementally improve learning outcomes for students.
- Having considered the longer term objectives over 5 years, they should then consider the relevant stage of implementing their Digital Learning Plan for their current year.

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

1. How successfully are digital technologies integrated into teaching, learning and assessment in our school?
2. What are our strengths in terms of the integration of digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment?
3. What are our areas for development in terms of the integration of digital technologies into teaching learning and assessment?
4. Does our school have a vision for the use of digital technologies as part of teaching, learning and assessment?
5. Have we created a Digital Learning Plan?
6. Can our Digital Learning Plan be aligned to our other teaching and learning priority areas/policy initiatives?
7. Can we break the Digital Learning Plan into achievable and time-bound priorities?
8. What are the priorities in the current year against the overall Plan?
9. What actions do we need to take to implement those priorities?
10. What technologies (i.e., ICT equipment and ICT Infrastructure) can support the school in achieving our vision?
11. What digital technology related advice and supports can we access to help us?

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

- Teaching Computers: 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.
- Shared Student Computers: 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 or 'apps' to support 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.

#### **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 PDST-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). Information on the Framework of Providers of Wireless Networking for schools, can be found at <http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Technology/Purchasing-Frameworks/>,



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 PDST Technology in Education advice sheets in respect of their technical requirements: <http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Technology>, 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 [www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/planning](http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/planning) (and through the dedicated [www.dlplanning.ie](http://www.dlplanning.ie) website 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://dlplanning.ie/contact/>

### **ICT Guidance and information**

- ICT advice on suitable technologies can be found at [www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/technology](http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/technology).
- If schools have specific queries in relation to ICT advice these queries can be emailed to [ictadvice@pdst.ie](mailto:ictadvice@pdst.ie).

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

- The Department's official Portal for Irish education (**Scoilnet.ie**) provides in excess of 21,000 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.
- Curated content, developed by PDST, to support schools and teachers engaged in distance learning is available at <https://www.pdst.ie/distancelearning>
- Videos demonstrating good practice in the use of digital technologies to support a number of teaching approaches and methodologies are available at <http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Good-Practice/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@pdst.ie](mailto:technologyineducation@pdst.ie)

## CPD

- Information relating to professional development on the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment <http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Training/> and through your local education centre <http://www.ateci.ie/education-centres.html> and the relevant social media channels of these organisations
- Further professional development programmes on the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment will be developed 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://www.sess.ie/>
- <http://www.nbss.ie/>
- <http://www.jct.ie> and [www.juniorcycle.ie](http://www.juniorcycle.ie)
- <http://www.ncca.ie/en/>
- <https://teachercpd.ie/>
- <https://dlplanning.ie/>
- <http://pdst.ie>
- <http://www.ateci.ie/education-centres.html>
- <https://www.webwise.ie/> - information, advice and free education resources addressing a range of internet safety issues and concerns, for young people, teachers and parents.

**End**