

Policy on Information and Communication Technology

Introduction

This policy was formulated in August 2012 and ratified by the Board of management in September 2012.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Our ethos statement expresses the desire that each child should learn and achieve to the best of his/her ability. We believe that ICT has significant role to play in ensuring that each child does so. Our commitment is based on our vision of ICT as a vital tool of learning and teaching, rather than as an end in itself. We see ICT as enabling children and teachers to engage with the curriculum in a deep, child-centred and creative way, for example:

1. Using high-quality interactive CD Roms or Internet-provided interactive activities enables deep learning in all areas of the curriculum.
2. Word-processing packages encourage the Draft-Edit-Publish approach to both creative and functional writing. This keeps the child in control of his/her own creative effort throughout the process and enables him/her to maximise creative potential.
3. Internet research enables a child-centred learning in a wide variety of topics across the curriculum.
4. Engagement with problem-solving software, e.g. *Maths Circus*, encourages the development of concepts in various curricular areas while also stimulating higher-order levels of talk and discussion.
5. The use of interactive white board allows teachers to access a wide variety of resources on the internet and CD Roms, and to prepare their own material, all of which can be shown quickly and easily to the whole class. This facilitates professional lesson preparation and presentation, and stimulates whole-class discussion.
6. It also allows the children to interact with the on-screen resources in a child-friendly way. They are able to touch the screen and manipulate text and images, thus engaging with the curriculum at a deep level.
7. We hope to develop a school website which provides an opportunity for teachers and students to publish and celebrate their work.

Expected Skill and Learning Outcomes for ICT at each Class Level

Junior Infants

- Become familiar with vocabulary related to ICT: mouse, screen, monitor, hard drive, keyboard, digital camera
- Learn to use the mouse
- Navigate software by entering, exiting, closing, choosing options, clicking, double clicking and dragging mouse
- Navigate the interactive whiteboard with their hands

Senior Infants

- Learn to use a keyboard and type their name
- Learn to operate the radio and CD player
- Use and Navigate a variety of software packages, currently including Maths Circus, Tizzy's Toybox, Starfall, Sesame Street, Superspell, Wordshark, Muppets and Brainfun
- Use the digital camera to take photos for clay animation projects
- Have many opportunities to engage with the interactive whiteboard

Suitable software for Junior and Senior Infants that we hope to purchase in the school:

- Maths Circus
- Tizzy's Toybox
- Starfall
- Sesame Street
- Superspell
- Wordshark
- Muppets
- Brainfun

Junior Classes (1st & 2nd):

As for infant classes, plus:

- Learn to use Microsoft Word to draft, edit and publish creative writing, using upper and lower case letters, full stops, commas, and question and exclamation marks, using the spacebar, the return, shift and caps lock keys, highlighting text and deleting, changing font, adjusting font size and using the Bold, Italic and Underline tools
- Learn to use software to engage in real learning, largely using the same software as for infants
- Log on to educational websites such as BBC and channel 4 to explore content, play interactive games and search for information at an age-appropriate level. Sites to be chosen by the teacher and placed in favourites list
- Learn to use the digital camera under close supervision to document work/educational experiences
- Continue to use interactive whiteboard activities.

Middle Classes (3rd & 4th)

As for Junior classes, plus:

- Develop further use of Microsoft Word tools such as WordArt, Copy and Paste, Spell-check, Justify/Centre/Align Left, Print
- Publish creative writing and project work on the school website
- Learn to create folders, store and file work in different locations and retrieve it when necessary
- Learn to use an Internet browser to search for information

- Use Internet interactive learning sites, e.g. Brainpop, Mr Don, to deepen and enhance learning across the curriculum
- Use Microsoft Paint to create art work
- Become familiar with the Technic Lego through use of the introductory “Yellow boxes”
- Participate in at least one specific ICT project per year, e.g. Photostory, Clay animation, Webcasting, Lego Mindstorms, if possible in conjunction with Liberties Learning Initiative/ The Digital Hub.

Senior Classes (5th and 6th)

As for middle classes, plus:

- Learn to exploit further features of Microsoft Word such as choosing different fonts, changing colours, using text boxes, creating columns and simple tables etc.
- Learn to copy and paste from one file to another
- Gain further experience with the Lego Mindstorms materials and learn to use the programming tools associated with it.
- Learn to use Scratch animation software
- Learn to use the school digital video camera
- Contribute reports to the school website
- Explore more advanced educational websites
- Learn about safety on the internet, especially with regard to social networking sites

Software we hope to purchase for Middle and Senior Classes Includes:

- Where in the world is Carmen San Diego?
- Where in Time is Carmen San Diego?
- Maths Circus
- Scratch Animation
- Lego Mindstorms
- Frames (Photostory)
- Claymation
- A wide variety of stand-alone CD Roms covering various areas of the curriculum.

Safety, Security and Behaviour Issues

- With regard to the Internet an Acceptable use policy has been in place for many years and has served the school well. Children only use computers while supervised and the school uses the School’s broadband service, which has a stringent “net nanny”. Students are not permitted to access social networking or shopping sites
- The computer trolleys are stored in a secure cupboard with a combination lock whose code is only known by the teachers in the school. Teachers must ensure that computers are safely locked away after use
- The computers are numbered and each child is assigned a specific computer for his/her own use at the start of each academic year. This ensures easy traceability if there is damage to a computer or inappropriate use

- Eating and drinking while using the computer are forbidden, and desk space should be tidy with no food, liquid or other items, (Clay, glue etc.) present while the computer is being used
- Other ICT equipment such as digital cameras may only be used under supervision
- ICT equipment may not be removed from the school except with the permission of the Board of Management. Exception: Digital cameras may be taken on school trips

The Role of the ICT Co-ordinator

The staff selected Liv Heneghan to be the ICT co-ordinator. The role involves:

1. researching availability and price of all ICT equipment, hardware and software, before purchasing
2. Keeping a record of equipment purchased
3. Arranging for the safe storage of the equipment
4. Time-tabling access to the class set of notebook computers
5. Ensuring that all staff are fully aware of the security and behaviour protocols with regard to ICT equipment

Olivia Kerrigan has been given the duty of researching and setting up a school website

Special Educational Needs

As a school we are deeply committed to providing the best possible learning experiences for the children with special educational needs. ICT has an important role to play in this commitment, as it facilitates deep engagement with the curriculum and caters for a variety of learning styles. Desk-Top Computers are available in the Special Education Class, Resource and Learning support rooms, and children are facilitated to use them extensively, as well as having access to the notebook computers, Lego technology, interactive whiteboards etc., when integrated in the mainstream classes. The Board of Management is happy to fund the purchase of special software or other equipment as necessary. Currently there is no child enrolled in the school who requires the aid of assistive technology, but applications would be made for grants in this area if the need arises.

Staff Development

The current members of staff have received extensive training on the use and educational application of ICT, through initial teacher training, summer courses, evening classes in the local Education centre and day-release seminars provided by the Liberties Learning Initiative. The Board of Management grant-aids staff professional development in this area as in many others. In addition, the staff members regularly contribute to each other's professional development in ICT through advice, demonstration and informal discussion. At a recent staff meeting it was agreed that some time from staff meetings could be devoted to staff members demonstrating aspects of their ICT expertise.

Review of ICT Policy

As ICT is such a valuable tool for learning and curriculum implementation, its use is continuously under review by the teaching staff. Matters such as the website, new software, Digital Hub projects, time-tabling, or difficulties with the equipment are discussed at almost every staff meeting.

A formal review and updating of the policy will be undertaken every year by the staff. The aim of this review will be to ensure that the potential for ICT is maximised in the school and that the considerable funds invested are not wasted. The Board of Management will discuss the outcome of such reviews and ratify them as it sees fit.