Scoil Ursula

■ Title
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY POLICY

■ Introductory Statement

Scoil Ursula ICT Team met in November, 2013 to update this policy in preparation for our application for a 'Digitals Schools of Distinction Award' in 2014. It was adapted to the current format in accordance with the guidelines of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Technology in Education and is in line with current best practice and guidelines. The Draft Policy was published on the School Website from December 11th to January 1st and submissions invited from Board of Management (BOM) Members, Staff & Parents. These were incorporated into the final draft which was ratified by the BOM on the _____.

■ Rationale

Information & Communications Technology (ICT) will be used within the framework of an integrated and cross-curricular approach, with an awareness of our multi-cultural society. Management and teachers are aware that ICT should not be used for its own sake, but should be used to provide children with the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning and provide opportunities for them, to decide when it is appropriate to use ICT in their work. It is important that pupils are made aware of the ways computerised information can be made to work for them. They must also gain insight into the ways that computers can intrude on our private lives.

■ Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

It is our wish to provide a learning environment, which is most conducive to the academic, social, physical, psychological and moral development of the children under our care. To this end three general aims permeate our educational processes:

(1) To enable the children to live full lives as children.
(2) to equip them to avail themselves of further education.
(3) to prepare them to live full and useful lives as adults.

In the light of these aims our ICT Policy emphasises the need to facilitate the full development of children to prepare them to play a full role in society into the future both from a work perspective but also in terms of lifestyle. Technology is playing an increasingly essential role in the society of today and this will continue apace into the future. It behoves us as a school to do all we can to equip our pupils with the skills they will need to play a full and active role as citizens of this country and of the wider world.

■ Aims

- To give children regardless of race, gender or disability, confidence in the use of ICT.
- To use ICT to enhance teaching and learning and the delivery of curricular objectives.
- Provide opportunities to develop specific ICT skills such as keyboard and typing skills, mouse control and internet skills.
- Enable the children to become familiar with other ICT hardware available in the school.
- That pupils will understand the capabilities and limitations of ICT and the implications and consequences of ICT use.

■ Content of the Policy

Communication
Microsoft Word, Open Office, Creative Writer, Clicker 5, Power Point and Lynx enable the children to present their work in an attractive way, regardless of handwriting ability. Word-processing enhances the children's self esteem, as it allows them to re-draft their work (amending, adjusting and altering work). It is an application, which will lend itself to any topic.

Classroom Management
Pupils are exposed to educational websites and software as it is integrated into the teaching and learning process. Using a wireless mouse and or Interactive Whiteboard pupils will become familiar with navigating specific software and websites. During station teaching groups of children will listen to relevant educational stories using headphones and a laptop. Pupils will be encouraged to use the school cameras to enhance their learning. We aim to ensure that each child is exposed to the ICT hardware in the classroom.

ICT Supporting the Curriculum
ICT has been integrated into curricular areas in a supporting manner using the data projector and IWB with emphasis on project work in English, Maths and SESE among others.

Hardware in the school
Each classroom has a laptop, projector and Interactive White Board. Some classes use a wireless mouse as well. The focus is now being placed on purchasing a set of six tablets to be rotated around the school and to make certain areas of the school wi-fi enabled. The school has a computer room which is used by teachers on a timetabled basis. There are 18 computers for pupils and a teacher's computer in the room. Every classroom is connected to a networked copier/printer. We have two, one in the Cookery Room serving the Senior Classes and one in the Junior Block for the Junior Classes. The school also has a server, which stores folders and files for general use throughout the school. Teachers can back up their files to the server and school documents such as resources and photographs are stored there and are available for use by all teachers. School Administration files are also backed up to the server.

Websites
Teachers have built up an invaluable bank of appropriate educational websites some of which are listed on the server. We are beginning to use Delicious to bookmark and share relevant websites. Teachers regularly share good quality websites through word of mouth also. The use of websites has been integrated into teaching and learning across all subjects. Pupils watch suitable educational programs on rainy days during lunch regularly.

Software

The Jolly Phonics software is the most commonly used software in the junior block. Open office is used in the computer room. Word shark is available in the school however the move is towards use of relevant websites.

Learning Support SEN

ICT equipment is used for record keeping and planning as an administrative function. Copies of standardized test results are kept on the server. The Micra-T software is used when collating data on standardized testing.

ICT is used as an extra support for the teaching of pupils with SEN both in the classroom and Learning Support room and is also used to consolidate previous teaching and learning. All three learning support rooms have a projector and laptop. One of the rooms has an interactive whiteboard the others use a wireless mouse. Some pupils have access to an i-Pad, which is monitored by SNAs. Two pupils have Opti-Verso technology and Zoom Text software. Zoom Text is in operation on a machine in the computer room.

Exceptionally Able Children

ICT is used as an extra support for exceptionally able pupils in the computer room in order to maintain interest and extend their learning.

Internet Use

An Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) has been drawn up. New parents are given opportunity to read and sign the school AUP as part of the enrolment process. The Internet is currently used as a resource for teachers in accessing information and communicating with outside agencies. The internet is also used by children for project work, educational websites and information gathering under the supervision of a teacher. The issue of internet safety is continually monitored. 'Strict filtering settings' have been selected in the Google preferences for each machine.

School Website

The content of the school website varies from children's work and projects to copies of the school newsletter and an outline of the school calendar. In the past one teacher updated the website on a regular basis. Access has now been extended to the other members of the ICT Team. Within the school website are class galleries and blogs which individual teachers have access to update.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Staff training in the area of ICT is available by the supplier of the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB), the ICT team and the Education Centre. However peer tutoring being the most effective method where teachers with a query / difficulty, ask a staff member for advice and assistance. Teachers attend courses in the Sligo Education Centre as they deem necessary. Teachers avail of summer courses in ICT as they feel necessary. Teachers are encouraged to share new knowledge at staff meetings. The list of CPD courses on offer in the local Education Centre, is on display in the staff room. Teachers discuss courses after attending them. The ICT Committee will give teachers an opportunity annually to respond to a questionnaire about present skills and future needs.

Health and Safety

Children are instructed in safe shut down practices. Teachers are reminded to turn off machines on a daily basis. The ICT co-ordinator advises teachers with regard to organizing wires and cables in a safe trip free manner. Pupils with Opti-Verso technology are encouraged to have a mat covering the cables running from the wall to their desks. Faulty pieces of technology are removed and replaced as is necessary. Teachers are aware of the need to balance lighting in the classroom to reduce glare using blinds / turning lights off. Pupils' eyesight needs to be protected.

Collaboration
Recent developments in ICT in the school have lent themselves to greater collaboration both within the school and with parents and other agencies outside the school. We have rolled out Google Apps for all teachers and staff who now have their own Gmail address for school use, access to private and public school calendars and access to cloud storage through Google Drive. In addition to this an Information Management System called Aladdin has been put in place to facilitate greater information sharing and communication between all staff members. Documents and records relating to all children are now stored on a central system that is accessible to all staff members dealing with them. It is hoped that Google Apps will be further integrated across the school and that staff will become more comfortable using it following CPD for staff.

Social Media
The school operates both Twitter and Facebook accounts in order to further the reach of the school website to parents and the wider school community. We also use a social bookmarking site to share bookmarks among staff members. Use of the school Twitter and Facebook accounts are strictly limited to teachers and staff. Class teachers may set up a social media account (e.g.: Twitter) for their particular class. While pupils may be allowed to use the account in an appropriate manner in school it must always remain under the control of the teacher.
In the operation of the school Facebook account it has come to the attention of the school that a number of pupils have liked the school page. This is inappropriate as Facebook have a minimum age of 13 in order to set up an account. Therefore as a responsible web and social media user the school will report any accounts of under age pupils to Facebook. This will happen after an initial warning to the pupil and parents concerned.
Misuse of social media by pupils or staff will be dealt with by the Principal or Board of Management.

Maintenance
Each teacher is responsible for reporting faults to the ICT co-ordinator by text, email or word of mouth. General maintenance and minor repairs are dealt with as they arise by the ICT team. Our ICT technician, Graham Mc Mullen, is called in for more serious technical issues.

Storage and Security
An inventory of hardware within the school has been undertaken previously and is due to be updated once tablets are purchased. Laptops are securely stored in locked filing cabinets or brought home at the end of each day.

Budget and Purchasing
Plans for raising additional finance for the purchasing of further ICT hardware are discussed at Board level as is necessary. The ICT team discuss and decide how to spend money available to the school through various grants.

■ Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Principal

The principal will have overall responsibility for ICT in the school. He will be part of the ICT team, which will debate the relevant ICT requirements of the school.

The role of the ICT Co-ordinator

The ICT Co-ordinator Lorna McHugh has a Post of Responsibility for ICT. This involves co-ordinating with the technician with regard to technical faults across the school, working with the principal with regard to the budget and purchasing of ICT hardware, supporting teachers with regard to the incorporation of ICT into the Teaching and Learning experience, overseeing maintenance and upkeep of the computer room, sourcing and pricing new technology, and taking minutes at the ICT planning meetings.

The Role of the ICT Committee

The ICT Team consists of three members: Tony Gallagher, Lorna McHugh and Roy Mitchell. They meet each term or twice per term as is necessary to discuss all issues regarding ICT in Scoil Ursula. Decisions made at ICT Team meetings are then brought to the attention of staff members through email / text / Aladdin notice board or staff meetings. Teachers' opinions and needs are respected and taken on board with regard to ICT in Scoil Ursula. When important documents are ready to be ratified they are presented to staff members first and then brought to the Board of Management to be ratified. Mr. Roy Mitchell is the third member of the ICT team. He has set up a detailed school website with various blogs incorporated into it. He brings vitality and technical knowhow to team meetings. He also oversees the operation of the Aladdin school management software.

The Role of the Class Teachers.

The class teacher's role is to provide opportunities for the teaching and learning of ICT skills and integration of the same into other curricular areas. The ICT team will encourage, advise and support teachers with regard to ICT.

The Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

SNA's (where possible) support pupils that they work with, with regard to the use of ICT. This is particularly relevant with regard to pupils with visual impairment and the use of Opti-Verso technology and zoom text. One computer in the computer room has zoom text installed.

■ Success Criteria

Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our aims.

■ Timeframe for Implementation

The policy is implemented from January 2014

■ Timeframe for Review

This policy will be reviewed in Autumn 2014.

■ Responsibility for Review

The ICT Team will be responsible for reviewing the policy.

■ Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the _____ of _____.

Signed: _____, (Chairperson, BOM)

Scoil Ursula does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and is available to the wider school community through the parents' representatives on the BOM. All Scoil Ursula policies are available for inspection in the school and on the Scoil Ursula Website www.scoilursula.com