Circular 0014/2026

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 committed to in the National Development Plan 2021-2030, providing continuity of funding following the €210m that issued to schools to support the previous strategy. Grant funding of €135m from the NDP commitment of €200m has issued to schools under the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027, including €35m that issued in May 2025.

€35m will issue in January 2026, in the form of a grant payment to all eligible schools.

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

As outlined in previous circulars for Digital Strategy ICT Grant Funding, schools are required to have Digital Learning Plans in place. The digital learning plan is a strategic document designed to guide and enhance the embedding of digital technology into teaching, learning, and assessment practices. Developed in line with the digital learning framework it assists schools in identifying needs and setting priorities as part of the school improvement process, including ICT infrastructure and professional learning and which underpin the use of the ICT grant funding provided. The digital learning plans enhance this support and inform training and support needs. Future issues of grant funding for ICT infrastructure may require submission of these Plans, and it is intended to select a small representative sample of schools to provide their digital learning plans for review following this grant issue. The intention of the review will be to inform how best to assist schools in their digital learning planning, and to ensure the funding is being used effectively and appropriately. The selected schools will be contacted in due course and supported to provide their digital learning plans. Further information on Digital Learning Planning is provided below.

In addition, and as part of a whole-school approach to digital learning, schools are required to have an up-to-date Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in place.

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Address Line 1, Address Line 2, County, PostCode
T +353 1 234 5678 | name@department.gov.ie
www.department.gov.ie

Further details on AUP requirements, including timelines, supports and review arrangements, are set out later in this document.

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,](#) and its associated Implementation Plan.

The Strategy aims to realise the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students so that all learners have the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills they need to successfully navigate an ever-evolving digital world.

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.
- Each school is required to have an up-to-date Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in place by the end of February 2026. An AUP is a core school policy that sets out expectations for the safe, acceptable, and responsible use of the internet and digital technologies, including AI. Following the issue of this grant, a small, representative sample of schools will be selected to submit their AUP for review.
- Each school must have website accessibility statement as required under EU Web Accessibility Directive (WAD), transposed into Irish law through S.I. 358/2020. Support for schools to fulfill this requirement can be found on the National Disability Authority website, as they are the body responsible for the oversight and implementation of the directive. https://nda.ie/monitoring/eu-web-accessibility-directive.

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Funding:

- Funding must be used for ICT infrastructure only, and can include but is not limited to, teaching devices, devices for learners, including shared devices, projectors, interactive panels, 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 the appendices.
- Funding can also be used to provide digital technologies to support differentiated and personalised learning.
- The funding can also be used to 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.
- The funding can be used for cybersecurity solutions.
- A standard funding formula incorporating both a flat rate lump sum and a per capita amount for each pupil/student enrolled has been used to calculate the grant due to each school.
- An enhanced per capita rate applies to pupils/students enrolled in DEIS and Special schools and to pupils in mainstream special class primary settings.
- All pupils/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 a 50% rate.
- The scheme will be supported by the provision of technical and procurement guidance and information for schools and their leaders, found in the appendices.
- Schools are required to use established public procurement arrangements. Further information on procurement can be found in the appendices.
- Schools should support equitable access to ICT infrastructure among all students, so that they can fully engage with the use of digital technologies envisaged in the school's digital learning plan. This can include the provision of loan schemes for devices for example.
- 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.

<u>Additional Information/Queries</u>
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.

Maurice Boland
Principal Officer
Digital Policy for Schools
January 2026

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Appendix 1

1. Digital Strategy for Schools and related supports.

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.

Questions to assist schools in the planning process:

The digital learning planning process is aligned to the school self-evaluation process. SSE is based on a reflective analysis of what is working well in a school and what can be improved on. Whether focusing on national or school-specific priorities, the fundamental questions for a school continue to be:

- How well are we doing? How do we know?
- What are our strengths? How can we build on our strengths?
- What are our areas for improvement?
- How can we improve?

The questions below are intended to guide schools in examining how they address the SSE process as set out above in their digital learning planning.

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?
9. How can the voice of the learner be captured in our digital learning planning?
10. How can digital learning planning involve and support parental engagement?

The questions below are not for inclusion in the digital learning plan, however schools should address these in considering their approach and requirements in expending the ICT Grant funding:

1. What work has been done to address cybersecurity? What are the plans to address these requirements? (Advice available on the Oide Technology in Education website – see Appendix 4).
2. Have the requirements of the website and app accessibility directive, outlined at https://nda.ie/monitoring/eu-web-accessibility-directive, been addressed? What are the plans in place to be compliant with these requirements? (E.g. engaging with the NDA to obtain support.)
3. Have the requirements to have an AUP been met? (Advice available on Oide Technology in Education website, (AUP and AI - Oide Technology in Education).

Appendix 2

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, and laptops is available at 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.

Classroom Display & Presentation Technologies:

- Projectors including short throw or ultra-short throw, long throw, interactive, or interactive flat panels (IFPs).

Network & Infrastructure:

- Networking equipment (e.g. fixed and wireless networking, and including cabling, switches and installation).

Software, Platforms & Cloud Services:

- 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 & Supporting 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, and printers.
- Funding may also be used for school cybersecurity solutions, as well as the maintenance and repair of equipment purchased under this grant.

Classrooms or other teaching areas:

- Teachers in classrooms need to have access to a suitable teaching computer and a digital projector or interactive flat panel (IFP)
- 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 panel (IFP).
- The choice of student computer is one for the school. Schools may use PCs, laptops, tablets or combination of these.

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Appendix 3

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. €25.17 per mainstream pupil confirmed on the rolls on the 30th of September 2024 in mainstream primary schools.
   b. €30.20 per special needs pupil on the rolls on the 30th of September 2024, in special classes attached to mainstream schools, and per pupil in special schools.
   c. €27.69 per pupil on the rolls on the 30th of September 2024 in DEIS category primary schools.
   d. €30.20 per student on the rolls on the 30th of September 2024 in post-primary schools.
   e. €33.22 per student on the rolls on the 30th of September 2024 in DEIS category post-primary schools.
   f. €15.10 per student on the rolls on the 30th of September 2024 student in fee-charging schools.

Appendix 4

Guidance 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/

Infrastructure

- 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.

Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

- Guidance and advice on the development and review of Acceptable Use Policies, including the possible use of AI, is available from Oide Technology in Education
  AUP and AI - Oide Technology in Education
- Further information on the AUP generator and associated guidance is available via Webwise.
  Webwise Forms – Webwise Forms

Additional Resources: Embedding of digital technology in teaching, learning, and assessment

- Video Library of Good Practice:
  - ➢ Explore a series of videos showcasing good practice in the use of digital technologies
    https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/videos/
- Webwise Online Safety:
  - ➢ Find free educational resources, advice, and guidance promoting the safe and effective use of the internet for children and young people, teachers, and parents:
    https://www.webwise.ie/
- Scoilnet Portal:
  - ➢ Access over 24,000 curriculum-aligned digital resources for primary and post-primary schools
    www.scoilnet.ie

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Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)

- Professional Learning:
  - ➢ Explore resources and courses on embedding digital technologies in teaching, learning, and assessment: https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/courses-practice/
  - ➢ Information relating to professional development on the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment can be accessed at https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/onlinecourses/

    https://www.oidetechnologyineducation.ie/courses-practice/schoolsupport/ through your local education centre https://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/

Appendix 5

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.

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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.

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 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. 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, meaning schools do not have to obtain quotes. Further information available at www.spu.ie.

Information on current ICT Frameworks is available at 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.

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 Oide Technology 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 and the Office of Government Procurement information at 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 - [Contracts & Procurement Guides for Schools | SPU Ireland](#)

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