

Report of ACCS Information and Communication Technology Sub-Committee 2017/2018

Members: Ms. Antoinette Nic Gearailt, President ACCS, Mr. Paul Thornton, Chairperson, Mr. Paul Behan, Ms. Mary O’ Sullivan, Ms. Siobhán McCarthy, Mr. Tom Cash, Mr. Ciaran Stewart, Ms. Anne Smyth, Ms. Teresa Hennessy, Mr. Cahil Doherty, Mr. Malachy Molloy, Mr. Dermot Healy, Mr. Tom Lonergan, PDST Technology in Education, Ms. Áine O’Sullivan, Assistant General Secretary, ACCS and Mr. John Irwin, General Secretary, ACCS.

The following represents the main activities of the ICT Sub-Committee over the last year.

1. Following the successful Pilot Project and the subsequent appointment of Ms. Deirdre Redmond as ICT Advisor to C&C schools a total of 66 schools engaged with the service finding it invaluable in identifying strengths and challenges in their own school system and in highlighting a way to advance the system often involving significant savings for the Board of Management and to the school.

When Ms. Redmond was appointed it was agreed that all interested schools could avail of a visit and audit from the ACCS advisor who would focus on identifying the current level of provision within a school and would advise on potential future advances.

Ms. Redmond presented her findings to the ICT Sub-Committee in November 2017 highlighting the learning from the school visits. A scoring system was used which provided a score between 1 and 6 for a school under the headings:

AREA	AVERAGE SCORE
Network Infrastructure	3.8
Servers	3
Desktop/Devices incl. printing	2.4
Wireless Network	3.1
Software/Licensing	4.9
Telephony	2.1

The average scores as presented in the table above represent the key findings to date of the schools completed.

The KEY FINDINGS in the schools visited include the following:

- There was a lack of awareness of Technical Guidelines Documents (TGD) e.g. Wireless network procurement guidelines.
- Equally there was a lack of awareness of Purchasing Frameworks.
- Schools in general did not utilise available supports e.g. PDST/Webwise.
- In schools, a proactive approach versus a reactive/*Fire-Fighting* approach is more effective and sustainable.
- Schools who have defined roles of those working in I.T. clearly fare better.
- School principals should have a “grasp” of the school I.T. systems e.g. good documentation for handover.
- Separately awarded budgets should be used for areas for which they are intended rather than becoming “monies” for use on overall schoolwide ICT improvements.

Advice to schools ranged from cost saving measures to proper identification and planning across a myriad of areas including data protection and security, maintenance contracts, storage and back up of school systems and delivery of content when moving to a cloud based platform.

- Make a plan whether it is 6/12/18 months to reach particular goals e.g. how to move to a cloud email/data platform, implications for data/storage/backup/maintenance/ delivery of content.
- Have an AUP: <https://www.webwise.ie/aup-2/>.
- Gear up for GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation, New regulations come into effect in May 2018) at which time those organisations in non-compliance will face heavy fines.
- Consider carefully use of Third Party I.T. Support what the school requires: e.g. logging of calls/suitability/expertise/value.

- Examine the types of support contracts available e.g. Telephone support/Proactive block hour contracts.

(There are many options around I.T. support – proactive hour contracts versus annual so if you are not happy you can change/move on. All the sites that scored high the on-site co-ordinator had good documentation, a system for logging and mainly liaised with third party).

Report Summary:

- Hardware: Structure the cables – if you can see the cables, you can manage them.
- If it looks organised... it probably is, the opposite also applies!
- Consolidate – remember to cancel redundant lines and services.
- Re-negotiate your support rates regularly.
- It's not “a one size fits all” in I.T. in schools. Contexts matter.
- Make informed decisions and commit to these.

Developing an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

Following on from the advice by the ACCS ICT Advisor to schools about the necessity of having a robust Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) which sets out key points in addressing internet safety issues for students, the ICT sub-committee considered a number of different AUP templates and acknowledged that one of the best approaches for schools to consider is to access the PDST AUP generator available on pdst.ie. This generator takes you through the process asking the school various questions and generating a document. It notes the importance of all schools considering the issues pertaining to Data Protection and Child Protection when developing AUPS for school security and use.

The Digital Strategy 2015-2020: ENHANCING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT sets out how schools will work to realise the potential of ICT to transform the learning experiences of students by helping them become engaged, creative and critical thinkers, global citizens, and active and self-determined resilient learners in collaborative social-learning environments. The pilot programme is in 5 Community and Comprehensive Schools including St. Clare's Comprehensive School, Gorey Community School, Gort Community School, Kinsale Community School and Loreto Community School. Work which is ongoing in these schools include various initiatives on teaching and learning in the modern day classroom.

Leaving Cert Computer Science:

In November/December 2017 a total of 126 schools made application to join Phase 1 of the introduction of the new Leaving Certificate Science subject. The final selection was made up of 40 schools which were spread across the country over 16 different counties. Of these 23 were co-educational schools and 35% were designated DEIS schools. Five Community and Comprehensive schools were selected to be part of the pilot phase:

- Carrigaline Community School,
- Moate Community School,
- Mayfield Community School,
- St. Aidan's Comprehensive School, Cootehill
- Mount Temple Comprehensive School.

The launch of the new programme was scheduled for February 2018. The ICT sub-committee will endeavour to support these schools in their work in introducing the new subject in September 2018.

Microsoft Shared Platform:

Early in 2018, ACCS explored the establishment of a shared platform with Microsoft which will enable schools to share resources and initiatives involving ICT and other learning and teaching strategies and methodologies. Current School-based projects/initiatives which focus on improving Teaching and Learning Methodologies, and which also incorporate ICT include working with Mr. Mike Hughes, Mr. Graham Powell, (NAPD) the Instructional Leadership programme (ETBI) and TL21. The platform will provide a sharing facility for schools, will be accessible through the ACCS website and will be available to all member schools.

Education Conference – April 2018

In preparation for the annual ACCS Education Conference, ACCS ICT sub-committee worked with PDST to create 5 short videos promoting best practice in managing ICT on site and in schools. These will be presented at the Education Conference in April 2018 which has taken its theme this year as “Championing 21st Century Learning”. The other areas which the sub-committee intends to promote at the conference in April are the use of AUPs in schools and the development and use of E Portfolios in schools.

The Chairperson wishes Ms. Deirdre Redmond, the best in her new role in PDST and expresses his thanks to members of the ICT sub-committee for their active engagement, Mr. Tom Lonergan, PDST Technology in Education and to the ACCS Secretariat for their support.

*Mr. Paul Thornton,
Chairperson.*