

How Good is Your School's

Digital Learning?



A guide for school leaders on
promoting digital literacy

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Digital Learning

Digital technology is embedded in all aspects of modern life. Today, children, young people, and adults have access to technologies that are transforming how they connect, share, work and play in innovative and exciting new ways. From the rapid growth of the Internet, online services and social networks, to the development of a wide variety of mobile devices and applications, digital technologies offer tremendous opportunities for education.

Digital Innovation

Innovative use of technology transforms learning and improves educational outcomes for young people. In schools, teachers and learners are making increased use of technology to engage in dynamic learning experiences involving exploration, discovery, collaboration and creation. Learners can access an ever-increasing range of digital tools, resources, and environments that support learning; they can collaborate with other learners and learn in a personalised style that best suits their individual needs.

Mobile Technologies

The most significant change in the technology landscape in schools in recent years has been the increased use of mobile technology including tablets and netbooks. This allows the technology to come to the learner rather than learner to technology. It facilitates a greater number of devices for the same overhead costs and offers new and more flexible ways of working in and around the classroom.

Digital Literacy Skills

One of the key challenges for schools is to ensure that learners possess the digital learning knowledge and skills required for learning, life and work in the 21st century. This is often referred to as 'Digital Literacy'.

Digital literacy means having the knowledge and ability to use a range of digital technology tools and media for varied purposes. A digitally literate person can use technology to find and evaluate information, connect and collaborate with others, produce, share and present digital content, ideas and knowledge, and use the Internet and technology tools to achieve academic and personal goals. They also need to be able to do this while staying safe online.

Digital literacy is much more than being able to use a computer. It's about knowing when and why digital technologies are appropriate and helpful to the task at hand and when they are not. It's about cultural and social awareness and understanding, and it's also about being creative. The skills associated with digital literacy can be classified under 6 headings.

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|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| * Creativity | * Research and finding information |
| * Collaboration | * Communication |
| * Critical Thinking and evaluation | * eSafety |

Creative use of Technology

Becoming digitally literate involves not just being active in exploring digital media but also in creating it. Digital technologies provide an array of exciting opportunities for young people to create their own digital media and online content. Many will already be using digital technologies to document their lives in some way and to create digital outputs by, for example, editing a social networking profile page, manipulating digital images, making films or compiling playlists of songs. Participating and communicating in an increasingly digital world requires the creative ability to effectively utilise these opportunities.

Critical Thinking

A digitally literate student is not just passively receiving information or meaning but also contributing to it, analysing it and shaping it. This requires critical thinking. Critical thinking involves transforming, analysing or processing given information, data or ideas. It means young people using reasoning skills to engage with material, to question, analyse, scrutinise and evaluate it. It is about being reflective, interpreting meaning and determining significance in order to make purposeful decisions and make informed sense of the world.

Students need to engage in critical thought in order successfully develop other elements of digital literacy such as creating outputs and choosing which tools and format to use for particular purposes and audiences and developing cultural and social understanding.

Digital technologies can support critical thinking by providing opportunities for students to present an argument, evaluation or analysis. Students might do this in written form by creating a blog, Wiki, presentation or report. They might use visual or audio formats by creating podcasts, films or animations. In each of these cases, the student is practicing their critical thinking skills and developing their digital literacy in order to create and communicate an argument. This means critically engaging not only with subject knowledge but also with how to write and communicate using different technology and media.

Programming and coding are also key skills associated with critical thinking and these are. In the years ahead schools need to promote software development, computing science and the skills associated with coding in primary and secondary schools as a critical aspect of education for work.

Evaluating the Quality of Digital Learning

The chart below shows a suggested audit for evaluating the quality of your school's Digital Literacy (Theme 3 from HGIOS Quality Indicator 3.3)

The full audit of QI 3.3 can be accessed online.

Use the Impact online quality improvement tool to complete the traffic lighting exercise and record strengths and weaknesses.

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Theme 3: Digital Literacy

Digital learning across the curriculum

Courses, programmes and learning activities embed regular opportunities for digital learning.	
The curriculum is reviewed and refreshed to better meet the demands of learning, life and work in the digital age.	
The curriculum has clear progression in the knowledge and skills associated with digital learning.	
Curriculum design is informed by school partnerships with the business community and local skills providers.	
Teacher planning integrates the use of technology in learning activities.	
The use of digital technologies gives learners the skills to understand, apply and create new digital solutions.	
Digital learning enables learners to develop skills in computational thinking, coding and programming.	
Digital technologies are used to support learners with additional support needs.	
The availability of digital versions of resources helps learners to access the curriculum more effectively.	
The school uses social technology to communicate with parents and to share pupils' work and achievements.	

Digital skills and knowledge

Using digital technologies to meet a personal, social or learning need.	
Making informed choices about the use of technology to enhance and personalise learning.	
Using technology creatively, eg, films, animations, podcasts, blogs, wikis, learning diaries, social media.	
Selecting and using a range of digital tools and media for varied purposes.	
Identifying appropriate formats, tools and media for particular purposes and audiences.	
Using technology to find and evaluate information, and judge the validity and reliability of content.	
Using technology to share and present content, ideas and knowledge.	
Using technology to connect and collaborate with others (eg, through online collaborative tools)	
Following e-safety procedures when using digital technologies, including the internet and mobile phones.	
Understanding issues associated with online content, grooming, cyber-bullying, plagiarism, and virus protection.	

Digital inclusion

The school provides assistive technology to deliver the curriculum for learners with additional needs.	
Staff are aware of learners at risk of digital exclusion due to economic background or learning needs.	
The school provides additional access to technology for learners from disadvantaged communities.	
Digital technology enables those learners unable to attend school to access content and resources.	
Technology is used to improve parental engagement and help to bridge the gap between home and school.	
Social technology is used to share pupils' work and achievements with parents.	

Full audit online at www.hashtag-learning.co.uk