



# ICT School Strategy

## Information and Communications Technology Plan

### Vision Statement

Clarecastle National School, is committed to being a lifelong learning centre for ICT, serving the educational needs of the children and the school community, through creative educational use of present and emerging Information and Communication Technologies. We aim to provide an environment where ICT is integrated into all aspects of the school in a way which actively supports and promotes motivated life-long learners, helping all to make links to the wider world whilst preparing everyone for the challenge of a rapidly developing and changing technological environment.

### Aims

In order to achieve this we will continually:



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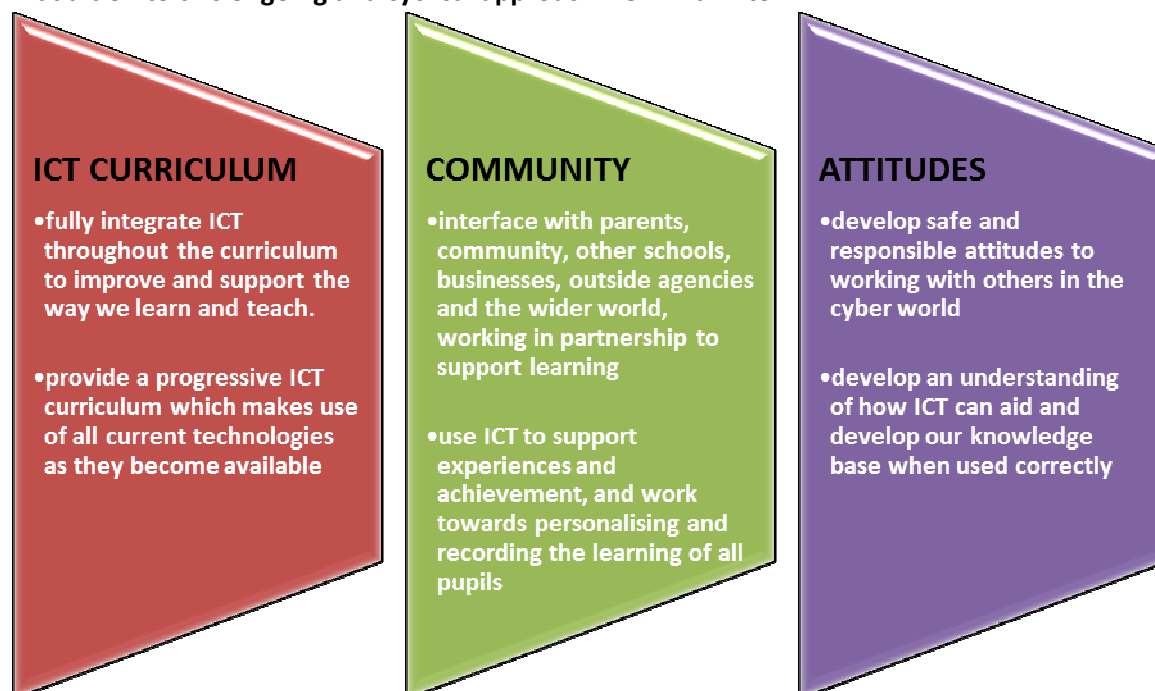
**Roll Number:** 17026M

**Telephone:** 065 6828274

**Email:** [clarecastlens.ias@eircom.net](mailto:clarecastlens.ias@eircom.net)



**In addition to this ongoing and cyclical approach we will aim to:**



Our use of ICT in the collaborative educational environment of our school will be a positive endorsement of the educational value of multimedia instruction.

### **Rationale**

#### **General Rationale for the use of ICT as an educational tool:**

Integrated technology in teaching and learning across the curriculum is a new challenge which we feel must be met in Primary Education. We, as teachers, recognise the potential of ICT as a cross-curricular resource at primary level to both expose the children to greater masses of information and to enable them to develop skills necessary to live and work in an ever-changing world. In line with the general educational philosophies of the school, the mode of instruction will attempt to generate, in the children, a sense of fulfilment, while experiencing the benefits of ICT to facilitate creative expression and academic achievement. Clarecastle's philosophy and motto

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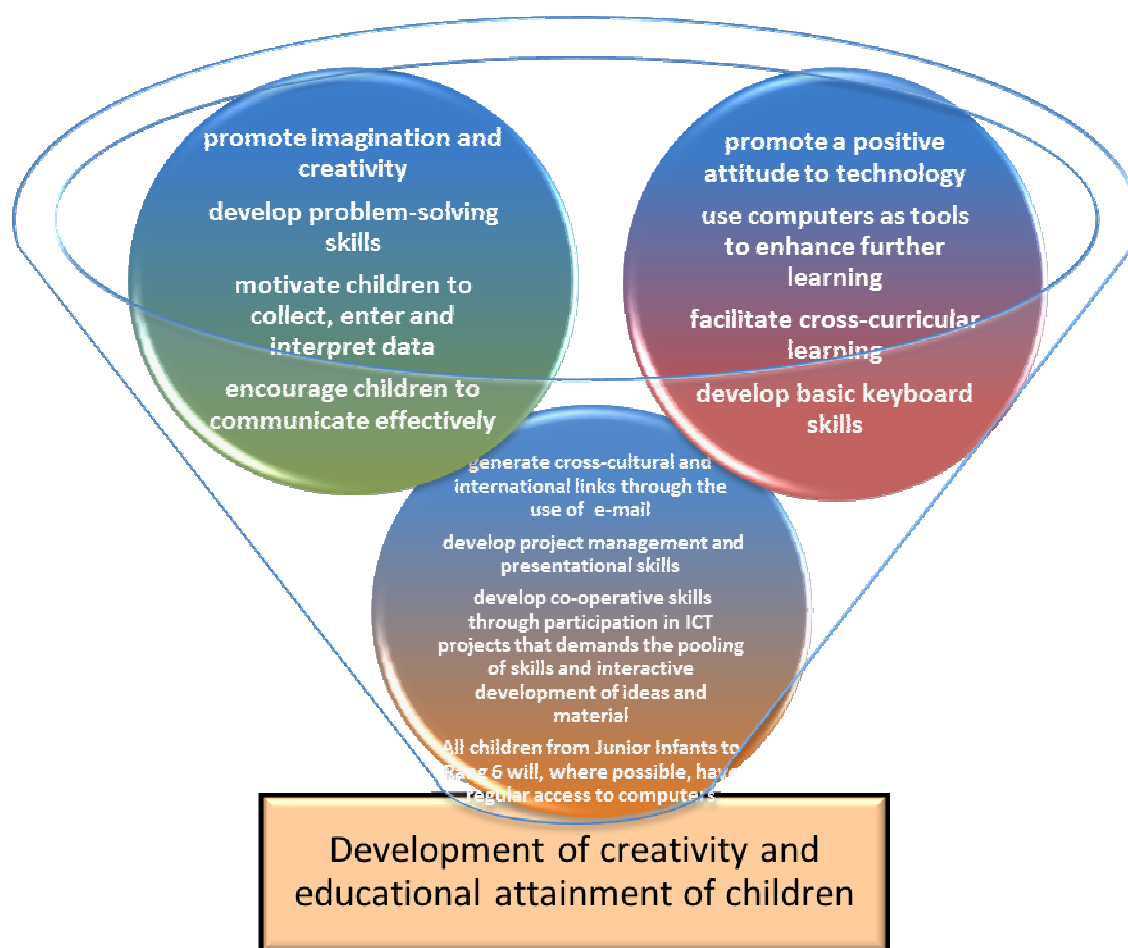
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states "That they will have life and have it to the full!" This ethos determines that each person, through positive learning experiences will be stimulated to achieve his/her potential. The use of ICT presents the most innovative way of ensuring we, as teachers, can help the pupils in our care to fulfil this potential. The introduction of interactive boards in all classes has been pivotal in making ICT accessible to all. We are confident that this new pedagogic tool, along with the existing ICT infrastructure, will equally enhance the learning opportunities of *all* the children in an atmosphere of self-worth, self-belief and self-motivation. This should indicate our positive endorsement of the benefits of multimedia educational strategies. Specifically in our recognition and promotion of ICT and its benefits we would intend that ICT would be used by all children to:



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### Introduction

Clarecastle School, recognises the need to provide all its pupils with computer literacy skills so that they will be able to maximise the opportunities presented to them by the information age in Ireland and abroad. Teaching at all levels of the educational system must keep abreast of the potential created by the new technologies for the process of teaching and learning. It is increasingly important that a basic appreciation and understanding of the modern information and communication technologies is fostered in young people, from their early years in school up to the completion of their education.

### Aims of ICT in the Primary Curriculum

The aims of ICT in education are:

- To develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable the child to use ICT to support his/her learning in appropriate ways.
- To enable the child to acquire and apply ICT skills in the attainment of appropriate curriculum objectives across the range of subjects.
- To enable the child to experience a wide range of ICT tools and resources in relevant curriculum contexts.
- To encourage the child to use ICT critically and creatively and to be discriminating in the selection, analysis and presentation of information.
- To enable the child to gain hands-on experience of a range of available technologies and to explore their potential in the classroom.
- To foster confidence in the use of ICT through enjoyable collaborative learning experiences in which each child can experience success.
- To raise the child's awareness of the significance and impact of modern technology on the social, economic, cultural and other dimensions of society.
- To develop the child's understanding of ICT as a valuable "life-skill" that can enhance living and learning right throughout an individual's life.

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## Current ICT Status: School Profile



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**Computer Room**



**Interactive Whiteboards**



**Kidsmart Units**



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### **ICT Adoption to Date**

#### **Early Adoption**

This school has been embracing ICT development since the early 2000's. Initially each classroom had been equipped with a PC and appropriate software. Each year the school has continually strived to develop its base for Information and Communications Technology.

#### **Computers: Desktops & Laptops**

By 2006, many of the computers were becoming obsolete and many were very old and difficult to maintain. It was decided that an overhaul of the computer base in the school was needed so that ICT could be integrated in a co-ordinated way. Laptops were purchased to make teaching and learning more interactive. At this stage we also established a maintenance and technical support contractor who we have retained since. After a number of years these laptops too needed updating so, using the ICT Infrastructure grant, we purchased the current batch of laptops in 2011 and the original laptops were made available for the children's use in the classrooms, adding to the PCs that were already in each classroom. When our new school was being built we included a state of the art computer room, equipped with 17 PC's. In addition to this there are now 18 teacher laptops, 17 classroom laptops, 19 classroom desktops and 3 administrative computers.

#### **Adoption of Wired Connections**

A wired internet network (ISDN fast connection) was also set up in each room when the new school was built in 2007. This network is operated through the server in the Comms Room and each classroom also has several computer points in the classroom to allow every PC and laptop in each room access to the internet. Students primarily use the Web for project research – downloading text and images on a wide range of topics and for operation of Accelerated Reader. The staff uses the Web to locate relevant online content, including lesson ideas, lesson content, images, sounds, games, etc. The staff also uses e-mail to discuss items of interest with colleagues. Each staff member was given their own email address and set up on an internal mail system. Since 2012 the school has embraced Aladdin as an online and electronic means of collating all

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relevant student details from test scores, attendance, personal details, behaviour analysis etc.

### **Adoption of Wireless Printer**

Three wireless networked printers are in operation in the school – two are black and white, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> has full colour functionality. We have found these far more efficient to run than desktop printers and they require substantially less maintenance. While we still have a number of desktop printers in the school they are now only in use for administrative purposes in the secretary's and principal's offices and in the Resource Rooms for individual sheet printing.

### **Adoption of the Acceptable Usage Policy**

Once internet was accessible throughout the school, the ICT Co-ordinating teacher updated the school's Acceptable Usage Policy which was ratified by the BOM. A copy of this policy was made available to the parents in the school through the school website. (See Acceptable Usage Policy)

### **Digital Cameras**

The school currently has three digital cameras. The children and teachers use the school digital cameras to take photographs of a wide variety of events- sporting occasions, tours, achievements, school gatherings etc. When relevant, students and teachers use the digital camera to video record local happenings and items of interest. The school has now developed a comprehensive library of digital images for use in many of their projects and for uploading to the school website.

### **Adoption of Interactive Whiteboards**

The school installed interactive whiteboards throughout the school when our new building was completed in 2007. The school recognised the benefits of making this innovative and exciting classroom tool available to all pupils from the earliest age possible. In recognition of our commitment to ICT, the BOM and the Parents Association spearheaded some tremendous fundraising initiatives to ensure the installation of interactive boards in every classroom and for the provision of a portable

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board and projector that could be used for parents' evenings, school concerts or in the smaller resource/learning support rooms as required. The teachers use the IWB to deliver the curriculum in a meaningful, interactive and simulative way to pupils throughout their lessons. Pupils engage actively with the IWB and use it to demonstrate as well as develop their understanding of many complex topics. The IWB is also used as a station in classes where station teaching is employed during in-class support sessions, particularly in the area of numeracy. As a result of the interactive nature of the board pupils across a range of learning styles can benefit; the IWB can illuminate learning for auditory, pictorially and kinaesthetically inclined learners when used effectively by the teacher with relevant learning activities in which the pupils engage.

## **Adoption of the Schools Website**

The school has had a website since 2006. However the original website had been created on Dreamweaver and therefore it was not possible for each teacher to regularly add content. It was decided that a new, interactive school website was needed. This was created and then launched in October 2012. The school now has a very active and versatile school web site ([www.clarecastleschool.com](http://www.clarecastleschool.com)). Each class has its own class blog. The class blogs are used in a number of ways by the teacher: Learning activities that pupils and parents can access at home are made available through this on-line space. Pupils/parents who have access to a computer and internet at home are encouraged to access this space to find learning activities aligned with classroom work. Children's work and classroom experiences are represented through text or photographs on the site and whole school initiatives and successes are also celebrated on this forum.

## **Current Practices in relation to SEN**

ICT is a resource that is made available for ALL children in our school and is used in an inclusive and supportive way. However we recognise that in addressing the special needs of certain pupils it is on occasion necessary to use additional assistive technologies and appropriate ICT resources to ensure supplementary or differentiated learning support.

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### **e-Twinning and ICT based projects.**

Our school got involved in the eTwinning initiative in October 2012. Since then several class groups have been engaged in international projects, using ICT to collaborate with other schools and develop their own knowledge.

Each class level also engages in ICT based projects on a regular basis. In the lower end of the school these would take the form of presenting class activities and events digitally by the teacher. As the children progress through the school they have the opportunity to learn the necessary research and ICT presentation skills in order to undertake independent and group based projects. The forms of presenting work are continually being developed as teachers in the school are introduced to new innovative sites and apps through in-service training and/or personal knowledge.

### **ICT in a cross-curricular and cross- school approach**

Use of ICT is encouraged in teaching and learning in our school. It is used to support all curricular areas through use of appropriate websites, online activities and software.

In addition to this the school adopted the Accelerated Reader programme in September 2010. This uses ICT to encourage and promote reading and comprehension development through electronically setting reading targets, tracking children's reading progress, achievements and success in attaining targets.

The introduction of the IBM Smartkid Units in the infant classrooms uses ICT to support the language curriculum and language development.

The school also introduced the digital edition of CAT 4 – (Cognitive Ability Test 4) and programmes for data analysis of Drumcondra and Sigma T standardised tests. This allows for detailed analysis of results on a class and individual basis to inform our teaching and direct future learning outcomes in a comprehensive way.

Aladdin pupil data base is used in the school as an inter-communication system. It allows sharing of information and school notices among staff. However it also facilitates electronic recording of pupil attendance and automatic generation of information required for NEWB records. It facilitates digital production of school reports, records

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money collected, allows the addition of medical, behavioural and /or learning need notes on pupils which can then be passed on to the next class teacher. This ensures more efficient sharing of information.

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**CURRENT AND FUTURE PRACTICES**

**Management and Planning**

- Review the existing ICT policy collaboratively on a cyclical basis
- Continually integrate appropriate ICT activities throughout the school plan
- One member of staff will continue to assume the role of ICT co-ordinating teacher
- Regularly audit the software and hardware available and make teachers aware of this software and hardware.
- Extend software available in SEN classrooms
- Continue assessing the cost and usage of the various printers

**ICT Resources and Infrastructure**

- Continue to purchase and upgrade laptops for use in classrooms when funds are available
- Internet access is available in all classrooms
- Install wireless internet network connection when funds are available
- Purchase some more digital video hardware
- Replace headphones for all computers used by the children in a staged manner
- Introduce a supply of IPADs for educational purposes on a phased basis as funds are available

**ICT and the Curriculum**

- Source and buy educational software and appropriate licences for specific curriculum areas (e.g., SESE -Science, Geography, Irish etc.)
- Source and buy additional software titles to meet the needs of individual students, particularly students with special needs
- Expand the use of word processing to improve students creative writing skills and the school's ICT culture
- Continually update the existent list of interactive websites and make these accessible to teachers for use in lessons
- Regularly audit the school's educational software
- Work collaboratively as a staff to ensure the school ICT programme is age appropriate and allows for progression in ICT knowledge and usage at each class level.
- Plan as a staff to ensure that learning experiences in ICT are balanced and consistent across all year groups.

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## Health and Safety

### See Acceptable Usage Policy

**While recognising the benefit of the Internet as a teaching and learning tool we recognise that there are inherent dangers associated with its use. Therefore we have established practices in the school to help mitigate against this:**

- Children are only allowed access to the internet in supervised situations. The NCTE Broadband installation program is providing external centralised firewall.
- We also have set a block on each individual computers for extra protection against inappropriate images coming through search engines.
- Obviously unwanted material is deleted immediately and teachers have been asked to immediately inform the ICT co-ordinator if a child accesses a site he/she should not.
- Children are not allowed to have their own e-mail accounts in the school and are not allowed to access their existing ones.
- In exceptional circumstances, for example, children who have a differentiated work programme that requires access to email or sites the teacher will set up a school based email account for them and organise the sites that they will be able to access eg set them up on a Symbaloo account. The parents of such children will give written permission for these measures and will be informed that any breach of procedures and regulations associated with this access will result in termination of this privilege.
- Children are taught from an early age that they do not give out any personal details like surnames, addresses, phone numbers etc.

## Other areas of Health and Safety

- All cameras are stored with one teacher who tracks their use through a sign in and sign out sheet.

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- Each teacher is responsible for downloading of their own photographs after use of the cameras.
- Laptops and cameras are stored, either in the strong room or in classroom storage press for all holiday periods.
- Interactive whiteboards, computers and laptops should be plugged out each afternoon by the teacher as soon as he/she is finished with equipment to avoid damage by lightening or by an electrical fault.

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