



Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs

## **Abacas Special School Kilnamanagh Assistive Technology/ICT Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

The Board of Management recognises the benefits of schemes provided by the Department of Education and Skills for children in relation to the use of ICT in schools.

### **2. Rationale**

This policy was put in place to ensure the safe and correct use of ICT in the school and to ensure that devices are properly cared for and maintained. Abacas Special School is committed to incrementally increasing the use of ICT resources (both hardware and software) for student learning based on the following benefits:

- ICT can motivate and enthuse our pupils, hence it can be used as a reinforcer for work.
- ICT can help build confidence and self-esteem in our pupils.
- ICT can present information in new ways that can help out pupils to understand and use it more readily.
- ICT can develop skills in cause and effect, control and decision-making.
- ICT can help our pupils to concentrate and focus.
- Integrating ICT into our school curriculum helps to implement and reinforce the curriculum that is being taught by providing situations where pupils may be able to work independently, in pairs or as a group.
- ICT can make the curriculum more accessible and available to our pupils.

### **3. What does “Information and Communications Technology” (ICT) cover**

As well as being an important national curriculum requirement, the ability to use ICT effectively is a vital life skill in modern society. We interpret ICT to include any equipment or resources which allows users to communicate or manipulate information electronically.

This includes the use of:

- Computers
- Laptops
- Programmable toys and interfaces
- Assistive technology e.g. specialist keyboards, rollerball, switches and touch screens
- Interactive whiteboards



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- iPad/tablet computers
- Audio and video recorders
- Digital cameras and scanners
- Sound amplification equipment
- The internet
- Printers

#### **4. ICT co-ordinator**

The school's ICT co-ordinator is the Deputy Principal, Karen O' Dowd. The role and responsibilities of the ICT co-ordinator are outlined as follows:

- Liaise with the other members of staff to draw up ICT policy.
- Advise on training and support for whole staff and individual teachers.
- Support teachers in the use and development of ICT in the curriculum / classroom.
- Keep an inventory of computers and peripherals, software licences, serial numbers and purchase dates.
- Maintain a co-ordinating role in the purchase of suitable hardware and software, within budget constraints.
- Ensure that all original disks/software and manuals are stored in the school.

#### **5. Assistive Technology Scheme Funding**

The Department of Education and Skills runs an Assistive Technology Scheme, which provides funding to schools towards the purchase of equipment for pupils who have been assessed as having a special educational need that requires specialist equipment to enable them to access the curriculum. Grant aid is pupil-specific and based on the pupil's needs, as determined by the associated professional.

Individual applications are made when supported by a professional recommendation which outlines that assistive technology is necessary or essential for the pupil to access the curriculum. This includes illustrating how the equipment will be used. An assessment indicating that equipment would be beneficial, desirable or useful is not sufficient.

Any equipment purchased by the school under this scheme remains the property of the school and should normally be kept in the school. However, the Board of Management may, in certain circumstances, allow the use of the equipment in the pupil's home. Such a circumstance might be where it is agreed that the pupil could potentially benefit from, or



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achieve a degree of improvement to their academic and educational performance or their learning, through the use of technical support or equipment such as a school laptop.

This agreement endeavours to ensure the safe custody and handling of the equipment when in the care of the pupil outside of the school.

Procedure to allow pupils to take Assistive Technology home:

1. The pupil's parent/guardian must write a brief letter outlining the reason why they believe it is necessary for the pupil to bring the assistive technology home.
2. The letter will be brought to the attention of the Board of Management and a decision made.
3. The parent/guardian will be required to read in full and agree to the terms and conditions attached to this policy (Appendix A).

## **6. Pupil-owned devices**

In some cases, it may be recommended that a pupil have access to their own personal device in school. This involves allowing pupils to bring their own 'mobile devices' to school to support learning activities/communication.

For the purpose of this programme, a 'mobile device' refers to a pupil-owned device, i.e. a device not funded or provided by the school/Department of Education and Skills. This may include a tablet, laptop, netbook, iPod Touch, or suitable phone.

Parents/guardians who wish that their child have access to such a device in school must accept the responsibilities outlined in Appendix B, and must read, sign, and return this form.

## **8. Responsibilities of class teachers**

The responsibilities of the individual class teachers are outlined as follows:

1. To integrate ICT throughout the curriculum as suitable to meet the needs of the pupils
2. To keep the ICT co-ordinator informed of any problems or difficulties with the use of ICT within the classroom.
3. To help identify software needs and ensure suitable software is selected for class use.
4. To ensure the safe use of the internet by the pupils in their class.
5. To ensure that the use of Assistive Technology is integrated into a pupil's IEP, in cases where it has been recommended by a relevant professional to assist communication or otherwise.

## **9. Technical support**



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All computer laptop and software problems should be reported to the ICT co-ordinator. The ICT co-ordinator will try to resolve issues as much as they can. External support as required is available from ACOM technology.

The school's "Acceptable Use Policy" should be referred to for all areas of Internet Safety.

### **10. Audit**

An annual internal audit will be performed on all laptops, desktops and iPads to ensure no unlicensed software has been downloaded during the previous year. Any such software will be deleted. As part of this process, all browsing history will be inspected in order to highlight any unauthorised activity.

### **11. Security**

The school will make regular checks to ensure that the anti-virus software installed on school-owned hardware is kept up to date.

### **12. Insurance**

- All school-owned hardware, software and peripheral devices, including devices provided under the Assistive Technology Scheme, are insured on the school insurance policy while on the school premises.
- ICT devices owned by pupils are not insured on the school insurance policy and must therefore be adequately insured by the pupil's parents/guardians.

**Policy adopted by the BOM on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Review date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Chairperson, Board of Management**



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## **Appendix A: Home use of school-owned assistive technology**

### **Model, Make and Serial Number:**

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### **Value of laptop and software:**

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The school has purchased the abovenamed device from funding received for educational purposes through the Assistive Technology Scheme administered by the Department of Education and Skills. This equipment can be subject to an audit by the Department at any stage.

If this device is to be used outside of school, parents/guardians are required to sign the below indemnity form indicating their understanding and acceptance of the terms and conditions of the scheme.

### **Terms and Conditions:**

1. The approved assistive technology/equipment remains the property of Abacas Special School. iPads etc. are synched with the schools iTunes account and backed up by the school's internal server. As a result, only school-approved software, packages, apps and programmes recommended by the professionals working in the school can be downloaded for use on this device.
2. Should the designated pupil change school, including to post-primary, the school will consult with the SENO with regard to the transfer of any approved assistive technology/equipment with the pupil where it is still appropriate for the pupil's assessed needs. The final decision regarding transfer will rest with the Board of Management of Abacas Special School.
3. The approved assistive technology/equipment will be used solely by the designated pupil and will not be used by or transferred to a third party.
4. The item is covered under school insurance when on school premises.
5. Any repairs necessary due to damage caused to the item while in the care of the pupil outside of school will be arranged by the school and paid for by the parent/guardian of the pupil.
6. The parents/guardians will take due care of the equipment at all times when handling, transporting and using the equipment to avoid damage or loss. This includes adherence to the following guidelines:
  - It is not to be left unattended in a public place.



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- It is not be left in plain view in an unattended or unsecured vehicle.
  - It is not to be interfered with, tampered with or altered by a third party.
7. The item must be returned to the school in good working order on or before the last day of the school year or earlier if requested by the school.
  8. Use of the item including all internet usage will be supervised by the parent/guardian to ensure that the pupil is not exposed to inappropriate material.
  9. The school will make regular checks to update the item, ensuring that anti-virus software is kept up to date and also checking for inappropriate use.
  10. The item will be used lawfully. The following is deemed by the school as being completely unacceptable and will result in the equipment being re-claimed:
    - Accessing, transmitting or receiving obscene or pornographic material
    - Engaging in cyber-bullying
    - Downloading or installation of software or applications that are not approved by the school.
  11. The equipment will be kept in good working order. All faults, defects or malfunctions while in the care of the pupil are to be reported to the Principal or Class Teacher who will inform the teacher with responsibility for the servicing and upkeep of the equipment.
  12. The item will not be sold, assigned, transferred or otherwise disposed of.
  13. Any markings, tags or plates or engravings will not be removed, concealed or altered. The item must not be marked in any way that might reduce its value.
  14. If the item is lost, stolen or damaged, parents/guardians will advise the Principal and the Gardaí as soon as possible orally and in writing including all relevant details, a record of events etc.
  15. Due to current software licensing arrangements covering home use, the item cannot be used for any commercial purpose.
  16. If any of these terms or conditions are breached, the Board of Management may at any time revoke this arrangement.



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I confirm that I accept responsibility for taking into my possession an item which is the property of Abacas Special School after school when my child requires it.

I confirm that I have read, fully understand and accept the Terms and Conditions attached to this agreement and other relevant policies as are determined by Abacas Special School.

**Name of Pupil:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Parent/Guardian (BLOCK CAPITALS):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Parent/Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Numbers:**

Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_



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## Appendix B: Use of pupil-owned devices in school

Any parent/guardian who wishes that their child use a personally owned mobile device within the school must read and sign this indemnity form, indicating their understanding of the terms and conditions of the scheme.

1. Pupils and their parents/guardians are responsible for their devices, including any breakages, costs of repair, or replacement. It is essential that all devices brought into school are insured privately and fitted with a protective cover at all times. They are not covered by school insurance, nor does the school accept any responsibility for breakages.
2. Mobile devices must be charged prior to being brought into school so that they are usable during school hours.
3. Devices may not be used to record, transmit or post photos or videos of teachers or other pupils. No images or video recorded at school can be transmitted or posted at any time without the permission of the teachers. This does not include the use of photos of internal school locations/reinforcers/school staff for use with communication apps.
4. The pupil may use the school wireless network and content-filtered broadband.

**Name of Pupil:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Device Details:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(e.g. tablet/phone/laptop – include manufacturer, type of device and serial number here)

I wish for my child to use their own personal device during school hours. I understand that the school cannot accept responsibility for any loss, breakages or replacement. I confirm that the device is insured and is fitted with a suitable protective cover.

**Name of Parent/Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(BLOCK CAPITALS)**

**Signature of Parent/Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_