

2008

National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) Annual Report 2008

Supporting ICT in Learning and Teaching

The ICT in Schools Initiative of the Department of Education and Science





National Centre for Technology in Education
Ionad Náisiúnta don Teicneolaíocht san Oideachas

NCTE

National Centre for Technology in Education

Annual Report 2008

Dublin City University, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, Ireland. Tel: +353-1-700 8200 Fax: +353-1-700 8210 email: info@ncte.ie



The ICT in Schools' Initiative of the Department of Education and Science
Tionscnamh ICT sna Scoileanna de chuid Roinne Oideachais agus Eolaíochta

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
THE WORK OF THE NCTE	5
STAFF	7
TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION INITIATIVE	8
CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	12
SCOILNET	17
INTERNET SAFETY	22
DIGITAL CONTENT	26
ICT IN THE CLASSROOM	33
FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE	37

FOREWORD

I am very pleased to publish the 2008 Annual Report of the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE). It describes a busy year for the NCTE as we developed and delivered our various programmes and initiatives.

The Strategy Group appointed by the Minister to advise on the priorities for investment in ICT in schools and chaired by myself published the report *"Investing Effectively in Information and Communications Technology in Schools, 2008-2013"* in July 2008. It presented some key recommendations, some of which were already underway by the NCTE such as the development of resources and supports for e-learning planning in schools, as part of the whole school planning process.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) remained strong in 2008 and over 11,760 places were availed of by teachers on a wide variety of professional development workshops and courses. Two particular focal points in NCTE's CPD activity for 2008 were supporting the T4 roll-out of new syllabi by providing tailored ICT courses for teachers and the development and delivery of workshops for ICT Coordinating teachers at post primary level.

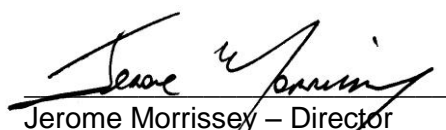
The provision of digital content for learning and teaching continued through the expansion and development of Scoilnet, as well as through our work on other content-rich educational websites, such as the *French.ie* website and *ImageBank.ie*. *Scoilnet Maps* went live in February 2008 - professional development was delivered by the Geography Support Service as part of their in-service programme for geography teachers and this was very positively received by teachers and reflected in the high usage statistics.

The Schools Broadband programme continued to be implemented in 2008. Over 99% of all primary and post primary schools had Schools Broadband connections and were supported by the Broadband Helpdesk.

The Scoilnet Blogging and hosting service was also developed in 2008 and will be accessible to all schools in the Schools Broadband Network in 2009. On the procurement side, the NCTE worked closely with the Department of Finance in 2008 to make the national ICT Procurement Framework arrangements more accessible to schools. These arrangements offer schools a clear and simple route to improving value for money in their ICT expenditure.

The NCTE is very fortunate to have access to ongoing input and collaboration of the other educational bodies and teachers' representative groups. Their cooperation and assistance enables us to carry out our work more effectively and plays a significant role in the success of our various initiatives. I would particularly like to acknowledge the direction and support of the ICT Policy Unit in the Department of Education and Science throughout the year.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge and pay tribute to the commitment, dedication and achievements of my own staff in the NCTE during 2008.



Jerome Morrissey – Director
National Centre for Technology in Education

THE WORK OF THE NCTE

Established in 1998 as an agency of the Department of Education & Science (DES), the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) is responsible for managing the implementation of the Department's *ICT in Schools* policy. The Centre's core mission is to promote and support the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) by teachers and students in their daily teaching and learning and a range of supports are provided to schools to facilitate this. As teachers are encouraged to explore the potential of ICT in their teaching, innovative and engaging methodologies evolve in Irish schools. Such developments are immensely positive, eliciting benefits for both teachers and students alike. The holistic integration of ICT in schools can create a dynamic, relevant learning environment — one that enables students to realise the learning objectives of the curriculum and become confident, creative users of new technologies.

Technology Integration Initiative (TII)

This initiative provides a range of planning, advice and supports to schools as they develop their ICT infrastructures. Throughout 2008, the delivery and support of the Schools Broadband Programme has continued to be a primary focus. This has included the management of the Schools Broadband Service Desk, one of the key supports made available to schools.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD focuses on the delivery of continuing professional development for teachers in the use of ICT in learning and teaching. Courses are generally delivered through the education centre network and there are a wide range of courses available for teachers at both primary and post primary level. In addition, the NCTE works with different partners in the design, development and delivery of CPD.

Digital Content

The Digital Content initiative develops and provides access to digital content appropriate to the Irish school curriculum. This includes the development of satellite websites within specific curriculum areas, as well as sourcing and evaluating software suitable for educational use. Software licensing agreements also fall under the remit of Digital Content.

Scoilnet www.scoilnet.ie

The Scoilnet initiative manages *Scoilnet.ie*, the portal for Irish education, as well as the NCTE website, the Internet Safety website, *Webwise.ie*, and several standalone project websites. *Scoilnet.ie* is a key access point for those seeking curriculum-relevant learning resources. The Scoilnet team manages, maintains, develops and grows all elements of the Scoilnet website including its database of 11,354 teacher-reviewed web links.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) and ICT Initiative

The SEN and ICT initiative works within each of the other initiatives to develop resources and supports relating to special needs education. The management of specific projects on the use of ICT in special needs education is also included within this initiative.

ICT in the Classroom

The NCTE is committed to supporting and promoting innovative and effective practice of ICT in learning and teaching. Consequently, a diverse range of independent or collaborative projects have been undertaken with teachers and students in schools in recent years. The case studies and evaluations produced from these innovative projects push the boundaries of ICT practice in schools forward, and encourage and enlighten other teachers in their integrated ICT practice.

Internet Safety

The NCTE, through its Webwise Initiative, in partnership with the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum Support Service and the National Parents Council - Primary (NPC), focuses on promoting safer and more effective use of the internet by children in Ireland. The education programme includes:

- Classroom resources for use in teaching the SPHE curriculum to first, second, and third year students in post-primary schools
- Nationwide in-service training for SPHE teachers
- Nationwide Internet Safety seminars for parents
- Nationwide Social Networking workshops for primary and post-primary teachers

STAFF

Director

Jerome Morrissey

Technology Integration Initiative

Tom Lonergan	National Coordinator
Helen McKeon	Broadband Support Manager
John Heffernan	Project Officer (Sept 08- Dec 08)

Continuing Professional Development

Madeleine Murray	National Coordinator
Fred Boss	Project Officer

Digital Content

Anne White	National Coordinator
Karin Whooley	Project Officer
John Heffernan	Project Officer (Jan – Sept 08)

Scoilnet

Mike O'Byrne	National Coordinator
Patrick Coffey	Project Officer
Sharon McDonald	Project Officer
Simon Grehan	Project Officer (Internet Safety)
Grainne Walsh	Project Officer (Internet Safety)

Special Educational Needs and Digital Schools

Neil O'Sullivan	Project Officer
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Central Administration & Technical Services

Denise Brennan	Senior Office Administrator
Carmel Coen	Office Administrator
Pascal Leloup	Senior Analyst Programmer
Seán Dower	Systems Administrator
Frances Jacob	Clerical Assistant
Michelle Herron	Secretary/Receptionist
Svetlana Vasilieva	Accountant
Sonja Ryan	Accounts Assistant
Rita Grimes	Administration Assistant

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION INITIATIVE

The Technology Integration Initiative (TII) provides a range of planning, advice and supports to schools as they develop their ICT infrastructures and provides advice to the DES on the technical infrastructure required in schools. The development of a functional and stable ICT infrastructure underpins and supports the integrated use of ICT in schools.

During 2008, the TII focused on the following areas:

- Updating technology advice to schools by developing new ICT advice sheets on podcasting, blogs and visualisers
- Developing and scoping out plans for Phase 2 of the Broadband roll-out to schools
- Managing the Schools Broadband Helpdesk
- Introducing ICT Procurement Frameworks for schools
- Trialling of a new Webhosting-Blogging Service and introducing 'Online Names'

Schools Broadband Programme

The Schools Broadband Programme, which began in 2005, provides first and second level schools with a managed broadband connection and associated centrally managed services.

Since its introduction the Schools Broadband connection has become a critical ICT element for digital communications and access to online content. Fast, reliable broadband access to the internet and specific content along with associated content filtering are perceived by schools as the main benefits of the programme.

The Schools Broadband service also comprises centrally managed services including content and website filtering, a centrally-managed firewall for all schools and centrally hosted anti-virus control.

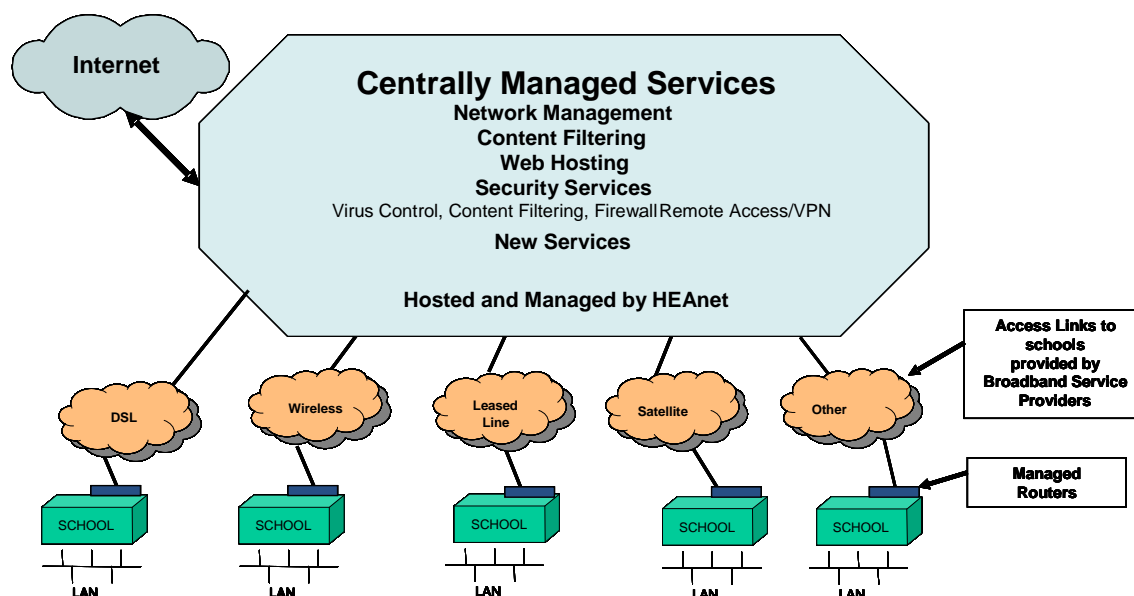


Figure 1: The Schools Broadband Network

The predominant focus for 2008 was to support existing schools broadband connections via the NCTE Service Desk and to complete the installation in a small number of remaining schools. This generally involved resolving any broadband problems, handling information requests and questions from schools on a wide range of broadband-related issues, and assisting schools in their use of broadband. Over 99% of schools had been provided with broadband by the end of 2008.

Broadband Service Desk

The NCTE-managed Schools Broadband Service Desk is the primary means of day-to-day communication and co-ordination between schools and the broadband programme. Fully operational since April 2005, the main roles of the Service Desk are:

- To provide a single point of contact between schools and the Schools Broadband Programme providing information, advice, guidance and technical support.
- To co-ordinate operational activities between service providers and the NCTE.
- To co-ordinate and test all broadband connections and broadband router equipment once installed by service providers.
- To provide a fault management, escalation and resolution process for all issues raised by schools and other parties.

Schools are encouraged to call the Service Desk via an 1800 free number or to email the Service Desk with any issues they may have regarding the Schools Broadband service.

During 2008, the Service Desk received 20,469 incoming calls and made 16,899 outgoing calls relating to schools broadband. Additionally it received 2,668 incoming emails and sent 2,507 emails during the year relating to Schools Broadband.

As the contract for Phase I was coming to a close, planning for phase 2 of the Schools Broadband programme took place. The main activity was developing a

Request for Tender (RFT) to procure an improved level of broadband in terms of technology mix and quality over broadband phase I levels. This activity was undertaken jointly by the ICT Policy Unit of the Department of Education and Science, NCTE and HEAnet.

Technology Advice and Support

Throughout the year, the NCTE provided information, advice and support on many different technical and ICT infrastructural issues via direct phone, email and other communications and via the NCTE website. ICT advice and support is provided on the NCTE website at www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport.

In 2008, new ICT advice sheets were developed for Podcasting, Blogs and Visualisers (www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport/AdviceSheets/).

ICT Procurement Frameworks

ICT Procurement Frameworks are national purchasing arrangements set up and managed by the CMOD (Centre for Management and Organisation Development) section of the Dept. of Finance with a view to helping non-commercial public sector bodies achieve to better value for money in their ICT expenditures while simplifying procurement procedures at the same time. The Frameworks were established following open competitive procedures advertised across the EU, and provide a number of highly favourable contractual protections for customers as standard (including in particular a three-year next-business-day on-site warranty at no extra charge).

The NCTE has worked with CMOD to develop school-friendly communications to promote these arrangements in an easily accessible manner to schools. As at the end of 2008, schools can seek competitive quotations from the full range of successful Framework “vendors” with a single email for each of four distinct categories of Framework product (PCs, Notebooks/laptops, monochrome and colour Laser Printers). Ceiling prices have been agreed for a range of standard specifications considered suitable for schools, and it is expected that competitive dynamics will deliver further discounts for schools, particularly for larger orders.

Frameworks, in short, provide schools with the benefit of central expertise in developing value-for-money contracts, while allowing schools themselves full flexibility in deciding precisely what and when to buy. For more details refer to www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport/Purchasing.

Web Hosting-Blogging Service

The Scoilnet Webhosting-blogging service was developed and introduced on a trial basis to schools during 2008. It provides both a website hosting and a blogging service for primary and post primary schools and allows schools to easily develop a school website or school blog and to host it free of charge on the Schools Broadband network. The blogging service supports different types of content, including text, images, audio, podcasts and video clips. Both the blogging and webhosting service are available to schools via the NCTE Service Desk. More information can be found at <http://blog.scoilnet.ie>.

Online Names

In 2008 NCTE also introduced the concept of a Scoilnet '**Online Name**' to schools. This offers a unique Scoilnet 'online identity' to each school. The Online Name is a unique school name or identifier, which is used in an online context and is required for the Scoilnet Website Hosting-Blogging Service. An example of an Online Name is 'stmarysartane', which provides an intuitive name which uniquely identifies a school from other schools, and will be used for Webhosting and other future online services.

Hermes: Schools "Thin Client" Broadband Wireless

The Hermes project involves nine inter-connected schools in north Co. Dublin sharing a common ICT infrastructure and using "thin client" and broadband wireless technology. ("Thin client" means that many applications run on a central server, rather than on individual PCs in a network). The project continued during 2008, funded by the Department of Education and Science via NCTE. The project delivers centrally-hosted learning applications and managed broadband Internet access to the nine linked schools and helps to achieve enhanced ICT integration on a whole school basis. A centralised technical support service is provided to schools to ensure maximum service availability and application availability to users. An independent evaluation of the Hermes project is being carried out which measures how effective integration of ICT in learning and teaching is provided in the schools by the underlying ICT infrastructure.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Providing Teachers with Professional Development in ICT

This was one of the most informative and interesting courses I have ever done. I know that I will use what I have learned in my classroom next year!

'good course well structured and very beneficial to my teaching'

Quotes from participants attending NCTE courses in 2008

One of the key roles of the NCTE is the provision of ICT continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers. In 2008, the NCTE continued to design, develop and deliver a comprehensive programme of ICT courses, workshops, online CPD, support activities and training resources to primary and post primary teachers.

Course Participation

NCTE-funded professional development activities are offered in partnership with the regional network of Education Centres. In addition, NCTE facilitates programmes of ICT professional development with other educational partners, e.g. INTO, the Colleges of Education, curriculum in-service teams and other government agencies such as Discover Science and Engineering. This includes the provision of funding, course development and review, supply of course materials and tutor training. In 2008, 11,760 ICT professional development places for teachers were availed of through the NCTE's CPD initiative.

Course Participation in 2008:				
Provider	Attendance	Primary	Post-Primary	Mixed
Education Centres	10,564	5927	4637	
NCTE online	515	272	34	209
INTO Summer Programme	332	332		
Mary Immaculate College	126	126		
Liberties Learning Initiative	80	43	37	
Other tutor training	143	29	114	
Total	11760	6729	4822	209

Course Development

NCTE continued to add to its portfolio of ICT courses, with the following new courses being designed and rolled out in 2008.

DEVELOPING AN E-LEARNING PLAN

This course was developed by NCTE in May 2008 and is based on the process of the development of a school's e-Learning Plan in the context of the whole school plan. It is aimed at primary and post primary ICT co-ordinating teachers and teachers involved in ICT planning. It covers the planning process, and helps schools to identify what their current e-Learning status is and to define where they

would like to progress this. It is expected that this course will be availed of by many schools when the NCTE's e-Learning Handbook is released.

NCTE/T4 - COMPUTER AIDED DESIGN – MODULE 3

This 10 hour course, designed in conjunction with T4 and the Teacher Professional Networks (ETTA – Engineering Technology Teachers Association and the Techno Teachers Association), was first offered through the Education Centres from January 2008 as a continuation of the Parametric CAD modules 1 & 2. These three modules ran concurrently, with Education Centres using modules 1 & 2 as a refresher course before commencing with module 3. The third module, consisting of 16 Solidworks exercises based on models of Leaving Certificate technology projects, builds on the previous skills learned in the earlier modules. In all, 20 tutors were trained in the delivery of this course and all three modules reached 1,000 participants.

NCTE/T4 - DCG STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PORTFOLIO COURSE

This new Design & Communication Graphics Student Assignment Portfolio course was developed in conjunction with T4, the Technology Subjects Support Service and ran in the late Autumn of 2008. It was developed to support teachers of the DCG syllabus for the 2009 Leaving Certificate which now contains an ICT component. The new DCG syllabus requires all students to prepare and submit an e-portfolio for assessment. The professional development course for teachers consists of six 2.5 hour modules and was offered throughout the Education Centre network in Autumn 2008.

NCTE/T4 - CAD/CAM INTO LC TECHNOLOGY PROJECT WORK

This course focuses on the integration of ICT into Leaving Certificate Technology and was also designed in collaboration with T4. The course consists of two 2.5 hour modules and was delivered in 5 Education Centres in 2008.

NCTE/INTO - BEYOND 2020

This summer online course, developed in conjunction with the INTO, built upon the 2007 *Developing an E-Learning Culture in your School* course and is aimed at primary teachers with intermediate ICT skills. It covers areas such as podcasting and other digital media.

In addition to the above courses, the following new professional development programmes were rolled out:

ICT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ICT CO-ORDINATING TEACHERS

In line with the Minister's Strategy Group Report recommendation regarding support for the role of the ICT co-ordinating teacher, NCTE delivered a series of one-day in-service workshops to 426 post-primary ICT co-ordinating teachers in total through the Education Centre network in November and December 2008. This programme covered:

- Co-ordinating ICT in a school
- How to integrate ICT at post primary level
- Developing an e-Learning Plan
- How to use e-Links (see below)

It is planned to deliver a similar programme of workshops to primary ICT co-ordinating teachers in 2009.

E-LINKS

As part of the above programme, NCTE set-up e-Links for post primary ICT co-ordinating teachers in December 2008. e-Links is an online community within NCTE's virtual learning environment (VLE). Its aim is to develop an online Community of Practice for ICT co-ordinating teachers.

In e-Links post primary ICT co-ordinating teachers can

- find support material, advice and best practice guides to support their role
- access and organise local CPD in the form of ICT courses and ICT support groups
- share experiences, resources and information with other ICT co-ordinating teachers
- access relevant online professional development

Each post primary ICT co-ordinating teacher was given a login to e-Links before attending their in-service workshop in November/December and having received training in using e-Links they began to communicate, share and collaborate online.

It is planned to set up e-Links for primary ICT co-ordinating teachers in 2009.

ICT Professional Development and Special Educational Needs

The NCTE continued to offer its suite of seven specialised courses for teachers of students with special educational needs. In 2008 in excess of 500 participants attended ICT and SEN courses and support groups.

Tutor Professional Development

The recruitment and provision of professional development for tutors is a key activity of the NCTE. The NCTE provides comprehensive training to tutors in all new courses and for major course updates. In 2008, the following tutor professional development activities took place:

Developing an e-Learning Plan

40 tutors were trained as part of a 3 day tutor training programme in June 2008.

T4 courses

20 tutors participated in a tutor training programme for the newly developed Parametric CAD module 3. This was jointly organised with the T4 support service team.

In collaboration with the T4 support service team also, 50 tutors attended two days of tutor professional development to prepare them to facilitate the new Design & Communications Graphics – Student Design Portfolio course.

ICT Co-ordinating Teachers workshops

33 tutors were trained to deliver this in-service programme to ICT Co-ordinating

teachers in November 2008.

Elinks tutors

9 of the tutors who presented the ICT Co-ordinating Teacher Programme at seminars in December undertook to be e-Moderators in e-Links.

The e-Moderators are teachers who will work with ICT co-ordinating teachers online, supporting, responding to and facilitating online communication. They will offer support in the use of e-Links resources and learning materials and in sharing best practice and collaborating online with peers.

Tutor Communication

The *Tutor News*, which is an NCTE newsletter for NCTE tutors, issued three times in 2008. The tutor section of the NCTE website was moved to within the NCTE's VLE and maintained throughout 2008 to provide information and resources on individual courses, as well as general resources for tutors such as template PowerPoint presentations, e-Tutoring tips, and digital video clips of ICT usage in classrooms. This facility was also used by course developers to upload and share resources and as a communications tool with NCTE.

Summer Courses

The NCTE continued to work with other educational partners to deliver an ICT summer course programme. There was a high uptake on summer courses among primary teachers.

The NCTE and the INTO collaborated on two courses in 2008:

- Using ICT as a Teaching & Learning Resource – 129 participants
- Beyond 2020 online course – 203 participants

NCTE-funded summer courses also took place in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. The courses funded were:

- Interactive Whiteboards in the Primary Classroom (22 participants)
- Internet Resources for the Primary Classroom - online (104 participants)

Online Courses

The NCTE online course, *The Internet: A Teaching & Learning Resource*, ran in Spring, Summer and Autumn 2008, with a total of 515 teachers participating in the course.

The course was also made available to other educational partners including the Second Level Support Service (SLSS), Dublin City University and Mary Immaculate College.

Promotional Activity

The NCTE website provides comprehensive information on the full range of NCTE-funded ICT professional development courses available for teachers. It contains a complete list of the ICT courses available, as well as a detailed schedule of those

offered each term in each of the education centres. See: www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining/CourseSchedule/.

In addition, leaflets promoting NCTE courses were distributed via the education centre network. NCTE ICT professional development for teachers was also promoted through educational magazines such as *InTouch* and *Astir*.

In order to promote the new courses for the e-portfolio in Design & Communications Graphics, a specific promotional leaflet was designed and printed. These leaflets were distributed at the T4 in-service days, through the Education Centre network and also as part of the Technology TPNs membership mailings and conference programmes.

SCOILNET (www.scoilnet.ie)

The focus of the Scoilnet initiative is the promotion and use of online content and services for learning and teaching. The core of this initiative includes:

- developing the Scoilnet website (www.scoilnet.ie);
- developing and maintaining the NCTE website;
- supporting the development of other professional development and curriculum support service websites, and
- supporting school websites.

Subject Matter Experts

Scoilnet Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) find, review and categorise online resources according to the Irish curriculum. Ongoing training, support and advice are provided to the SMEs to ensure that the quality of content and reviews are of a high standard. A central element of the SMEs' work involves the monitoring of existing resources to ensure they remain relevant. In many cases this means deleting resources from the database as the links no longer work. The subjects worked on were: Primary: English (emphasis on SEN); Maths; Music; Religion; SEN - Exceptionally Able; SESE History; SESE Science; SPHE. Post-Primary: Economics; English; Home Economics; Gaeilge; Geography; Religious Education; LCA (Work module); Music; SEN (across subjects). This resulted in an increase in the number of resources in these subject areas and a rise in the traffic to these subjects. In total 20 teachers (12 post-primary; 8 primary) worked part-time and successfully completed 27 contracts as Subject Matter Experts.

The Resource Finder continued to attract considerable traffic during 2008. Its 11,354 resources were viewed 1,187,008 times during the year, an increase of 15% on 2007.

Site Developments

The emphasis in 2008 was on maintenance and consolidation rather than new development. Nonetheless, a revamp was applied to the display of results for the resource finder and site search to make it easier for readers to see multiple results. Planning and development of a new Quiz Tool, which will allow users to create their own quizzes (with audio and video capacity), was also undertaken and is set to be launched in 2009.

Themepages, crosswords and quizzes were created by SMEs and continue to be among the most viewed pages on Scoilnet. The e-newsletter which uniquely targets primary teachers, post-primary teachers and post-primary students was sent fortnightly to just over 1,000 subscribers each and to relevant schools.

The Star Site section www.scoilnet.ie/schoolsonline provides recognition to school websites that are developed and display best practice. There were 59 school websites highlighted in the 'star sites' archive by the end of the year. Scoilnet maintained editorial space in the In Touch magazine and used it to promote the most viewed resources accessed through the site, a chosen teacher's favourite sites and a school 'star site'. Over the year almost 1,000 submissions to 'contact us' were answered or acted upon.

Thirty seven sites, covering many areas of the primary and post primary curriculum, were reviewed in detail and given "Site of the Week" status. This feature continues to be an extremely popular area of the site with views of over 3,370 to a featured site of the week in the month of April. Over the year, reviews have become more detailed and now include a section that contains links to additional resources related to the featured site of the week. The area displaying teacher feedback and comments on the site of the week still remains.

Approximately forty polls were created in 2009 seeing a total of 9,000 responses. The most popular poll also ran for a week on the 21st April and had a total of 973 responses.

Storytime, the feature that allows you submit your story and located on the primary students section of the site, continues to have high usage. 2008 saw an increase in the number of recurrent storytellers, stories submitted in the Irish language, jokes, photos accompanying stories and poems. The total number of stories submitted to the site was 445. The following are sample submissions.

A little joke, by Shauna, Age 11

A man wanted to learn to make an omelette. So he went to shop and bought a box of eggs. He went home took out the recipe book and the book said "separate 2 eggs" so he put 1 egg in the kitchen and 1 in the hall.

The Night of the Ghost, by Louise, Age 9

One night, not long ago there was a ghost. His name was Edward, he didn't have many friends and he was very lonely. His only friend was a bird, named Tweet. Tweet went around to every one and told them that Edward was lonely. The next day Edward got a letter from his neighbour, it said to meet him at the old school down by the lake at midnight. So Edward went. His neighbour was there and she brought him into the old school and when they walked through the door everyone jumped up, yelling, "Surprise" and from then on they were all friends and Friday the 30th of October was known as the night of the ghost.

The licence agreement with Magicstudio was renewed in July which saw the development of twelve new interactive timelines focusing on Geography, History and Visual Arts.

Promotion

A four page leaflet promoting the uses, highlights and features of Scoilnet and associated websites was produced in November. The main focus of the leaflet was to remind teachers and students at primary level of Scoilnet's key components, especially the Resource Finder which now has 4,094 resources at primary level. This leaflet was distributed nationwide at the post-primary school seminars run by the Continuing Professional Development Initiative.

Reference Material

The procurement process to acquire access to online reference materials was concluded by NCTE in January 2008 with recommendations made to the Department of Education and Science.

Categories of content identified included encyclopaedias, dictionaries, thesauruses, atlases, media sources and other material supportive of the primary and post-primary curriculum. Content will be through text, graphical, audio and video format and will be available to schools online through the Schools Broadband Network.

A licensing agreement was signed with Eircom Ltd. (for World Book Complete Suite) under the Framework Agreement.

EU Meta Data Project

The NCTE worked with 13 European ministries of education to develop metadata standards and Web 2.0 systems for sharing educational content between teachers and learners across Europe. MELT (Metadata Ecology for Learning and Teaching) is a content-enrichment project built on existing technical architectures to form a network of content repositories so learners and teachers can easily carry out 'federated searches' to find content.

The learning objects from the MELT project are displayed through the site search on Scoilnet through a tab entitled 'LRE' (Learning Resource Exchange).

A meeting of project partners was hosted by NCTE in Dublin during November.

FÓN - FOGHLAIM ÓN NUATHEICNEOLAÍOCHT (FORMERLY MALL - MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING)

Following an internal evaluation of phase one of the project and subsequent proposal, a second phase of this project ran from September. Operating on a much larger scale than the first phase and under the new name of FÓN, the project continues to investigate the use of ICT to enhance learning, teaching and assessment of oral Irish at Junior Cycle level. A secondary but significant focus of this project is to examine its scalability at national level and as a potential means of assessing the Junior Cycle oral Irish exam.

The project centred on the use of mobile phones and computers. Students accessed a voice-response system and responded to questions covering many topics within the Junior Cycle curriculum. They also dialled into the system in order to conduct a "voice-chat" with another student in their class, school or in another school. Laptops were then used by teachers to download student responses and "voice-chats" in order to provide feedback based on the Junior Certificate marking scheme. Students were also sent vocabulary words and phrases through daily SMS and participated in supervised web-based conversations.

The second phase of the project is also being evaluated with findings due in 2009. Preliminary findings have indicated that the project has had a hugely positive impact on student learning due to the following reasons:

- Students were motivated by the technologies involved
- More opportunities were provided for students to practise their Irish and converse with others on the project
- There was a shift in learning from teacher led to student directed and this empowered students
- The ability to self assess allowed students to compare their levels of fluency with others

The FÓN Project continues to be managed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in partnership with the NCTE and a small advisory committee was convened comprising representatives from the NCTE, NCCA, Foras na Gaeilge, State Exams Commission, Ratoath College and CCEA, the Council for Curriculum and Assessment in Northern Ireland.

French

French.ie is a portal site created by and for French teachers in Ireland and is part of the broader Scoilnet portal. The original steering committee had representatives from organisations involved in French language learning including NCCA, the Inspectorate, the French Teachers Association and the third level sector. While the steering committee was no longer active in 2008 the working relationship between Scoilnet and the French Embassy continued. Four SME contracts were completed during the year, adding a net increase of 82 reviews (733 in total) of websites for use in classroom practice. One of these contracts was targeted at producing podcasts and the first podcast went live on the site in September. Further podcasts are planned for 2009. The site forum is used by the community to discuss issues of relevance to the teaching of French. A poster to promote the site was printed and distributed to post-primary schools in the early part of the year. French.ie was presented with a European Language Award in recognition of its role in promoting the learning of a modern European language.

Geography

The Geography Support website www.scoilnet.ie/geography was maintained as a reference point for the Geography in-service training delivered to Leaving Certificate teachers of the subject. The work emphasis for the year focused on maintenance with links within the resource finder and themed pages checked and updated. Just one SME contract was issued during the year and this resulted in a net increase of 27 resources giving an end-of-year total of 531 reviewed resources in the Geography Resource Finder.

German

German.ie is a portal site created by and for German teachers in Ireland and is modelled on the successful *French.ie* website. The project is driven by a steering group comprising representatives and organisations with an interest in the teaching of German including the Department of Education Inspectorate, The Goethe Institut, the Austrian Embassy and the German Teachers Association. Planning and initial development of the website was undertaken during 2008 with the hard coding expected to be completed in February 2009. Four SME contracts were delivered to add resources to those already held in Scoilnet. By the end of the year there were 221 resources in the German Resource Finder.

NCTE website (www.ncte.ie)

The NCTE website provides comprehensive information, support and advice on ICT in education including:

- Over 30 advice sheets (regularly updated) on a range of ICT related topics such as Wireless Networks, setting up School Web Sites, Software Licensing and Computer Viruses
- Information on the Schools Broadband Network
- Information on ICT purchasing including the Schools ICT Framework
- Information on School Networking, including a directory of suppliers
- Information on all of NCTE's CPD courses
- Access to E-links, NCTE's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for teachers

A popular feature is the NCTE Newsletter which is also sent monthly by email to more than 3,000 subscribers. The newsletter highlights NCTE activities and topical items regarding ICT in education. Back copies of NCTE Newsletters are available online at www.ncte.ie/pastnewsletters.

In addition to the NCTE website, the NCTE also hosts websites for a number of educational organisations such as Kilkenny Education Centre (www.eckilkenny.ie), Youthreach (www.youthreach.ie), History Teachers' Association (www.htai.ie) and the Geography Teachers' Association (www.agti.ie).

Development

In August NCTE successfully completed the migration of its main website, www.ncte.ie, to a new web server along with www.softwarecentral.ie, www.sip.ie and over 100 other websites. At the same time, NCTE implemented a major upgrade of its Site Manager content management system and a refresh design of the NCTE website. The main purpose of this was to refresh and update the design to give the site a fresher look and to make the site WAI AA compatible.

INTERNET SAFETY

Webwise 2008

Webwise was delighted that for Safer Internet Day 2008 the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, T.D. launched the fully integrated education programme that includes:

- classroom resources for use in teaching the SPHE curriculum to first, second, and third years in post-primary schools, nationwide in-service training for SPHE teachers;
- nationwide Internet Safety seminars for parents, and
- nationwide Social Networking workshops for primary and post-primary teachers.



Education plays a central role in communicating risks and effective risk reduction strategies to children, young people, and parents. Effective educational approaches integrate parents as active facilitators of their children's media literacy and foster an ability in their children to self-manage potential risks in online environments. Parents and schools both have a key role to play in protecting children and educating them in the responsible use of new technologies. This is why teacher and parent training are the foundations of this integrated internet safety initiative.

The measures undertaken by the NCTE to strengthen children's capacity to be creative and innovative users of new technology include:

1. The development of an integrated educational programme in partnership with the SPHE Support Service called **Be Safe_Be Webwise**

2. Delivery of Internet Safety Seminars for parents in schools nationwide in partnership with the NPC
3. Provision of Internet safety continuing professional development training for teachers

1. SPHE Internet Safety Initiative

The National Centre for Technology in Education's Internet Safety initiative, *Webwise.ie*, in collaboration with Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Support Service created an Internet Safety learning and teaching programme *//:Be SAFE_Be WEBWISE://*. The programme, which is the first educational programme of its kind in Europe, is designed to address the personal safety needs of our young people when online and to help them become safe and responsible Internet users for life.

Young people take on new roles and responsibilities during their teenage years, renegotiate relationships with adults, peers, and the community, and experiment with things symbolic of adult life. These socialization experiences are often accompanied by the adoption of risk-taking behaviours that can compromise health and safety.

While healthy risk-taking is a positive tool in an adolescent's life for discovering, developing, and consolidating their identity, the new SPHE Internet Safety programme aims to equip young people to reflect on their attitudes and values and to adopt appropriate behaviours that will assist them in coping with life's challenges in regard to their online lives and behaviour.

In this context, delivery of the SPHE unit on Personal Safety has been updated by the inclusion of this Internet Safety programme to allow the students themselves to discuss and examine their own safety when online. The programme consists of a Teachers' Internet Safety Lesson and Resource Pack for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year Junior Certificate SPHE classes and in-service training for SPHE teachers. The in-service was delivered throughout the country in the context of the SPHE module on Personal Safety.

2. Webwise Parents' Internet Safety Seminars

Parents often admire how easily their children can use the Internet – but are not quite sure of what they are doing or seeing. Yet the single biggest step we can take towards ensuring the safety of children online is for their parents to get involved in their online lives. National Parents Council Primary working with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) has developed a seminar to take the mystery out of the Internet for parents and to give them the skills to engage with their children's online lives.

The seminar gives a practical demonstration of the technologies and the websites young people are using. Parents hear young people talking about how they use the Internet and why it is attractive to them, and get an insight into children's main concerns about being online. Parents are introduced to strategies to help their children be responsible, effective and safer Internet users.

These seminars have been developed, delivered, and refined using an action research methodology since September 2007.

3. NCTE's Teachers' Social Networking Workshops

The NCTE's continuing professional development programme [Teaching Skills Initiative (TSI)] offers a range of Internet safety courses for both primary and post primary teachers. These courses provide teachers with advice and strategies for developing safe approaches to learning and teaching while using the Internet. They also set out to give teachers practical experience in taking internet safety precautions within their subject disciplines.

By doing these courses teachers acquire classroom activities, practical resources and easily accessible support materials to incorporate Internet Safety good practice to enhance teaching and students' learning when using the Internet.

As at the end of 2008, the NCTE delivered Social Networking workshops for teachers in 20 regional Education Centres. This 2-hour practical, hands-on workshop is suitable for all teachers, primary and post-primary.

Watch Your Space

For 2008 we wanted to bring our message to teen social networking users and to reach them directly. We wanted to empower them to create strategies for their own online safety. To build upon the *Watchyourspace* brand and to engage teens in a real and authentic manner, we created the *Watchyourspace* comic and then went to meet thousands of them with our *Watchyourspace* Photo Booth at youth conferences.



In May 2008, we brought the *Watchyourspace* message to over 5,000 teenagers who took part or visited the Young Social Innovators Showcase.

They queued for a free photo, volunteered to take our Cyberbullying Survey and chatted to us about eSafety

issues. The stand was extremely popular and our safety message was reaching the teenagers.

Research

The two short surveys conducted in 2008 supported and informed the awareness raising work of the NCTE as they offered a picture of the present situation in regard to the use of the Internet by children and young people. The knowledge gained helped us refine our awareness campaigns, guided us in tailoring our resources and tools and helped us remain relevant.

1) The Webwise 2008 Cyberbullying Survey was conducted in May 2008 at the Young Social Innovators Showcase in Dublin. To find out more about how new technologies were facilitating the harassment of teens by teens, we surveyed 514

fourteen to eighteen year olds and conducted qualitative interviews with 22 teenagers. Our objective was to determine what type of cyberbullying was most prevalent amongst 14 – 18 year olds in Ireland.

Our survey suggested that the two most common forms of harassment experienced by Irish 14 to 18 year olds are receiving threatening or aggressive text messages and posting photos or videos that were intended to embarrass the subject. In all other forms of harassment, except these two, boys were more likely than girls to be victims. However, in the two most common forms of harassment girls were almost five percent more likely than boys to be victims.

2) The *Watchyourspace* 2008 Survey is the second annual survey of how Irish teenagers (13 to 18 years old inclusive) are using social networking websites (SNWs) such as Bebo and Facebook. A short survey on young people's use of SNWs was administered at the Young Scientist Exhibition in January 2008 (conducted by Webwise with assistance from the members of the Anchor Youth Centre).

Adding to insights gained from the *Watchyourspace* 2007 Survey, the 2008 Survey also indicates that the popularity of social networking websites shows no signs of waning. Overall levels of usage in January 2008 were similar to those found in 2007 in terms of frequency of access. However, teenagers appear to be spending less time on these sites. That teenagers are engaging in shorter sessions on SNWs is indicative of more mature usage patterns.

A Guide to Cyberbullying

The fourth booklet in the *GET with IT!* series, *A guide to cyberbullying* was developed in 2008 as a joint initiative between the Office for Internet Safety, the NCTE, O2 and Barnardos. This booklet offers measured and practical advice on cyber bullying and is intended to increase awareness of all aspects of cyber bullying – how to identify it, how to prevent it, and how to respond before things escalate.

Technology opens up a world of opportunities for young people, but it also presents hazards. Cyber bullying is a particularly nasty consequence of technological development. It is an insidious form of bullying. Cyber bullying can happen any time and any place and for many children and young people, home is no longer a safe haven from bullying. Bullying via the new technologies can potentially continue invisible to all but the victim and the perpetrator.

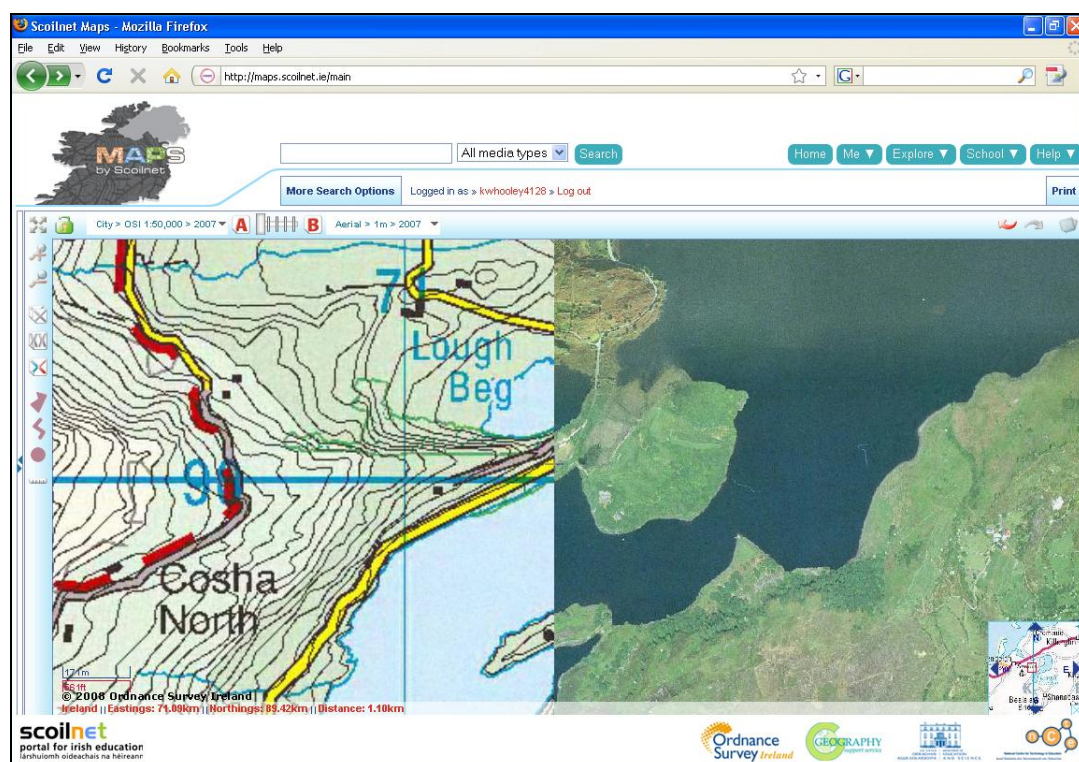
The booklet is available directly from the OIS through its freefone number 1800 24 25 95 and on its new website www.internetsafety.ie. It is also circulated widely in the education system through the National Centre for Technology in Education and throughout O2 stores nationwide.

DIGITAL CONTENT

The Digital Content initiative focuses on developing, sourcing and providing access to digital resources that are relevant to the Irish curriculum. This is achieved through the evaluation of software and the production of digital resources for key areas of the curriculum. Access to online digital content through the Schools Broadband Network has become a particular focus of the initiative in recent years.

Scoilnet Maps

The Scoilnet Maps website provides Geography teachers and students in second-level schools with online access to detailed Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) maps and aerial photographs for use in learning and teaching. In 2007, the NCTE licensed mapping data from OSi for use in second-level schools — the provision of regularly updated maps, orthophotos and digital terrain models was considered by teachers to be a basic tool for the teaching of mapping skills in the classroom. Furthermore, GIS was included in the recently revised Leaving Certificate Geography curriculum and the teaching and examination of this component will require geographical information data to be available to students in the near future. Following a public procurement process in 2007 for the provision of an Online Maps Viewer, the Scoilnet Maps website went live in February 2008.

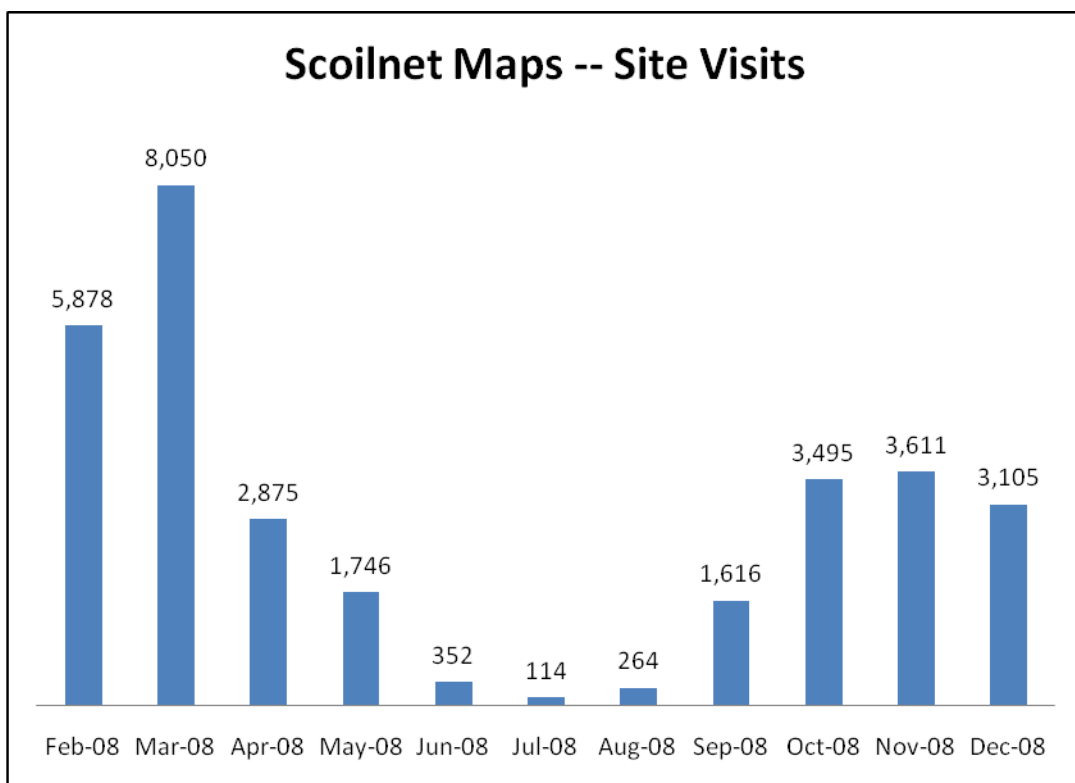


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In tandem with the launch of Scoilnet Maps, the Geography Support Service (GSS) trained more than 600 Geography teachers in use of the website in the context of supporting the revised Leaving Certificate Geography curriculum. The NCTE's close collaboration with the GSS has been highly productive and positive. In particular, the GSS have played an important role in the ongoing promotion of Scoilnet Maps in terms of its relevance to both the junior and senior Geography curricula.

Outside of the Schools Broadband Network, Scoilnet Maps requires users to log-in to view mapping data (due to licensing requirements). Authentication of log-ins occurs via an LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) directory which has been devised and developed by HEAnet in collaboration with NCTE. Throughout 2008, the number of registered users (i.e., those with personal log-ins) rose by 60%, from 836 in February to 1,355 in December. In addition, more than 250 email queries were received from teachers during the year in connection with Scoilnet Maps.

Visits to the Scoilnet Maps website were highest during the in-service weeks in February and March 2008. Visits dropped, as expected, during the summer months with steady traffic returning following promotional activities in September. On average, there were 292,885 page views per month --- the total number of pages viewed throughout the year was 3,221,736.



A series of website enhancements were implemented during the summer of 2008, including a refined search process, an improved resource upload process, and a playlist feature. In the autumn, an email newsletter was designed and distributed to promote the site and remind all registered users of features and updates. Email newsletters will continue to be sent out biannually. The Scoilnet Maps reference manual was also completed, printed and distributed to all registered users in 2008, providing comprehensive information about all functions and features available on the website. Following requests from teachers, the NCTE sought and was granted permission from Ordnance Survey Ireland to make the majority of the mapping data available to students (via teacher-created student accounts) at home. This development extends the usefulness of the website beyond the classroom.



Scoilnet Maps Newsletter

Autumn 2008
Issue 001

Welcome to the first Scoilnet Maps newsletter. You are receiving this because you registered to use Scoilnet Maps. We hope to provide you with updates and information (twice per year) about the mapping website Scoilnet Maps, which is the latest online educational resource for Geography teachers.

<http://maps.scoilnet.ie>

1:5 000 PLACE maps now available

The 1:5 000 OSI maps are now available in Scoilnet Maps. These are the most detailed maps of Ireland available. From the map picker menu, simply click on "STREET" and then "1:5,000".

Lost or forgotten your log-in details?

It may be some time since you registered for Scoilnet Maps and received a username/password from NCTE. If you've mislaid or forgotten these details you can have them reissued. Contact scoilnetmaps@ncte.ie or phone the NCTE Service Desk on 1800 334466.

Watch a Quick Start video

We've created some Quick Start videos which you may find helpful to refresh yourself on the basics of using the website. (Flash required)

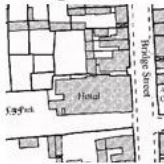
- [How to Log-in](#) (48 sec)
- [How to Select Maps](#) (1 min 13 sec)
- [The Toolbar Explained](#) (3 mins 30 sec)

Want to change your password?


You can now change the password issued to you for Scoilnet Maps to something you'll find easy to remember. Just log-in to the [Scoilnet Account Settings](#) page with your existing details and you will see a "Change password" box. You can also update your email address here.

Look at what's available!


OSi 1:5 000




OSi 1:50 000



OSi Orthophotos



OSi 1:450 000

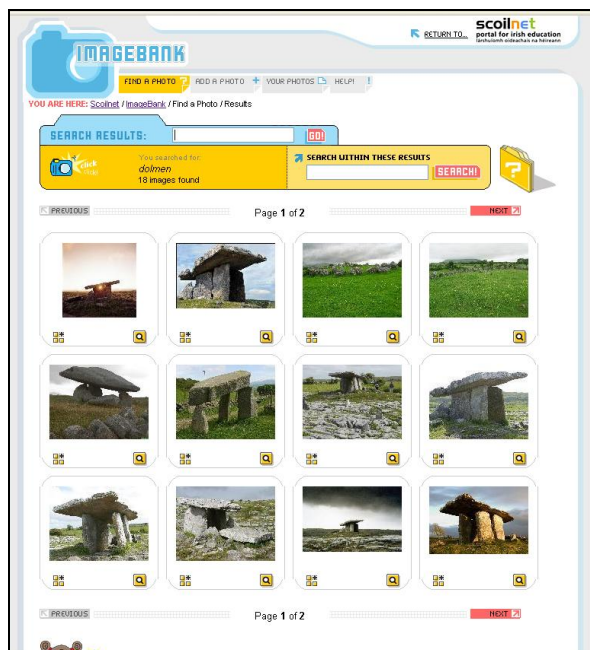


Finally, throughout the year, NCTE successfully liaised with six universities (UCD, TCD, NUIM, NUIG, UL and UCC) in order to promote Scoilnet Maps among trainee Geography teachers. Demonstration sessions were held and registration forms were distributed on request. Such pre-service links increase awareness among newly qualified teachers of the supports available to them as they start their teaching careers.

ImageBank

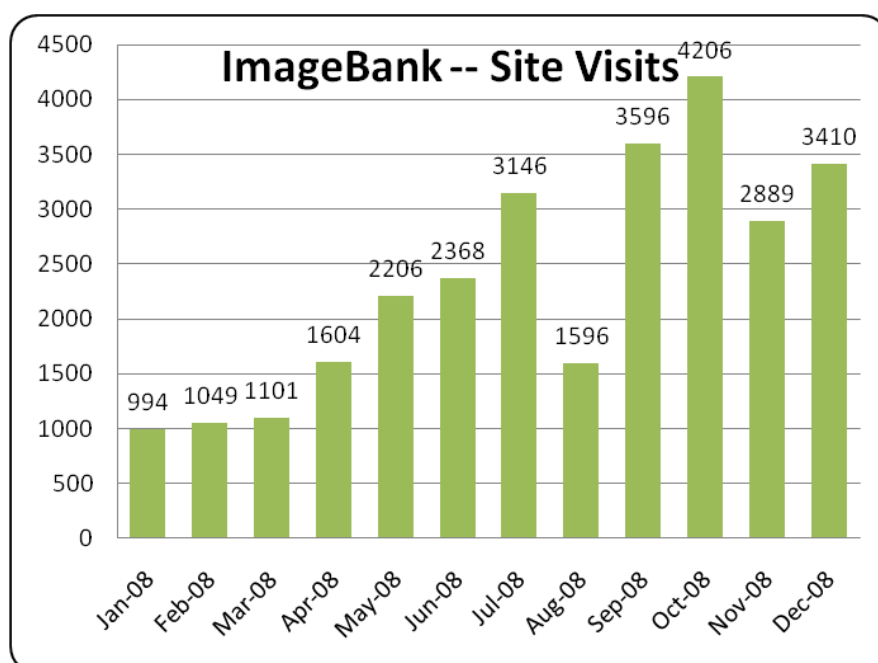
The NCTE's photo library website, www.imagebank.ie, was developed in 2007 as a direct result of feedback from teachers and other professionals in the education sector who highlighted the difficulties associated with sourcing images that are relevant to the Irish curriculum. ImageBank has successfully provided a space where users can share and search for suitable images safely. Copyright issues, and a lack of knowledge regarding same, have been addressed within ImageBank through the use of Creative Commons licensing (www.creativecommons.org). These licences encourage a cooperative and community-minded approach to the sharing of digital images and provide educational users with the opportunity to use resources appropriately and correctly.

The NCTE continues to emphasise the user-generated content aspect of ImageBank as this is considered a key feature to the ongoing success and sustainability of the website.

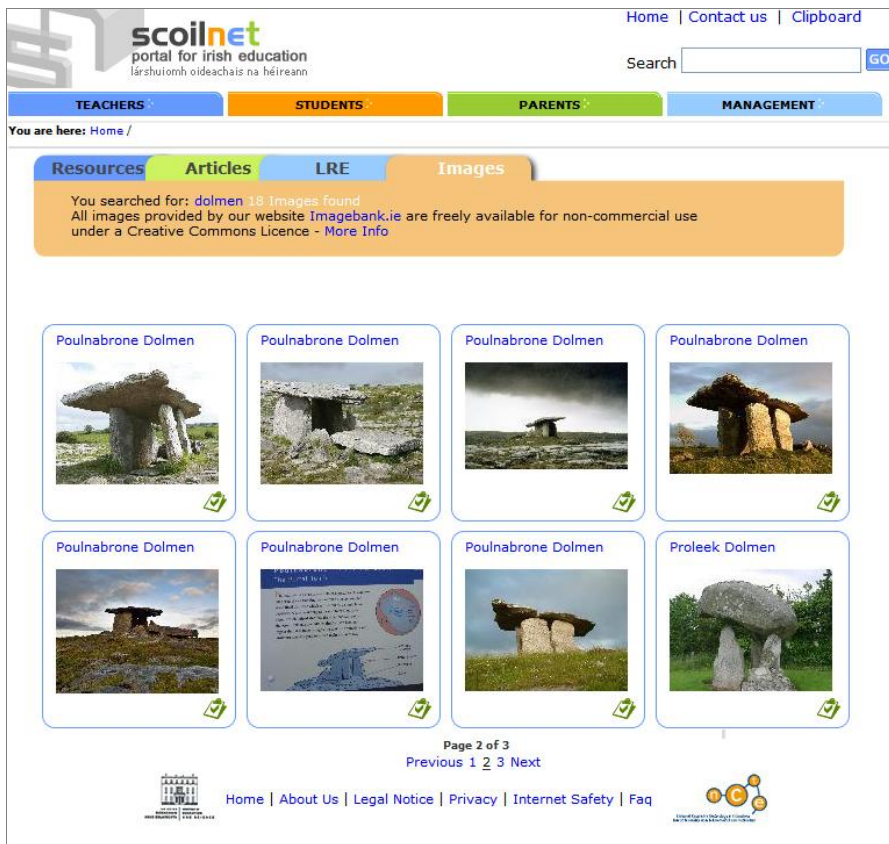


There was a particular focus on the promotion of ImageBank throughout 2008. Posters were designed, printed and distributed to all schools. Several organisations and companies worked with NCTE to share suitable, relevant images in ImageBank - a total of 1,332 images were received from these “contributing partners”. The Irish Times became a media partner for ImageBank and provided NCTE with zero-cost advertising space in the newspaper and relevant supplements.

The ImageBank media campaign, undertaken in September and October 2008, had a significant impact on traffic to the website. The highest no. of site visits occurred in October (4,206), with overall traffic to the website increasing by more than 300% over the 12-month period. There were 28,165 site visits to ImageBank in 2008, with approximately 278,000 page views being served in total.



In November 2008, an image search facility was integrated into the Scoilnet website, with the images in ImageBank underpinning this enhanced functionality. It is envisaged that this cross-site integration will greatly increase awareness and use of ImageBank content.



Throughout 2008 ImageBank has continued to promote and fulfil its remit of supporting teachers wishing to safely integrate ICT use in their classroom.

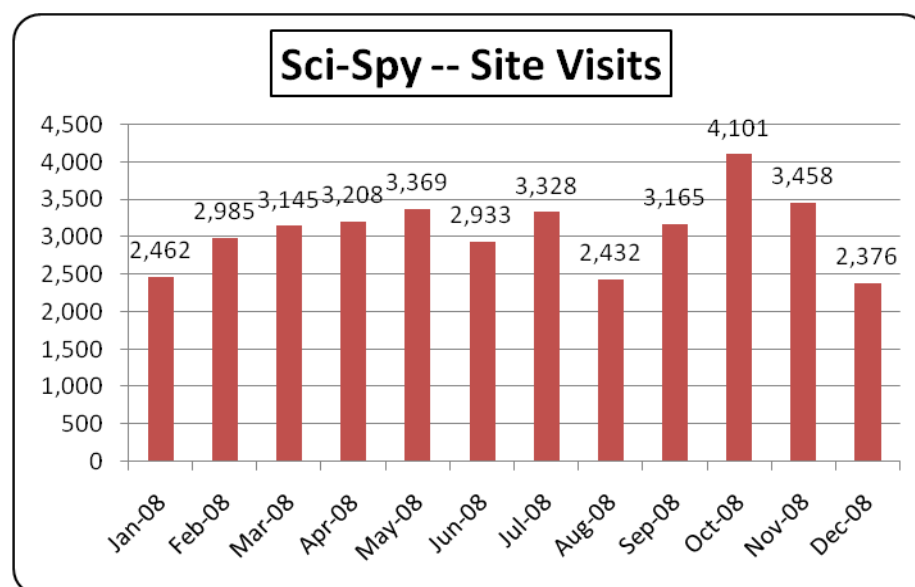
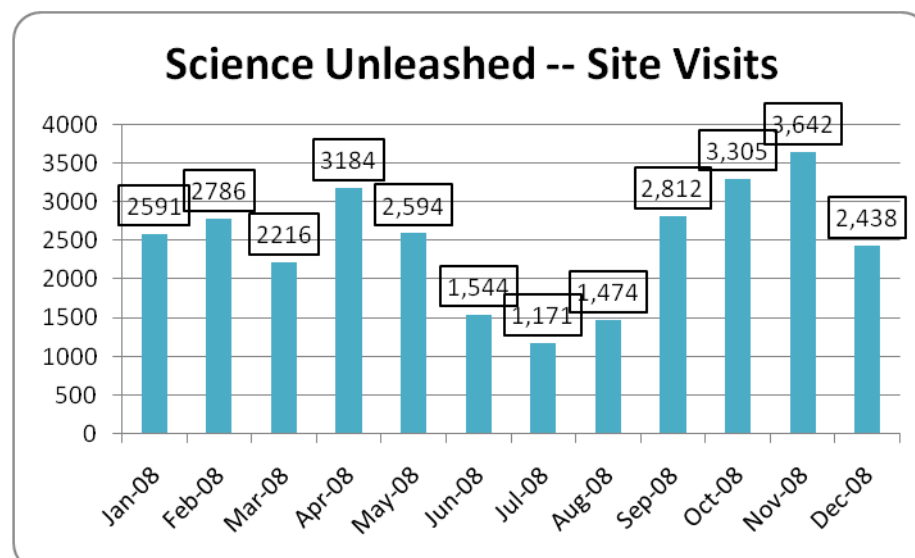
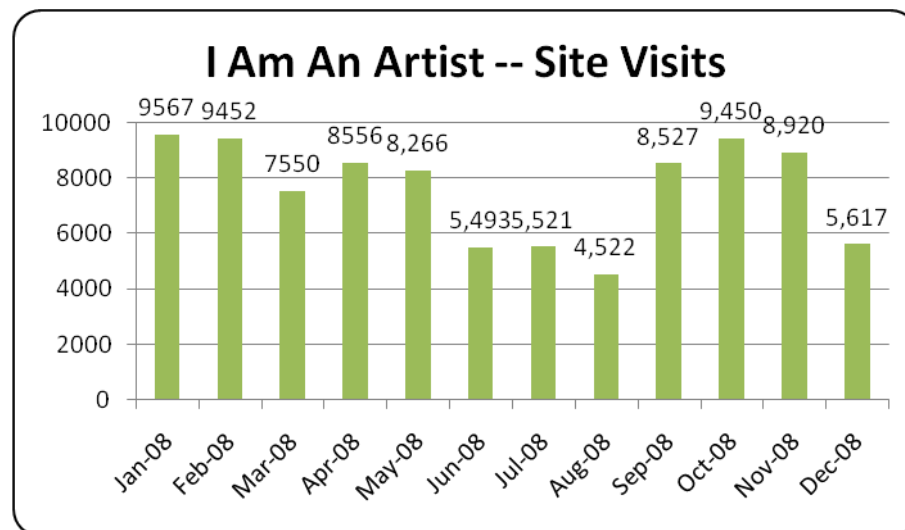
Immerse

Since 2003, IMMERSE, the digital learning partnership between the NCTE and RTÉ, has led to the production and development of several curriculum-relevant digital resources. These have been in the format of both DVD and online materials and include:

- I Am An Artist (Primary Visual Arts) — www.iamanartist.ie
- Sci-Spy (Primary Science) — www.sci-spy.ie
- Science Unleashed (Junior Cycle Science) — www.scienceunleashed.ie
- Look at History through the RTÉ Archives (Senior Cycle History) — www.scoilnet.ie/lookathistory

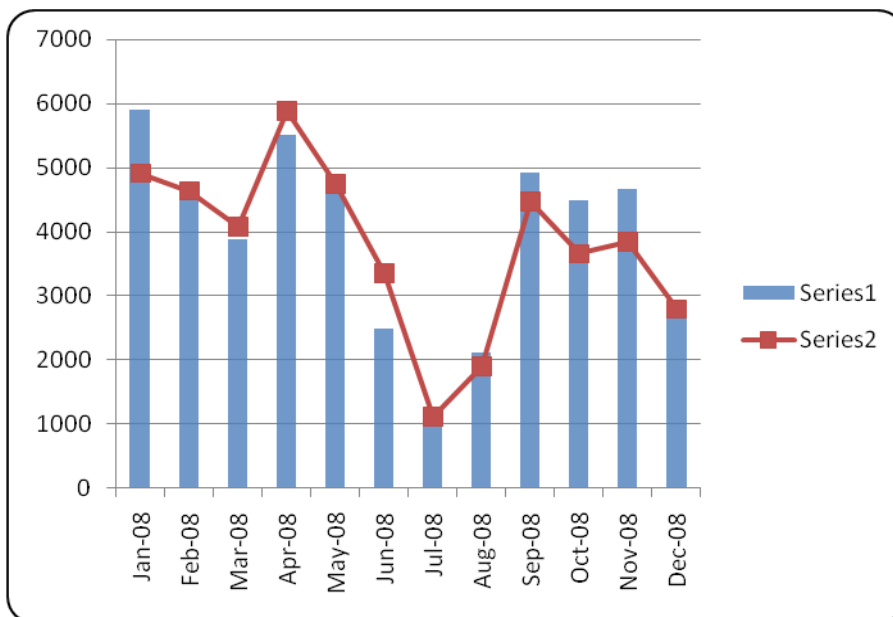
In 2008, the Digital Content team continued to maintain and update the various websites associated with IMMERSE. Overall, traffic to the IMMERSE websites increased during the year. The *I Am An Artist* website maintained its impressive 2007 traffic figures, with total website visits up slightly to 85,146. The Teachers' Notes available on this site were downloaded 40,875 times during the year. With regard to the other websites, traffic to *Science Unleashed*, the Junior Cycle science website, increased by 50% in 2008. The total number of visits recorded exceeded

27,000. Site traffic to *Sci-Spy* and *Look at History* remained steady throughout 2008.



History In-Service Website

The NCTE's collaboration with the History In-Service Support Team continued through 2008 primarily through the management and support of their website www.scoilnet.ie/hist. The website is a key focal point for teachers undertaking in-service and the part-time site manager (appointed in 2005) continued his work maintaining and updating content on the site as required. Website traffic statistics for 2008 grew by 25%, reflecting the value and importance of the resources and content contained within it. A total of 47,560 site visits were recorded for the entire year (up from 38,199 in 2007) with a monthly peak of 5,898 in January 2008. A total of 45,329 downloads of the PDF documents occurred during the year, confirming the high level of interaction that site visitors have with the content.



Series 1 = site visits Series 2 = Downloaded PDFs

ICT IN THE CLASSROOM



FÍS

FÍS (literally translated as 'Vision') is a project designed to introduce the medium of film as a support to the Primary School Curriculum (Curaclam na Bunscoile). FÍS is an initiative of the Department of Education and Science and the NCTE with additional support provided by the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology (IADT). A pilot project ran from March 2000 to March 2003 in 28 schools. Its success prompted a more extensive rollout of FÍS in 2005 to 50 schools, a further 25 schools in 2006 and a final 25 in 2007. The themes explored by the schools are firmly grounded in the primary curriculum and address all of the principles underpinning it.

The NCTE coordinated and delivered a structured programme of support and training through the education centre network in cooperation with IADT for all teachers involved in FÍS in 2008. At the close of the school year in June 2008, regional screenings of the films took place around the country, mostly in local cinemas, providing children and teachers with an opportunity to share and celebrate their work and the work of other schools involved in FÍS. The films range from topics on local history to hard hitting crime dramas.

Some 25 films from the regional screenings were short-listed for the National FÍS Film Festival which took place on November 4th 2008 in the Helix at Dublin City University. Over 700 children and their teachers attended from around Ireland. Twenty-six awards were presented to schools and their students to celebrate their outstanding film achievements in areas such as animation, acting, editing and direction.

Commenting on the National FÍS Film Festival, Anne White, National Coordinator with the NCTE, said *"We congratulate children from all over Ireland who have made these wonderful films. The FÍS methodology, using digital technologies, presents teachers and children with a collaborative approach to learning through the art of filmmaking. There are many roles to be undertaken in the filmmaking process and as a result FÍS often uncovers qualities and talents in children that might otherwise remain undiscovered. Their immense creativity never fails to impress."*

Digital Schools Award

The Digital Schools Award initiative recognises excellence in a school's approach to the integration of ICT in learning and teaching. The award scheme is unique in that it has the full support, not only of NCTE, but also of Computer Education Society of Ireland (CESI), Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), Irish Primary Principals' Network and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), all of whom contributed to its design and development.

The award scheme was launched by the Minister for Education & Science, Mary Hanafin T.D., in 2006 and some 51 primary schools from around the country participated in the first pilot phase of the initiative.

The criteria for securing a Digital School Award are clearly set out on the website, www.digitalschools.ie, and provide schools with a focused set of targets including an online self-evaluation tool. Validators have been appointed and trained by the NCTE to carry out the validation of a school for an Award. The NCTE is leading this project and is advised through a steering committee with representation from the partners involved.

During the course of the year 79 schools registered to become involved in the Award. In the same year a total of 13 schools received the Award bringing the total number of Digital Schools to 48 in 2008.

The Digital Schools website was updated in 2008 - this enabled improved streamlining of the application process and the inclusion of VLE access (improving communication between all partners involved).

A brochure was designed to promote the Award and sent to every primary school in the country. This promotional drive had a significant effect on the number of schools who registered for the Award and on awareness of the Digital Schools Initiative overall.

IBM Kidsmart Early Learning

The IBM *KidSmart Early Learning Programme* is a worldwide programme focusing on disadvantage and special educational needs in early childhood education. In Ireland, it includes the donation by IBM of computer-based learning centres suitable for use in early childhood education, together with selected Riverdeep educational software titles. The learning centres are specially designed for children from ages three to seven.

IBM extended its commitment to KidSmart by agreeing to fund 78 units for schools in 2008, bringing its total stated investment in this programme to over €1 million. Some 630 units are now in use in more than 300 schools. The NCTE developed a teacher training programme for primary schools participating in the *KidSmart Early Learning Programme*. This involved a tutor training programme and the development of training materials for teachers to enhance the support network for KidSmart teachers with a view to the upgraded system being made available in 2009.

In addition, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and Microsoft undertook to upgrade the existing Irish installation of Learning Village 1.8 to Learning Village 2.0 and to cover the costs of hosting and maintenance for 12 months. Learning Village is an online communications and collaboration platform for every teacher participating in the KidSmart Early Learning Programme.

A survey was developed for all existing schools which returned important information on the use of Learning Village in the schools.

Empowering Minds

The Empowering Minds project is a developmental project, based on a new approach to activity-based learning. Using mainly *LEGO Mindstorms* materials, children construct models which can be programmed to behave in certain ways, reacting to their environment and moving in different directions by acting on readings taken from the light, from touch and from temperature sensors.

The project is run by the NCTE in partnership with St. Patrick's College of Education. The NCTE is a member of the Project Steering Committee and provides project co-ordination and an ongoing programme of teacher professional development.

A number of partner schools exhibited at the Young Scientist Exhibition in January 2008 and two of them were award winners. Further workshops were organised for teachers from the project schools in Cork in January 2008 and support was provided by the project co-ordinator throughout the year. [Schools worked towards preparing a project to encompass the year's work with the aim of presenting it at a dissemination event.]

The NCTE funded, and was involved with, the organisation of the 10th Annual Roboshow in St. Patrick's College in May 2008. The Roboshow is an opportunity for children from 7 to 13 years of age to display imaginative projects. In a new departure for the project, a separate Roboshow event was held in Cork in May 2008 to facilitate the newer group of Cork schools participating in the project. All schools involved in the project exhibited at the events and themes included Roads & Bridges, the Lusitania sinking, models of school buildings, the world's first submarine and its designer JP Holland.

Some 22 schools attended the events in Cork and Dublin. Second level schools were represented for the first time as well with the demonstration of a Junior Certificate Technology Design project developed using LEGO robotics materials, showing the possibilities for developing and enhancing the ongoing work in Primary schools.

Examples of projects exhibited at Roboshow 2008 included:

- Coalmining in the local area
- Titanic
- Energy & Power Sources – from Coal to Wind.
- A history of Flight

Support was provided to a group of schools in Sligo during the first half of 2008 culminating in an exhibition event in Sligo Education Centre in June 2008. The teachers from the schools concerned had attended workshops over two weekends in preparation for their schools' initial involvement. Support was also provided by the local ICT advisor.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) and ICT

This initiative ensures that Special Education Needs are considered in the main activities and initiatives of the NCTE. It works across all other initiative activity at NCTE in seeking to bring a focus to SEN learning and teaching for students and teachers. The initiative also develops specific additional projects, supports and resources focused primarily on the needs of students and teachers in special needs education and the use of ICT in this context.

In 2008 Scoilnet resources for students with special educational needs and their teachers have grown substantially - over 240 new high quality resources have

been added on various topics. The SEN and ICT initiative has worked to create links with other agencies and organisations involved in the special educational needs such as the National Council for the Blind in Ireland (NCBI), the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (IATSE), the Irish Learning Support Association (ILSA), the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the National Disability Authority (NDA), to provide a more coherent service as regards ICT and special needs. This resulted in updated information and links on the NCTE and on Scoilnet. The initiative also contributed presented at conferences namely CESI, ISLA and IATSE.

Advice and support for exceptionally able children was also provided on the initiative's website. A trial focus group has been set up to keep abreast of developments in the area with the view to producing specific ICT resources.

The role of ICT and SEN Project Officer has grown in the course of the year to provide more wide ranging and case specific support to teachers on the use of ICT in learning and teaching of children with special needs. As a consequence, it is hoped to produce a booklet in 2009 and provide support and advice in this area.

FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE

The NCTE's core services are fully funded by the Department of Education & Science (DES). Dublin City University provides NCTE with financial services and includes the NCTE's income and expenditure in its financial statements.

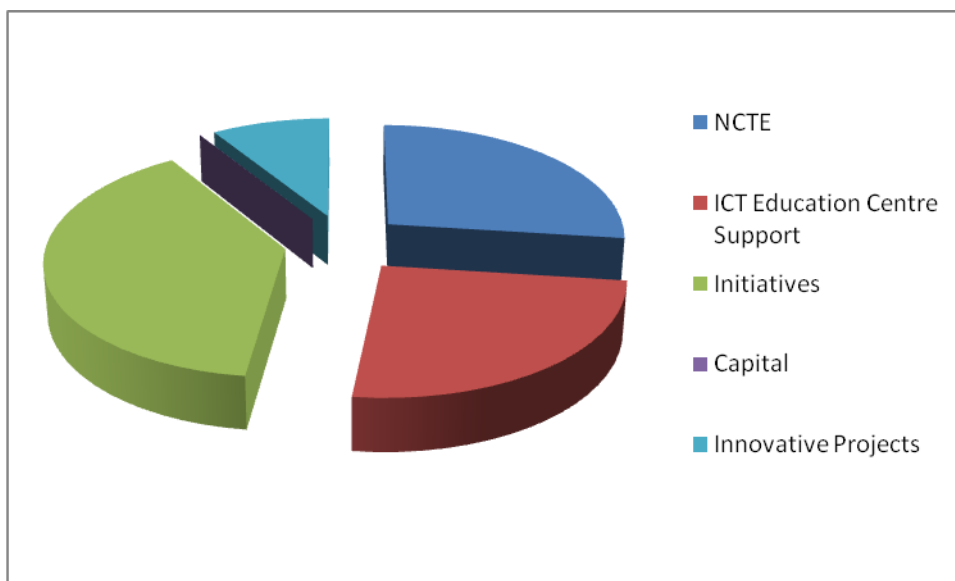
A total of €7,090,000.00 was received in 2008 from DES in order to fund the various initiatives of the ICT in Schools programme and the pay and non-pay costs for NCTE (centre costs). In addition the NCTE also received income of €364,990.59 from the European Union to fund the projects the NCTE oversees on the behalf of the DES.

A summary of total income/reimbursements is as follows:

NCTE INCOME	€'000
Income from DES	7,090
Funding from EU	365
Other income/reimbursements	9
Total	7,464

The total expenditure in 2008 was €7,280,818.79. The main categories were as shown in the table and the pie chart below:

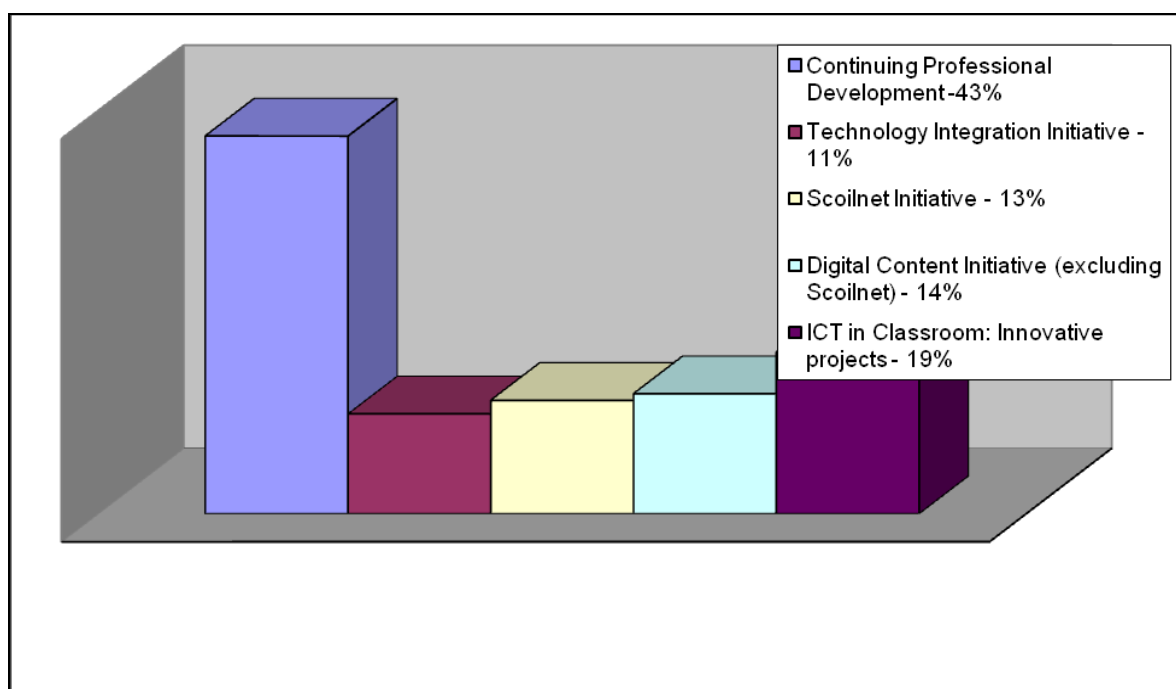
NCTE EXPENDITURE	€'000
Initiatives	2,821
Centre cost pay and non-pay	2,006
ICT Education Centres support	1,791
Innovative projects	641
Capital	22
Total	7,281



The major part of the expenditure went on the programme's initiatives which have been detailed in the preceding pages of this report. A further breakdown of the expenditure on these initiatives is also provided below:

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE ON ICT IN SCHOOLS INITIATIVES	€' 000
Continuing Professional Development	1,499
Technology Integration Initiative	396
Scoilnet Initiative	450
Digital Content Initiative (excluding Scoilnet)	476
ICT in Classroom: Innovative projects	641
Total	3,462

Note: expenditure on the Special Educational Needs and ICT Initiative is included in that of the other initiatives.



Expenditure for EU projects which the NCTE oversees on the behalf of the DES amounted €239,967.81.