

Background to the NCTE

The National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) was established under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science in 1998, as the lead implementation agency for the Schools ICT programme.

The NCTE was set up under a Memorandum of Agreement between the Department and Dublin City University (DCU) where it is still located today.

The ICT in Schools Programme commenced in 1998, following the publication of the three year programme *IT 2000 - A Policy Framework for the New Millennium* by the Department of Education and Science in November 1997.

The **core objectives** of the ICT in Schools Programme were to ensure that:

- all pupils have the opportunity to achieve computer literacy and to equip themselves for participation in the information society and
- teachers are supported to develop and renew their professional skills, so as to enable them to utilise ICTs as part of the learning environment.

The Schools IT 2000 project aimed to ensure that every pupil at primary and second level education had the opportunity to achieve computer and Internet literacy and be equipped for full participation in the information society. It had three main strategies for achieving its objectives:

- **Development of a technology infrastructure:** through the provision of multimedia computers and Internet access to schools
- **Development of a skills infrastructure:** through the provision of training to over 20,000 teachers in the use of ICT
- **Development of a support infrastructure:** providing advice and guidance to schools, supporting ICT-led innovation in teaching and learning, provision of curricular resources and information through the development of Scoilnet and the development of multimedia tools

The NCTE was charged with overall responsibility for the national implementation of ICT policy including the provision of a range of school supports for ICT in primary and post primary schools.

Building on the success of IT 2000, the Department publish *Blueprint for the Future of ICT in Education* which was a 3 year strategic action plan for ICT in schools. The Plan sought to advance the use of ICT in education by:

- augmenting the ICT capital provision to schools; with EUR78.72m capital grant aid for primary and second-level schools
- A significant lowering of the Computer/Pupil ratio
- expanding access to, and use of Internet technologies;
- Prioritising special needs students
- Investing in locally based teacher training and the further development of the teaching skills to fully integrate ICT into learning and teaching

- development of wiring-networking infrastructure in all schools and the introduction of broadband access to the Internet.
- The facilitation of Software/Multimedia Resources development for use in schools
- The development of ICT school plans to meet individual school needs
- The development of education Web resources primarily through Scoilnet
- A new scheme of innovative ICT projects
- Collaboration with other European countries
- Partnership with the social partners, industry and with the broader community
- Feedback from schools to determine future priorities

Between 1998 and 2004, the Department invested some EUR157m under the Programme, comprising EUR108m in capital investment and EUR49m in current investment.

Over the past thirteen years the NCTE has supported the Departments policies by implementing these plans.

More recently, the Minister of Education and Science appointed an ICT Strategy group to advise on the priorities for investment in ICT in Schools. Their report, **Investing Effectively in Information and Communications Technology in Schools 2008-2013** was published in 2009.

This was followed by the '**Smart Schools = Smart Economy**' action plan, produced by a Ministerial advisory group and a government investment of €150million under this plan.

This investment ensured that every classroom in the county would have a teaching laptop, software and a digital projector at a minimum. A series of grants have been given to primary and post-primary schools for ICT equipment in 2009 and 2010, and the NCTE has been at the forefront assisting schools with their procurement.