

Tarbert Comprehensive School



ICT Plan 2012/2013

Mission Statement:

We aim to ensure that all our students develop basic computer skills across a variety of application programs and gain confidence in using all aspects of the technology. More able students will be encouraged to use their talents as often as possible.

We strive to integrate ICTs across the Curriculum as far as possible and to safely expose as many students as we can to the huge resource that is the Internet.

Our hope for the students of Tarbert Comprehensive School is that they will acquire an appreciation of the place of computers in the modern world and of ICT as a tool to help them in their studies with us as well as in their future careers and lives.

E-Team: M. McGillicuddy, Principal
R Prendiville, Vice Principal
A. O'Halloran, ICT Co-ordinator
A. McNamara, Technology
J. Mulvihill, Science
S. Sheehy, Resource?
M. Culhane, Admin Staff

[Note: the role of regional ICT Advisor no longer exists.]

ICT Co-ordinator Role:

- Leader of E-team- responsible for developing/reviewing E-learning Plan, organising meetings and work arising.
- Reviewing the Acceptable Use Policy relating to all ICT issues in the school in consultation with all stakeholders
- Liaising with teaching staff to ensure AUP implemented and equipment kept in good working order as far as possible. Fault Log operated to assist with latter task.
- Conducting ongoing audits of hardware and software and making upgrade and planning decisions re. same.
- Providing First Line Maintenance/Basic Troubleshooting as far as possible, (often assisted by Andrew McNamara).
- Liaising with Castleisland Computers regarding day-to-day technical as well as annual overhaul and future planning needs.
- Liaising with Broadband provider (Imagine) and NCTE Helpdesk as necessary.
- Assisting colleagues with day to day ICT needs and acquiring any hardware or software they may require.
- Timetabling/co-ordinating access to both computer labs to optimise same across the school year.
- Ordering – and as necessary installing – inks, toners and other consumables.
- Keeping abreast of the technology – hardware and software; taking up inservice where useful. E-links and CESI forums both useful for this.

- Ensuring staff kept informed of ICT related CPD opportunities from NCTE and elsewhere as they arise.
- Liaising with Castleisland Computers and our Adult Education Officer re provision of software/network accounts for community evening classes in TCS labs.
- Researching/developing courses for day classes across range of skills, from basic up to programming classes.
- Liaising with Careers Officers re. student access to careers software, websites and online databases as well as CAO applications online.
- Liaising with LCVP/LCA/TY Co-ordinators re. those teaching groups.
- Liaising with Library Committee re. maintenance of equipment in this public area and incorporating ICT into Library re-furbishment.
- Providing ad hoc assistance to staff and students (other than timetabled students), for purposes of project research and preparation, e-mailing, printing of course and task materials.
- Liaising with SNAs re. assistive technologies/software and any other ICT needs.
- Consulting on development of professionally designed Website

Annual Review of ICT now includes:

- Development of E-Learning Plan for TCS [see attached]
- Audit and documentation of current infrastructure and planning for future developments of same
- Update of hardware and software together with licences and budget re. same
- Review of technical support service, budget and options re. same
- Review of changing staff needs re. CPD in ICT
- Review of integration of ICT across curriculum
- Review of ICT in relation to special needs requirements in TCS
- Review of AUP and other policies, internet security, filtering levels etc.
- Review of website facility
- Review of ICT programmes in place & related courseware
- Review of new Junior Cycle curriculum in relation to ICT

Developments since last review:

- Summer 2012 brought us 18 more ex-UL PCs, 15 of which have now been added to the network in various locations. There have been some complaints about their performance however and same will be reviewed over next school year.
- Wireless access points have now been deployed in strategic locations around the school campus, providing us with about 15% coverage. [During this school year a concern was raised by a group of medical personnel about the Health implications of installing wireless services in school environments. Our own investigations revealed no evidence has been found by national or international bodies as yet that might justify such concern. Thus, we expect to extend our wireless facilities in the future.]
- The Resource Room now has a much more effective ICT facility in place with 8 laptops and a printer of their own, accessing the Internet wirelessly. We did suffer some but these have abated since that WAP was moved to room A2 where it seems to operate much better and is overseen efficiently by the teacher based there.
- After trialling Moodle for school year 2011/2012, it was decided to discontinue with it as staff/students found the interface less than user friendly.
- E-portal finally rolled out at the beginning of this school year without too many hitches and is seen by the entire staff as a huge advance, easing planning and organisation in particular. Castleisland Computers have provided staff with home access to both e-portal and their staff e-mail accounts.
- 2012 summer works also included upgrading from Office 2003 to Office 2007 at last. Internet Explorer was replaced as our main browser by Google Chrome but this led to an unusually high incidence of software incompatibilities and glitches, and this move has now been reversed. We are now faced with a necessary upgrade of our Windows network OS which is planned for 2013 summer works.
- Co-ordinator conducted analysis of ink/toner costs during first term of this school year and changed suppliers as a result. Unfortunately the company contracted by the DES to provide us with consumables were substantially more expensive than a local supplier, so we placed our order locally.
- Staff photocopier is now used as an additional printer, but there have been some teething problems and a review of actual savings achieved will be conducted in due course.
- ABTutor software has proved to be a good investment enabling better classroom management in the computer labs as was anticipated. In addition, the ICT Co-ordinator can now remotely access the network (to a limited extent) from home. Although teachers are usually good at turning off the PCs in their classrooms, occasionally entire labs are left powered up in error after school hours. The School Caretaker will now notify me and I can deal with this problem remotely by utilising ABTutor. This should afford us some savings in electricity costs in the long term. [Further to this end, staff have been asked to remember to power down their teacher's PC and data projector at the end of each day rather than leaving equipment on standby.]

- The staffroom annex was re-organised last summer also and an old PC replaced. We now have 3 PCs, a mono printer and a scanner located along the left hand side of this little space, which are all well-used by staff. [The door to this room did have to be removed for safety though, as the first PC was a little too close for comfort initially.]

- *Continuing Professional Development:*
 - We began school year 2011/2012 with a Whole School Training Day aimed at bringing staff up to speed on all the latest ICT developments. Back to back sessions were conducted by Ann O’Halloran and Andrew McNamara giving staff an overview of new systems put in place. A handout was provided with guidelines on same. Each colleague was given a copy of the upgraded software for home use and installation instructions for same. An afternoon introduction to the interactive software for the data projectors was presented by Noel White of Castleisland Computers and staff were given the opportunity to calibrate their own boards and experiment with their Interactive pens and ActivInspire at the end of the session.

 - Co-ordinator undertook training in Scratch programming at the beginning of 2011 and subsequently delivered classes in same to Transition Year students, some of whom made it to the National Finals of the Scratch Programming competition run by LERO and Tallaght IT in May of 2012.



[Lero – The Irish Software Engineering Research Centre, based in UL are working on a Junior Cycle Short course on “programming/coding” due for final approval in March/April of 2013. We will be keeping an eye on the outcome of this work and taking part in further training if such is available. Co-ordinator intends to investigate Coder dojo also, as a further possibility of developing coding skills in our students.]

- Several staff members have undertaken subject based ICT courses this year, eg. ICT & Maths 2 course provided by NCTE at Education centres in both Limerick and Tralee.
- Co-ordinator completed online courses in Blogging, Podcasting and Wikis provided by NCTE in May/June 2012. Staff was also informed of availability of these easy-access courses.
- At the end of last school year Co-ordinator conducted a survey of staff skills and their use of ICT facilities put in place in recent years. See E-learning plan for results of this survey.
- Management provided staff with inservice from Forensic Psychologist Maureen Griffin in January 2013 on the serious challenges arising from Social Networking. Teachers found this session particularly enlightening if a little frightening. Maureen kindly made her presentation available to us, complete with links to useful guidelines and advice on how to deal with the increasing problem of cyberbullying. This has been placed on the Q:/ for staff.

Integration of ICT across the Curriculum:

- i) *Access to ICT facilities* has been much improved over the past few years. There are now 150 PCs on our school network. Both computer labs are still very busy but re-designing/expanding B8 has seriously eased both overcrowding and timetabling pressures. The T4 lab (Room C9) is still well used by LCVP groups however.
- ii) Staff continue to make excellent use of the (Q:/) for sharing resources, including Useful Websites [copy included in E-learning plan]. Inservice is yielding more and more useful ICT based resources many of which have been shared across departments quite successfully.
- iii) It is unfortunate that timetabling pressures have led in recent years to a curtailing of timetabled classes for our junior students in particular. The ECDL team found this to be a serious hindrance in completing the course undertaken back in 2009. It also prevented us being involved in a pilot programme the ICS has run ahead of the introduction of the new Junior Cycle. This problem could have unfortunate repercussions in the long term for our students' skills base, their 3rd level experience, their future careers and their likelihood of developing into life-long learners in an increasingly technological world.
- iv) There was a good staff debate at the end of last school year regarding the prospective introduction of iPads into our classrooms. This would of course be the ultimate "integration" of ICT. We have decided however to proceed with caution in relation to this particular development for a number of reasons, not least of which is the enormous investment involved. Castleisland Computers concurred with our caution on the matter, advising that signal loss is still a greater issue with iPads than with either desktops or laptops in their experience. This issue will be revisited again in due course.

- v) The data projectors are well-used by most staff at this point [see survey]. This has perhaps been encouraged particularly by easier access to the Internet both within classrooms and around the school thanks to wireless connectivity. Many people now bring in their own laptops and work in the staffroom or library, instead of having to wait for network PCs to become free.

Other Issues

We are once again considering the feasibility of continuing with ECDL given our time constraints and the costs involved. The alternative is to satisfy ourselves with a shortened version of the full certificate course – ECDL Start, or to move wholly towards Microsoft Qualifications, at least for our senior students.

The re-structuring of the LCVP away from groups rotating every 5 weeks between LCVP teachers to “class groups” led by one teacher for the duration of the course has greatly improved outcomes for students.

The delay in completing the website has led to a break in the provision of this facility. However, the new website is now imminent.

The Social Media inservice yielded the shocking information that an instance of “fraping” involving a couple of our students had come to light recently. There was no evidence that this abuse happened in school time or by means of school facilities, but our AUP [attached] is currently under review again to ensure TCS is as explicit as possible in relation to respectful use of our ICT facilities. All incoming first years will be given an introductory session by their CS teachers covering the terms of our AUP and their rights/responsibilities in regard to the school network. This session will probably involve some discussion of Social Media and its challenges, but that issue will be more fully addressed elsewhere in the curriculum.

For the past two years we have sent representatives to the BETT conference in London. Both trips have provided useful reconnaissance and networking opportunities regarding future planning for ICT.

Most pressing ICT tasks in near term:

Hardware

Look into costs of new server

Analyse sound problems in relation to all data projectors. We may have add speakers in some rooms.

Replace any remaining old style mice with optical mice.

Software

Investigate provision of Survey/Evaluation software, egs. Survey Monkey or QuestionTools to make collection and analysis of E-learning data as well as classroom assessment easier.

E-learning Plan

Complete Software audit and add to Hardware audit and Analysis of Staff Skills and ICT use.

Bring E-team together to examine data collected so far, determine how far we think we are along the ICT roadmap and present analysis to full staff. Their assistance will then be sought in setting targets and timelines towards completing the E-learning Plan.