Department for Education

Narrowing the digital divide in schools and colleges

Government consultation response

July 2025

Contents

Introduction

We want all schools and colleges to have the access to the reliable and safe technology they need for their students to achieve and thrive and for their organisations to run efficiently. In March 2025, we launched an online consultation to set out the Department for Education's long-term vision for narrowing the digital divide in schools and colleges, focusing on proposals for the future of the digital and technology standards.

This response is split into the same three sections as the consultation:

- Prioritising essential technology infrastructure
- Managing the risks of technology
- Harnessing the opportunities of technology

The consultation asked for feedback on our long-term ambition for all schools and colleges to meet the following core digital and technology standards by 2030:

- Broadband internet
- Wireless networks
- Network switches
- Digital leadership and governance
- Filtering and monitoring
- Cyber security

To inform future policy development, the consultation also sought to gather evidence on:

- The readiness of the sector to meet the six core standards, any barriers schools and colleges face in meeting these and support required from the Department.
- Examples of best practice in harnessing the benefits of technology, as well as areas where the sector has identified evidence gaps that it would like the Department to help address.

Main findings from the consultation

The consultation received 210 responses, See Annex A for more information on the respondents.

Overall, there was a positive response to the proposals with the majority of schools and colleges stating that they could meet the six core digital and technology standards by 2030, and many already meeting them.

Respondents agreed on the importance of narrowing the digital divide in education and the potential equalities impact on some schools and colleges not having access to reliable and safe technology.

The broad themes across the consultation responses were:

- Financial pressures on the sector to maintain their technology alongside other competing priorities, particularly when legacy systems needed significant upgrades.
- The need for support to build both technical expertise and leadership capacity in the sector.
- The importance of taking a strategic approach to technology, including long-term planning to spread costs.
- The important role of suppliers in providing products and services which supported schools and colleges to manage their technology safely and cost effectively.
- A desire from both the sector and the market for greater support and engagement from the Department to help schools and colleges meet the standards

Prioritising essential technology infrastructure

This proposal set a long-term ambition for all schools and colleges to meet the following standards by 2030 to ensure they have a strong digital strategy, and the essential digital infrastructure required in the digital age:

- Broadband internet
- Wireless networks
- Network switches
- Leadership and governance

This section covers questions 14 – 22.

Question 14

For everyone

For the following questions, will you be responding from the perspective of:

Answer	Total	Percent
A school or college	98	52%
An academy trust, local authority, college governing body, diocese acting on behalf of a governing body or site trustee	45	24%
An organisation and/or supplier who supports schools and colleges	35	19%
Other	11	6%
Total number of responses for this question	**189**	

Question 15

For schools and colleges

Is it feasible for your school or college to meet these four standards (leadership and governance, broadband internet, wireless networks and network switches) by 2030?

Answer	Total	Percent
Yes, we already meet them	32	30%
Yes, we can meet them by 2030	45	42%
No, we can't meet them by 2030	31	29%
Total number of responses for this question	**108**	

Question 16

For academy trusts, local authorities, college governing bodies, dioceses acting on behalf of governing bodies, and site trustees

Is it feasible for the schools and colleges in your organisation to meet these four standards (leadership and governance, broadband internet, wireless networks and network switches) by 2030?

Answer	Total	Percent
Yes, all of the schools and colleges in my organisation already meet them	8	17%
Yes, the schools and colleges in my organisation can meet them by 2030	26	57%
No, the schools and colleges in my organisation can't meet them by 2030	12	26%
Total number of responses for this question	**46**	

Question 17

For academy trusts, local authorities, college governing bodies, dioceses acting on behalf of governing bodies, and site trustees

Do you have the strategic capacity and capability to ensure that schools and colleges in your organisation have essential technology infrastructure?

Answer	Total	Percent
Yes, we already do this	26	57%
Yes, we could do this in the future	15	33%
No, we do not have the capacity or capability to do this	5	11%
Total number of responses for this question	**46**	

Question 18

For academy trusts, local authorities, college governing bodies, dioceses acting on behalf of governing bodies, and site trustees

What support would you need to take on a strategic leadership role for technology?

46 respondents answered this question. The most prominent themes were:

- **Additional funding** – Many respondents identified the need for increased funding to invest in technology infrastructure.
- **Leadership and capability building** – Many respondents identified a lack of individuals with both strategic and technical expertise to take on IT leadership roles in their organisation. Some respondents wanted support from the Department on upskilling staff, while others suggested a culture change was needed in the sector to value technical expertise.
- **No requirement for help** – Some respondents were already confidently performing this strategic role.
- **Government guidance and engagement** – Some respondents identified a need for the Department to provide more explicit advice on technical requirements, strategic approaches and effective use of technology. A small number of respondents also wanted more opportunities to collaborate with the Department for Education on this topic.

Question 19

For organisations and suppliers who support schools and colleges

How has your organisation aligned its products or services to support schools and colleges to meet the standards?

28 respondents answered this question. The most prominent themes were organisations:

- Aligning their products and services to the Department for Education's digital and technology standards
- Providing support with connectivity infrastructure
- Providing specialist support for cyber security and safeguarding.
- Providing training to improve digital capability
- Developing edtech tools to meet the needs of teachers and students
- Providing support with digital strategies

Some examples of organisations aligning their services to meet the standards include:

> In addition, we ensure that our members are kept informed about DfE standards and funding opportunities, and we regularly invite vendors and DfE representatives to engage directly with our community in a transparent and collaborative manner. This ensures schools are not only aware of the standards but also equipped with the real-world knowledge to achieve them sustainably.
>
> **Association of Network Managers**

> Our Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH) has operated for the last 14 years to support the entire children's workforce, including teachers and school professionals with any online safety issues, relating to them as professionals and to the children they work with. In this respect, POSH provides advice and guidance consistent with DfE standards particularly around safeguarding.
>
> **SWGfL (Partner in the UK Safer Internet Centre)**

> We have restructured our Managed Service offering to align our support model with the DfE's standards. We provide our customers with a radial RAG report showing where they need to invest compared to the current standards. It gives a visual representation of where a school is at technology wise, to a senior leader who is not always as technologically aware.
>
> **Computer Systems in Education Ltd**

Question 20

For organisations and suppliers who support schools and colleges

What could the Department do to enable you in this shared goal?

30 respondents answered this question. The most prominent themes were:

- **Departmental engagement –** Some respondents were keen for more regular updates and opportunities to collaborate with the Department, including advance notice of changes to the digital and technology standards so organisations can better prepare and support the sector

- **Funding** – Some respondents suggested ringfenced budgets for technology and greater investment in digital infrastructure
- **Communication with the sector** – Some respondents suggested the Department could do more to inform schools on the importance of meeting the standards and the benefits of technology
- **Support for these proposals** – Some respondents were positive about the 2030 ambitions which offers the sector a long-term strategy with clear priorities
- **Accreditation** – Some respondents would welcome accreditation schemes and approved supplier lists in their areas to support schools and colleges to make informed choices, especially for connectivity and cyber security.
- **Awareness raising of services** – Some respondents were keen for Department to promote specific services or products to the sector

A small number of respondents also mentioned:

- The positive impact the standards have already had in the sector and the market
- The need for better online safety training, including for parents and families
- The need for greater clarity on available funding and how to apply for it
- The need for more technical guidance for schools and colleges
- The need for more personalised guidance and support for schools and colleges
- A request for funding for their products and services

Question 21

For everyone

Are there specific elements of these standards that you or the schools and colleges you support would struggle to meet?

156 respondents answered this question.

Most respondents thought the standards were set at a suitable level, however they also flagged there could be significant costs associated with meeting them.

Overall, ASCL members are supportive of the digital and technology standards and the vision to embed these by 2030. Many have already started to embed the standards into their settings. To ensure that all settings can do this, they must be supported both with adequate funding that is accessed and distributed fairly, and with technical expertise to implement the standards. This will be necessary to ensure the digital divide is closed.

Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)

The most prominent themes were:

- **Wi-fi networks and network switches** – many respondents flagged the high costs associated with upgrading these systems to meet the standards, particularly if there has been historic underinvestment. A small number of respondents raised specific elements of the standards where they believed the specification should be lowered to reduce costs, specifically the need for:
    - critical core switches to have two management modules and power supplies
    - multi-gigabit ports
    - administrator training package
    - back-up broadband lines
- **Broadband** – many respondents flagged the specific challenges faced obtaining gigabit capable broadband in specific regions, particularly for schools waiting for fibre upgrades with unclear timelines.
- **No difficulties expected** –many respondents were already meeting the standards or confident that their strategy would allow them to do so in the coming years. Some of these respondents credited the Department's Connect the classroom programme with supporting them to upgrade their network infrastructure.
- **Leadership buy-in and expertise** – many respondents reported that their senior leadership team (SLT) were not likely to prioritise technology in the future. Some respondents also lacked the capability within their leadership team to appoint an SLT digital lead, as required in the leadership and governance standard.

Some respondents also raised themes of:

- **Ongoing maintenance** – respondents were able to meet the standards but were concerned about planning ahead for the ongoing maintenance costs of their technology infrastructure.

- **Legacy systems** – respondents flagged that their legacy systems were difficult to improve upon without a wholesale replacement, which could be expensive.
- **Procuring suitable technology** – respondents lacked confidence and expertise to procure technology which met the standards.

Question 22

For everyone

Please share any best practice examples regarding managing essential technology infrastructure.

122 respondents answered this question.

The most prominent themes were:

- **Digital strategies** – many respondents reported that a good digital strategy was essential for their successful digital transformations. They flagged the importance of their digital strategies, including plans for ongoing maintenance of their technology infrastructure, and how planning ahead with phased upgrades helped with affordability.

- **Tech support** – many respondents reported that strong tech support was a key component of managing their digital infrastructure, this included procuring support from external agencies, centralising it across their trust or local authority and having support within their school.

- **Working with suppliers** – many respondents reported that positive relationships with reliable and knowledgeable suppliers could provide significant value. Some respondents flagged that the opposite could also be true, with long contracts which didn't meet their needs sometimes restricting their ability to manage technology.

Many respondents also mentioned:

- **Centralised approach across a trust** – respondents raised the potential benefits of consistency, shared expertise and cost savings which a centralising technology within a trust could provide.

- **Upgraded Wi-Fi enabling use of tech –** respondents reported how improved Wi-Fi connectivity allowed them to access a wider range of technology and manage it more effectively, including transitioning to cloud based services and centralising services which can offer efficiencies and improved security.

- **Cyber security** – respondents flagged how a proactive approach to cyber security in their organisations allowed them to keep their technology infrastructure safe and secure.

Government response

Proposal outcome

We were pleased to see that the majority of schools and colleges (72%) that responded to the consultation are already meeting these four digital and technology standards or believe they can meet them by 2030. As a result, we believe it is appropriate to proceed with the proposal to set an expectation that schools and colleges meet the following standards by 2030:

- Broadband
- Wireless networks
- Network switching
- Digital leadership and governance

Barriers, concerns and support

We note the concerns from a significant minority of schools and colleges (29%) who do not currently think they could meet these standards by 2030. We acknowledge the financial pressures schools and colleges face, as well as other barriers around expertise and technical knowledge. We will prioritise work to further understand the barriers and provide support over the coming years to prepare them for 2030. This year, we are extending our Connect the classroom programme by investing £25 million in upgrading wireless networks in schools. As part of a wider effort to drive up standards, the programme will prioritise supporting schools currently receiving targeted intervention through the regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) programme, who are identified as also not meeting our wireless network standards.

We hear the concerns from some schools who have not been connected to fibre networks and as a result would struggle to meet the broadband standards. We understand that connecting a school to the UK's fibre network can be prohibitively expensive and do not expect schools to fund this from their own budgets. We will continue to work with DSIT and BDUK to identify schools that might be missed by the commercial rollout of gigabit-capable broadband and support those schools to receive an upgrade to fibre broadband ahead of the 2030 expectation to meet the broadband standards.

We appreciate respondents taking the time to flag specific elements of the standards which are expensive or difficult to meet. We are committed to ensuring that any

requirements on schools and colleges provide good value for money and help them to run as efficiently as possible. So, we will review each of these examples fully and consider on a case by case whether the standards should be amended. We will share an update of any planned amendments by the end of this year.

We also hear the request from the sector for more support on digital strategies and with the procurement of technology. Our plan technology for your school service supports schools to self-assess against the six core digital and technology standards and receive bespoke recommendations which can be used as part of building a digital strategy. Schools can also receive free and impartial procurement advice and guidance from specialists or search our DfE approved options via Get help buying for schools. We will continue to explore how the Department can best support schools and colleges in these areas.

Strategic leadership, suppliers and support

It was clear from the responses that Responsible Bodies have a crucial role to play in digital transformation, including managing essential technology infrastructure. In this context, Responsible Bodies refers to academy trusts, local authorities, college governing bodies, dioceses acting on behalf of governing bodies, and site trustees. We were pleased to see that the vast majority of Responsible Bodies (90%) either already have strategic capacity and capability to ensure their schools have essential technology infrastructure, or were confident they could do this in the future. We will continue with our proposal to support Responsible Bodies to take on increased strategic responsibility for essential technology infrastructure in the schools and colleges in their organisation. As part of this support, we have recently launched a Multi-Academy Trust view on our plan technology for your school service. This allows trusts to view a dashboard of their schools and their schools' recommendations aligned to the digital and technology standards.

We also heard feedback from some technical staff that they struggle to get buy-in from their senior leadership team to prioritise technology. We are mindful of the competing pressures leadership teams face and the need to balance these requirements alongside others. We believe that reliable technology infrastructure can help schools and colleges in many of their other priorities, including improving outcomes for students and reducing staff workload.

It was clear from the responses that many suppliers are already supporting schools and colleges to manage their technology infrastructure, and it is heartening to see how proactively they have adopted the digital and technology standards into their services and products. We note suppliers' request for increased engagement from the Department, including advanced warning of changes to the standards so they can update their guidance and services to reflect these changes. We will explore how we can better engage with the market in this way to help them better support schools and colleges in this rapidly changing landscape.

Managing the risks of technology

This proposal set a long-term ambition for all schools and colleges to meet the following standards by 2030, to minimise the risks posed by technology:

- Cyber security
- Filtering and monitoring (these standards should already be met as part of Keeping Children Safe in Education)

This section covers questions 23-30.

Question 23

For everyone

For the following questions, will you be responding from the perspective of:

Answer	Total	Percent
A school or college	100	53%
An academy trust, local authority, college governing body, diocese acting on behalf of a governing body or site trustee	48	26%
An organisation and/or supplier who supports schools and colleges	28	15%
Other	12	6%
Total number of responses for this question	**188**	

Question 24

For schools and colleges

Is it feasible for your school or college to meet the cyber security standards by 2030?

Answer	Total	Percent
Yes, we fully meet them now	46	38%
Yes, we can meet them by 2030	66	55%
No, we can’t meet them by 2030	8	7%
Total number of responses for this question	**120**	

Question 25

For schools and colleges

To what degree is your school or college meeting the filtering and monitoring standards?

Answer	Total	Percent
We fully meet them	70	59%
We meet them to some extent	47	39%
We don't currently meet them	2	2%
Total number of responses for this question	**119**	

Question 26

For academies, college governing bodies, dioceses acting on behalf of governing bodies and site trustees

Is it feasible for the schools and colleges in your organisation to meet the cyber security standards by 2030?

Answer	Total	Percent
Yes, all of the schools and colleges in my organisation already meet them	19	40%
Yes, the schools and colleges in my organisation can meet them by 2030	27	56%
No, the schools and colleges in my organisation can't meet them by 2030	2	4%
Total number of responses for this question	**48**	

Question 27

For academies, college governing bodies, dioceses acting on behalf of governing bodies and site trustees

Do you think the schools and colleges in your organisation are meeting the filtering and monitoring standards?

Answer	Total	Percent
Yes, all of the schools in my organisation already meet them	38	79%
The majority of the schools in my organisation already meet them	7	15%
The majority of schools in my organisation don't currently meet them	3	6%
Total number of responses for this question	48	

Question 28

For everyone

Are there are specific elements of the cyber security standards that you, or the schools and colleges you support, would struggle to meet?

140 respondents answered the question.

There was broad recognition of the importance of cyber security and a significant number of respondents did not face any barriers to meeting the cyber standards now, or by 2030.

While there was little reference to specific elements of the standards which respondents would struggle to meet, many respondents reported wider practical challenges that hinder their ability to be able to effectively meet the standards. The most prominent themes were:

- **Financial constraints -** Many respondents reported financial limitations as a barrier to implementing the cyber security standards. Costs associated with upgrading hardware, software, and infrastructure, as well as accessing external expertise, were frequently highlighted. The upcoming end-of-life for Windows 10 and the need to replace out of date hardware and software was a particular concern, with institutions unable to afford widespread device replacement.

> The main area of risk for our schools is the use of outdated hardware and software, which will be no longer supported with security updates and therefore be susceptible to vulnerabilities and potential cyber-attacks….
>
> …Further to this, many of our schools are still using end-of-life network infrastructure, which is no longer support with security updates and does not offer enhanced security control layers.
>
> **Academy Trust**

- **Technical challenges and expertise -** Respondents highlighted the difficulty of managing outdated systems and the lack of in-house technical expertise, particularly in smaller or rural schools. Respondents also reported a reluctance within their settings to adopt security measures like Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), as it was seen as inconvenient or expensive to implement.

> Cyber security is still often seen as a technical issue for the IT department to manage in isolation, rather than a core safeguarding, operational continuity, and reputational risk that should be embedded into the school's wider strategic thinking… To truly meet the DfE's cyber security standards across the board, there needs to be a shift in mindset at the top.
>
> We would urge the Department to strengthen its messaging and expectations around leadership accountability, making it clear that cyber security is not optional, nor simply a technical concern - it is a fundamental leadership responsibility. Stronger guidance and mandatory requirements, rather than recommendations, may be necessary to ensure action is taken before - not after - a serious breach occurs.
>
> **Association of Network Managers in Education**

- **Awareness and Training -** Respondents highlighted the need for improved cyber security awareness and training across all levels of school staff. Respondents noted that training is often deprioritised due to time constraints, and that ongoing awareness is essential to mitigate human error, which remains a significant vulnerability.

Respondents did not cite being unable to meet any specific standard but identified financial constraints, competing training priorities, and lack of technical expertise as barriers.

Question 29

For everyone

Are there specific elements of the filtering and monitoring standards that you, or the schools and colleges you support, are struggling to meet?

125 Respondents answered the question.

Respondents did not raise specific elements of these standards which they struggled to meet. The most common response was that they faced no challenges in meeting the filtering and monitoring standards. However, some respondents raised more general barriers in meeting these standards. The key themes were:

- **Technical challenges -** Some respondents reported difficulties in implementing and managing filtering and monitoring systems due to the complexity of the technologies used in the school system. These barriers include:
    - Device management and system complexity, particularly in environments with mixed operating systems or Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies.
    - Encrypted traffic and SSL inspection, which complicate effective monitoring.
    - Circumvention of filtering and monitoring systems via mobile data (4G/5G).
- **Financial and resource constraints -** Some respondents highlighted the costs associated with filtering and monitoring software, as well as the staff resource required to monitor alerts effectively.
- **Lack of expertise -** Some respondents highlighted a need for more training so that relevant staff could understand how filtering systems work, what constitutes a risk and how to interpret alerts.

Additionally, a small number of respondents highlighted:

- Challenges in balancing security and educational access
- Difficulties in keeping up with evolving threats and technologies
- The need for leadership involvement alongside technical teams

Question 30

For everyone

What additional support would you or the schools and colleges you support need to proactively manage the risks of technology, including meeting the cyber security and filtering and monitoring standards?

140 respondents answered the question

Many respondents expressed that they are committed to meeting the standards. Some reported that they were fully able to meet current standards and require no additional support, while others suggested a range of support offers that could assist them. Across the responses, five key areas of need emerged:

- **Financial support** – respondents highlighted the high costs of cyber security infrastructure, licensing, and staffing.

- **Improved training and awareness** – respondents highlighted expressed the need for up-to-date, mandatory training for staff and leadership, with a focus on practical cyber risk management and awareness of emerging threats.
- **Access to technical resources** – respondents called for better access to technical tools and shared services such as penetration testing, procurement templates, and AI risk management support. Many respondents reported that it was difficult to keep pace with evolving threats, and called for shared services, templates, and procurement support.
- **More guidance on how to meet the standards** – some respondents reported that they struggle to understand what is required to meet the standards. They requested some tools to help with compliance, such as checklists, and examples to help interpret and implement requirements effectively.
- **Access to expertise** – some respondents expressed a desire to have access to external cyber security professionals and advisory services to support audits, training, and incident response.

> Small schools need external expert support for appropriate policies, audits and training would be essential to avoid overload and this important aspect not being addressed fully.
>
> **Academy, North East**

> It is vital that DfE (Department for Education) emphasises the importance of educating staff and pupils about these risks and how to detect and report them, so appropriate action can be taken as soon as possible.
>
> **Digital Poverty Alliance**

Government response

Proposal outcome

We are encouraged that the majority of schools and colleges that responded to the consultation (93%) either already meet or believe they can meet the cyber security standards by 2030, and that 98% report currently meeting the filtering and monitoring standards either fully or to some extent. This reflects the sector's strong commitment to managing the risks that are posed by technology. As a result, we believe it is appropriate to proceed with the proposal to set an expectation that schools and colleges meet the following standards by 2030, to minimise the risks posed by technology:

- Cyber security

- Filtering and monitoring (these standards should already be met as part of Keeping Children Safe in Education).

Barriers

However, we recognise that a minority of schools and colleges face challenges in meeting these standards. A range of barriers were highlighted, including financial constraints, technical complexity, and a lack of expertise. We understand that refreshing out-of-date technology, the implementation of measures such as Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), and the change of pace of technology are also areas of concern. We also understand that filtering and monitoring systems can be difficult to configure and manage, especially in smaller schools or those with limited access to IT support.

We agree with respondents that cyber security and online safety are not just technical issues but core leadership and governance responsibilities. We will continue to work with the sector to raise awareness of the threats posed by cyber incidents and help schools and colleges to ensure that effective cyber security protocols and measures are embedded into wider school and college governance. We will also explore how we can continue to provide clear guidance and practical tools to support greater cyber resilience across the sector.

Support

For filtering and monitoring, we have funded a webinar series with UK Safer Internet Centre to help schools understand how to meet the filtering and monitoring standards.

We have also recently launched support content on both filtering and monitoring and cyber security in our *plan technology for you school* service. This allows schools to assess their technology set up against these standards and receive personalised recommendations and take actionable steps to meet them.

Finally, we understand the challenges faced by the rapidly changing technology landscape and are committed to ensuring that the standards remain up-to-date and achievable for all schools and colleges. We will continue to work with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and other stakeholders to review the cyber security and filtering and monitoring standards on a regular basis and consider whether any changes are needed.

Gathering Evidence: Harnessing the opportunities of technology

This section of the consultation asked respondents whether our current suite of eleven standards is sufficient, or if there are areas where further guidance would be beneficial. It also aimed to identify evidence gaps and gather evidence of best practice examples on using technology to:

- provide new teaching and learning opportunities
- improve inclusivity, including for students with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)
- improve workload efficiencies
- offer cost savings and efficiencies

Question 31

For everyone

Is this the right set of standards to help schools and colleges maximise potential benefits of technology?

181 respondents answered this question.

Answer	Total	Percent
Yes	141	78%
No	40	22%
Total number of responses for this question	181	

Question 32

For everyone

What is the best way the Department for Education can support schools and colleges to meet the remainder of the digital and technology standards within their existing technology budgets?

170 respondents answered this question. The most prominent themes were:

- **Financial and budgeting support –** Many respondents suggested additional funding for schools to meet the remainder of the digital and technology standards, with some proposing ring-fenced IT budgets or dedicated funding. Many

respondents identified the need for support on long-term planning regarding technology expenditure which would support efficiency and value for money.

> Too often, schools focus on short-term planning, looking only one term ahead rather than considering a long-term strategy. By providing a clear roadmap—showing how to progress over five years, with specific budgets for years 1, 2, 3, and beyond—schools can optimise their spending. For example, year 1 might require a larger investment in network upgrades, while year 2 could see reduced costs for devices. Without this understanding, schools risk misallocating funds and missing critical opportunities to invest in the right areas at the right time.
>
> **IT lead, Harrow**

- **Guidance and support –** Many respondents identified that clear, simple guidance and support were key aspects of the Department for Education helping schools to meet the remainder of the digital and technology standards.

  Respondents cited that this was especially important for those who did not have technical expertise but wanted to ensure that their IT support was meeting the standards. Several respondents spoke of the need for an auditing tool to assess whether they were meeting the standards. Several respondents suggested increasing accountability measures on the remaining digital and technology standards.

  Some also noted a desire for high-impact case studies that demonstrate how schools and colleges have implemented each of the standards using limited budgets. Examples included:

> Provide an easy-to-use tool aligned to the 11 standards that helps schools and colleges assess where they are, prioritise investment, and identify ‘quick wins’ that don’t require large capital outlay.
>
> **School ICT Support Manager / School Data Protection Officer, London**

> A tool or checklist for each standard would make it easier to assess compliance… Training tools and checklists for leaders to self-assess would be useful.
>
> **Association for School and College Leaders (ASCL)**

- **Procurement support –** Many respondents highlighted the benefit of assistance with cost-effective procurement, including bulk purchasing agreements and access to affordable technology solutions to maximise value for money. Some

respondents specifically noted existing Department for Education support including the Get Help Buying for Schools service.

- **Infrastructure and equipment –** Several respondents noted the need for support in upgrading and maintaining infrastructure equipment to ensure equal access to technology and opportunity. Some respondents specifically noted existing Department for Education support including the Connect the classroom programme.
- **Training and development –** Some respondents emphasised the necessity for training and professional development for teachers and support staff to further the effective use of technology in schools and colleges
- **Digital inclusion and equitable access –** A small number of respondents noted that support was needed in ensuring equitable access to technology for all students, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with some specifically flagging leasing and recycling of technology as a method to support equitable access.

Question 33

For everyone

Please share any examples of best practice which have allowed your organisation to use technology to:

- **provide new teaching and learning opportunities**
- **improve inclusivity, including for students with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)**

131 respondents answered this question.

Provide new teaching and learning opportunities

The most prominent themes were:

- **Teacher training and evidence-based pedagogy –** Many respondents highlighted the importance of providing the sector with the necessary training and resources to facilitate new learning opportunities for all students through the use of technology. Many also identified the use of evidence-based pedagogy when using technology as best practice examples.

Staff training is one the best ways to improve the use of technology. One good example of this is staff within our IT technical department working with teachers and teaching assistants to develop bespoke training sessions. We have run onsite training sessions with [devices] and looked at various apps to enhance teaching and learning. We set up training sessions in all areas of the curriculum, not just computing, to look at how students can use technology to evidence their learning.

Academy Trust, East Midlands

We are undertaking a cross-trust 'Primary Pathfinder' project which is systematically evaluating the educational technologies that have the most impact for SEND students. The study is being formally evaluated and is centred on assistive software tools, educational content, workflows and student devices. The outputs from the evaluation will allow us to scale this over time involving increasing our leadership capacity and a well understood set of tool recommendations aligned with targeted and impactful CPD for students.

Academy Trust, National locations

- **Innovative software –** Some respondents mentioned the use of innovative software to provide new teaching and learning opportunities across their curriculum, including augmented reality, e-sports and apps.

Improved inclusivity, including for students with SEND

The most prominent themes were:

- **Assistive technology** (*Digital assistive technology (AT) includes any device, software or system used to support students with SEND; it includes specialist equipment like Braille devices, as well as free or low-cost accessibility software such as dictation tools)* **–** The majority of respondents highlighted the integration of assistive technologies, such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text and screen readers to enhance accessibility and independence of students with SEND. Respondents also noted the benefits of inclusive classroom environments, and assistive technologies for learners.

We use technology to develop foundational skills with our SEN students - laptops are used regularly for typing practice, basic SPaG (Spelling, punctuation and Grammar) testing and skill development etc. We also teach our SEN students about the built-in accessibility tools (e.g. Adaptive Reader, we're a Microsoft School) and supporting them in developing their own working practices using these tools so they can have individualised support.

Senior leader, South East

- **Digital accessibility and inclusive environments -** Many respondents mentioned the use of built-in, free-to-use accessibility features. Best practice examples included implementation of accessibility tools, such as font size adjustments, closed captions, and immersive readers to support diverse learning needs and ensure digital resources for the benefit of all students.

  Many respondents also highlighted the development of an inclusive learning space using technology as a key aspect of ensuring equal access for all students including those with SEND and EAL/ESOL (English as an Additional Language/English for Speakers of Other Languages). Respondents also mentioned the use of digital resources and multimedia communications to support inclusivity.

Using tablets with chat (carefully controlled) can be a huge benefit for SEND or students struggling to communicate with their teachers, and using them with translation apps for EAL (English as an additional language) students, suddenly they can communicate, it is incredibly supportive for a new student to a school and a wonderful feeling to communicate with someone when you don't speak each other's language - but you see their smile!

Single Academy Trust, South West

- **Infrastructure and digital equity –** Some respondents identified equitable digital access as a key feature for improving inclusivity, including for those with SEND. Examples included ensuring that all students have access to necessary devices and internet connectivity. In some cases, this involved using pupil premium funding or re-purposing older devices.

The key challenge for students with SEND needs is having access to technology, both inside and outside school. We maintain a pool of devices that we can loan to our SEND community to ensure they are able to perform the assignments and tasks, that the non-SEND community are able to do easily. We continue to face a challenge to maintain the same filtering standards on these devices, outside of school, as we apply inside school…This school has a high proportion of SEND students and it has made a huge difference to their learning experience and the results.

Academy Trust, South West

- **Personalised learning** – A few respondents identified the use of technology to create tailored learning experiences that adapt to individual students' needs, abilities and learning styles, often through adaptive and AI-driven learning platforms. Appropriate safeguarding needs to be considered if these tools are being used directly by students.

Question 34

For everyone

Please share any examples of best practice which has allowed your organisation to use technology to:

- **improve workload efficiencies**
- **offer cost savings and efficiencies**

135 respondents answered this question.

The most prominent themes were:

- **Artificial intelligence and automation –** The majority of respondents highlighted the automation of tasks and the use of artificial intelligence tools as best practice examples to improve workload efficiencies.
    - For teaching staff: examples included marking and feedback; reporting and data analysis. These led to reductions in workload and enhanced teaching practices, linked to personalised learning and assessment.
    - For support staff: examples included streamlining HR processes and administrative tasks, such as ensuring all staff have completed training.

Staff have recorded saving up to 7.5 hours per week giving more personalised feedback through voice notes and emojis. Support staff report saving up to 3 hours per week not completing menial tasks such as cutting, printing and laminating meaning they have a high focus on teaching, learning and intervention. Financially, using technology has saved schools up to £16,000 annually on printing and paper. One school reported saving £10,000 per year on curriculum resources. These savings not only make the model sustainable for 1:1 devices but save the school money long term. Staff reported that time usually spent sticking in resources/lesson objectives - 5mins per day - were replaced with digital resources resulting in 67.5 hours learning time gained back for all children annually.

Academy Trust, West Midlands

Jisc has contributed to the Department for Education's Generative AI in Education expert views report, referenced in the consultation and released in January 2024, which indicated the potential of AI for workload efficiencies. Since then, we have completed our pilots of Teachermatic in 8 colleges over a 12-month period and found that it does indeed improve workload efficiencies for many staff, with 79% of pilot participants reporting this to be the case, with an average time saving of over 2 hours a week.

Jisc

- **Bulk procurement and devices –** Most respondents reported that they had realised cost efficiencies through purchasing in bulk, including devices, interactive screens and licenses. Some respondents also mentioned making cost savings through device leasing. Respondents reported that procuring hardware in bulk supported a reduction in the per item hardware cost and printing costs.

Our 1:1 [device] programme has seen a dramatic reduction in teacher workload and printing costs, as well as improving staff retention (because teachers know they won't have this opportunity in many other schools).

Senior Leader and Director of Digital Learning, London

> Procuring in bulk and using leasing to front load the purchase offered substantial discounts and allowed us to quickly replace a large amount of outdated equipment. As we entered the final year of the operating lease, we were able to buy out the devices for a nominal fee. This has allowed significant investment in the student devices estate whilst our staff can benefit from a refresh of the new equipment.
>
> **Academy Trust, North West**

- **Cloud-based solutions –** Many respondents praised the use of cloud-based systems to enhance collaboration, reduce costs and improve accessibility, workload efficiency and sustainability. The most common examples given were for the use of digital platforms, such as Microsoft365 and Google Workspace to facilitate communication and collaboration among staff, students and parents. Respondents cited using these tools to enhance resource sharing and improve workload efficiency. Some respondents also mentioned the positive impact on staff wellbeing through the ability to work flexibly.

Question 35

What are the current evidence gaps the Department for Education needs to fill to support the education sector to maximise the benefits of technology?

139 respondents answered this question.

The most prominent themes were:

- **Teaching and learning –** The majority of respondents flagged a lack of robust, pedagogy-based evidence on the impact on learning outcomes as a current evidence gap. Many also cited the need for longitudinal studies. A few responses also mentioned that with rapid technological innovation, evidence of short-term benefits may also be necessary.

> The Department for Education needs to gather more evidence on the long-term impact of specific technologies on teaching outcomes and workload reduction. There is also a gap in understanding the cost-effectiveness of different digital tools across varying college contexts, particularly in disadvantaged or rural areas. Additionally, more research is needed on the digital skills gaps among staff and students, and the most effective strategies for addressing them.
>
> **College, West Midlands**

- **Workload efficiencies –** Many respondents noted that a lack of evidence on the effective use of technology to reduce staff workload hindered informed decision making.

> While there is growing evidence about the potential of technology to reduce workload, there is limited data on which implementation models most effectively balance technology adoption with pedagogical effectiveness.
>
> **Supplier of a digital product, North West**

- **Artificial Intelligence –** Some respondents identified an evidence gap around the use of Artificial Intelligence, highlighting the lack of longitudinal evidence, financial benefits and the impact of AI on pedagogy.
- **Case studies and examples –** Some respondents identified a lack of real-world case studies, best practice examples and practical tips as an evidence gap. These responses predominately spoke of cost-benefit analysis (for areas such as cloud migration) and how other educational settings had successfully integrated technology (including device schemes).

> [We need] financial and organisational models that reflect different ways of enabling successful, sustainable 1:1 implementation.
>
> **Technical Strategist & Innovation Lead, Academy Trust, East Midlands**

- **Digital divide, access and skills –** A smaller number of respondents spoke of a lack of evidence on how disparities in access to technology, internet connectivity and lack of digital literacy skills impact learning outcomes. This was particularly in relation to those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with SEND.

> While digital infrastructure in schools is improving, there is still insufficient evidence on how disparities in access to devices and high-speed internet affect learning outcomes and equity.
>
> **Supplier of a digital product, North East**

Other responses highlighted:

- A need for case studies and examples for how educational settings have dealt with cyber breaches.
- A need for evidence for schools in different contexts, particularly rural settings
- A need for evidence around how technology supports in preparing students for their future, linked to employability

- A need for evidence of the impact of technology usage on both student and staff wellbeing.

Government response

We are pleased that the majority (78%) of those who responded to the consultation agree that the Department for Education has published the right set of digital and technology standards to support schools to maximise the potential benefits of technology.

Department for Education support

We acknowledge financial constraints in the implementation and use of technology. We appreciate respondents highlighting the need for support and guidance in planning their technology spend, including for maintenance and refresh plans. Many respondents expressed a need for a tool to support them in assessing themselves against the digital and technology standards. Our Plan technology for your school service supports schools to self-assess against the six core digital and technology standards and receive bespoke recommendations. The service helps schools to make more informed decisions about their technology, which saves time and money when they implement change and ensures they have safe, secure environments for all staff and learners. We will continue to develop the service to meet schools' technology planning needs. Schools can also receive free and impartial procurement advice and guidance from specialists or search our DfE approved options via Get help buying for schools.

We acknowledge concerns raised by respondents regarding infrastructure and equipment. The Department for Education recognises that safe and reliable technology infrastructure is an essential foundation for maximising the benefits technology offers. As outlined in the 'Prioritising essential technology infrastructure' section above we are investing £25 million in upgrading wireless networks in schools through our Connect the classroom programme. Furthermore, we will continue to work with DSIT and BDUK to identify schools that might be missed by the commercial rollout of fibre broadband and support those schools to receive an upgrade to gigabit-capable broadband ahead of the 2030 expectation to meet the broadband standards.

Best practice examples

We want to thank respondents for providing a rich and varied range of best practice examples in using technology to provide new teaching and learning opportunities, improved inclusivity (including for those with SEND) and cost and workload efficiencies.

It is clear from responses received that technology has promising potential to support students with SEND. The DfE digital accessibility standards recommend the inclusion of digital accessibility in relevant strategies and ensuring that digital resources are accessible to all learners, both of which are crucial to fostering an inclusive learning environment. We were pleased that many respondents highlighted the benefits of

assistive technologies to improve inclusivity for all students. The Department is eager to support schools and colleges to realise these benefits, which is why, from September 2025, all initial teacher trainees and early career teachers, will receive training on effective assistive technology use as part of their training based on the Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework.

Many respondents also flagged the role of Artificial Intelligence in supporting cost and workload efficiencies. To enable schools and colleges to safely and knowledgeably maximise these benefits, the Department has published a policy paper on Generative AI in education, supplemented by free online support materials to help schools and colleges use AI safely and effectively.

To ensure that AI is safe and effective for use in education, we have:

- Announced the Education Content Store pilot which aims to make the underpinning content and data that are needed for great AI tools available. In parallel, DfE has launched innovation funding to encourage developers to make use of the content store and stimulate the market to create high quality marking and feedback tools.
- Published a set of expectations AI tools should meet to be considered safe for classroom use, making AI tools for education safer by design.

We are pleased to hear about how schools and colleges are harnessing the benefits offered by technology and the Department for Education is eager to support more schools and colleges to realise these benefits. We will explore options to share these examples of best practice with the education sector.

Gathering evidence

We are grateful to respondents for highlighting key areas in which more evidence is needed to show the impacts of technology on organisations, staff and students. The Department is focused on a vision for a high-quality education for all, underpinned by evidence, and will continue work to develop and strengthen the evidence base. We look forward to the publication of the latest Technology in Schools Survey in Autumn, which will give insights into schools' decision making and how they plan for technology, what technology is being used and how effective it is, and the advantages of, and barriers to, effective implementation and use of technology.

We are also funding the EdTech Evidence Board pilot, which will explore how we effectively build evidence of EdTech products that work well, helping education settings feel confident that they are choosing products that work well for them and for their classrooms. Additionally, we are piloting an Edtech Impact Testbed to test edtech products in real education settings to generate evidence of their impact. We will be engaging with the sector to understand what works. We'll look at how tools, including AI, can improve staff workload, pupil outcomes and inclusivity.

Equality Impact Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment

Question 36

For everyone

What comments or concerns do you have, if any, about how the proposals in this consultation document may affect you or individuals (both adults and children) with particular protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010)?

89 respondents answered this question.

- **No concerns –** The majority of respondents did not have any concerns about how the proposals may impact individuals with protected characteristics, and instead believed the proposals would have a positive impact.

Of the minority of respondents who reported concerns, the most prominent themes were:

- **Digital divide** *(The digital divide refers to unequal access to technology, internet, and devices, which may exacerbate existing inequalities among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnic minority groups, and those with disabilities)* **–** Respondents commented on the impact of the digital divide, with concerns that the gap will continue to widen without appropriate funding, infrastructure and support structures in place, though some suggested that careful planning and flexibility can be used to overcome this issue. There were concerns about students not having access to appropriate technology at home versus the classroom, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Technology can be transformative for disabled young people, but only when quality training and support is available to enable the learner to get the most from the technology. It is vital that technology can work within an educational digital ecosystem and that learners are not without the software or devices they need. The digital divide is a complex social issue and is closely linked to social disadvantage, increasing the vulnerability of certain learner groups. This includes those at risk of poverty who live in areas with high deprivation and unemployment, come from single-parent households, work in low-paid sectors or are unemployed, reside in private or social rented accommodation, and belong to BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) backgrounds. Our data shows that many of the most disadvantaged learners fall into one or more of these categories. One way to address this is ensuring staff and students have the digital skills and tools needed to thrive in an increasingly technology enabled environment.

Jisc

- **Accessible and inclusive technology** – Respondents raised the issue of individuals with disabilities and other protected characteristics facing significant barriers to accessing and using digital technology; and highlighted the need for accessible and assistive technology, inclusive design, and accommodations to ensure equal participation and learning opportunities.
- **Teacher training and support** – Respondents also emphasised the importance of providing educators and senior leadership with training, resources, and support to effectively purchase and use technology to address the diverse needs of students with relevant protected characteristics. Some responses urged the Department to recognise the diversity of user needs across the education workforce beyond teachers and pupils (e.g. governors, parents/carers with disabilities and other protected characteristics).
- **Funding and resource constraints** – Respondents were concerned that effective implementation of technology is dependent on and potentially hindered by financial limitations and resource constraints particularly in disadvantaged areas and suggested more targeted funding and support. Some respondents indicated that restricted IT budgets may hinder the purchase of new devices and software, while older equipment fails to support accessibility features.
- **Data privacy, security, bias and discrimination** – Some respondents raised concerns about protecting student data, particularly for vulnerable groups, and ensuring robust safeguards and ethical guidelines are in place to prevent misuse. Others were concerned about the risks associated with AI-powered technologies potentially perpetuating biases and discriminating against those with disabilities or other protected characteristics.

- **English as an additional language** – A few respondents suggested that technology could help with communications for students and families with English as an additional language; whilst others were concerned about the barriers to using technology for such families.

Question 37

For everyone

What comments or concerns do you have, if any, about how the proposals in this consultation document may affect children and young people with special educational needs?

95 respondents answered this question.

- **No concerns or positive impact** – The majority of respondents did not have any concerns about how the proposals may affect children and young people with SEND, with many responses suggesting that the proposals would have a positive impact for those with SEND.

Of the minority of respondents who reported concerns, the most prominent themes were:

- **Funding and resource concerns** – Respondents raised concerns about inadequate investment, funding and resources potentially hindering effective implementation of technology to support children and young people with SEND. Comments included that without appropriate funding, schools are unable to invest in resources such as specialist software programmes or devices that support newer accessibility features.
- **Accessibility and inclusion** – Respondents commented on the importance of widespread adoption of assistive technology and other specialist tools to improve accessibility and inclusion, and support children and young people with diverse needs. Responses also emphasised the need to support children and young people with all needs, regardless of their background, as well as the need for appropriate connectivity and infrastructure to use specialist tools. Some respondents highlighted that children and young people with SEND could face barriers if technology is not designed with inclusivity and accessibility in mind.
- **Training and support** – Respondents stressed the need for comprehensive training and support for educators, staff and families of children and young people with SEND to make effective use of technology and assistive technology. The concerns were that without training, adults working with children with SEND may not fully understand their needs and how to deploy innovative technological solutions. Some respondents also suggested that families of children with SEND may need additional support to understand the digital tools used by their children.

- **Individualised support** – Respondents indicated that a one size fits all approach would not be sufficient for children and young people with SEND and called for personalised approaches and support plans tailored to the unique needs of each child. Some responses specifically called for bespoke solutions for students with hearing and/or vision impairments who may have varying needs. Several respondents suggested that proposals do not go far enough to provide sufficient support for children and young people with SEND.
- **Digital divide** – Some respondents raised concerns about the potential for existing inequalities to be widened for disadvantaged students if barriers for learners with SEND are not removed, either due to restricted budgets or inequity in access to technologies due to poor infrastructure.
- **Overreliance on technology** – A few respondents were concerned that the use of digital technologies for children and young people with SEND could lead to an overreliance on technologies and could therefore impact their ability to develop important motor skills such as writing.

Question 38

For everyone

Are you aware of the environmental impacts of technology?

164 respondents answered this question.

The most prominent themes were:

- **Awareness of environmental impacts** – The majority of respondents reported some awareness of the environmental impacts of technology. Many respondents cited the impact of production, energy consumption, water usage, transport and disposal of technology. Some pointed out the large amounts of energy needed for artificial intelligence, data centres and minerals for chips.
- **Sustainable practices** – Some respondents shared their own considerations of the environmental impacts when purchasing education technology and suggested ways in which they actively pursue sustainable practices across their digital estates to reduce environmental waste.

When purchasing technology, we carefully consider energy efficiency, lifespan, repairability, and environmental certifications. We prioritise devices and infrastructure that offer lower power consumption, longer-term value and reduced environmental footprint. This approach is integrated into our procurement policies to ensure alignment with our sustainability goals.

Academy Trust, West Midlands

Question 39

For everyone

Do you consider environmental impacts when purchasing technology?

163 respondents answered this question.

The most prominent themes were:

- **Consideration of environmental impact** – The majority of respondents reported consideration of environmental impacts when purchasing technology, with a small proportion of respondents reporting that they did not consider the environmental impact or only sometimes considered environmental impacts.
- **Financial implications** – Many respondents indicated a desire to consider the environmental impacts but often had to prioritise cost meaning that often, the cheapest option was purchased. Some respondents indicated that it should be the manufacturers' responsibility to ensure their products are environmentally friendly.
- **Green suppliers** – Those who did consider environmental impacts when purchasing opted for green suppliers or refurbished products to minimise their carbon footprint. Some responses explained that their environmental considerations were primarily implemented through supplier selection processes rather than through individual product level decisions.

Question 40

For everyone

Are there any specific environmental considerations that should be included in the DfE's digital and technology standards?

137 respondents answered this question. The most prominent themes were:

- **E-waste management** – The majority of respondents suggested that the Department's digital and technology standards should include considerations for responsible disposal, recycling and refurbishment of electronic devices where appropriate to minimise electronic waste and its environmental impact. Some shared ways in which they were reducing their own e-waste.

> We ensure all of our devices' lifetimes are maximised and devices are always re-purposed and sold on to parents, to give them a second life, hence minimising environmental impact
>
> **Local authority maintained school, North West**

- **Energy efficiency** – Many respondents emphasised that the use of energy efficient devices and practices reduced power consumption, particularly in digital technologies like artificial intelligence and cloud services.
- **Sustainable procurement** – Many respondents advocated for environmentally responsible purchasing decisions, including the use of refurbished or remanufactured devices, sustainable packaging, and consideration of the environmental impact of technology procurement.
- **Device longevity and repairability** – Many respondents suggested that the Department's digital and technology standards should promote the purchase and design of durable devices with repairable components to extend their lifespan and reduce the frequency of replacements.
- **Financial constraints and feasibility** – Many respondents highlighted the financial challenges in implementing environmentally sustainable practices and the need for cost-effective solutions.
- **Environmental impact of digital technologies** – Many respondents commented on the broader environmental effects of digital technology, including carbon footprint, resource usage and pollution, and integrating these considerations into digital strategies.
- **Government initiatives** – Several respondents suggested potential government initiatives such as approved supplier lists, requirements for suppliers to meet and government-run recycling schemes to reduce e-waste.
- **Environmental education and awareness** – Some respondents encouraged the integration of environmental topics into the curriculum and raising awareness among students and staff about sustainable digital practices.

Government response

We are pleased that so many respondents felt the proposals would not have any negative impact on individuals (both adults and children) with particular protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) or the environment.

Inclusion for students with SEND

We note the concerns from some respondents about how the proposals in this consultation document may not go far enough to support children and young people with SEND. We agree that accessibility and inclusion should be at the forefront of digital and technology policy and will continue to prioritise this in the next steps of this work to narrow the digital divide in schools and colleges.

The Government is committed to helping teachers and school staff to use technology to support students with SEND and we are continuing to build our evidence base on the potential for Assistive Technology to improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools. For example, we will be testing lending libraries in up to 32 local authorities as part of the Change Programme. The Department also has a well-evidenced assistive technology training offer which is available to all early career teachers from 2025.

Environment

We are encouraged by the good work schools and colleges are undertaking in this area and we will explore ways to share these best practice examples with the sector.

We agree that sustainability should be included within our digital and technology standards. We have embedded environmental considerations across all our standards rather than developing a standalone environment standard to ensure the impact is consistent across all standards, and for this to create the largest impact. Therefore, we will take the specific recommendations made into consideration when developing and updating our standards.

Next steps

Based on the responses to this consultation, we will continue with our long-term ambition for all schools and colleges to meet the following six core digital and technology standards by 2030:

- Broadband internet
- Wireless networks
- Network switches
- Digital leadership and governance
- Filtering and monitoring
- Cyber security

As set out in our proposals, we will explore long-term options for greater accountability on these standards ahead of 2030. As part of this, we will consider:

- what kind of accountability would be appropriate and proportionate in relation to the benefits technology offers
- where accountability should sit, for example, with individual schools and colleges or academy trusts, local authorities, college governing bodies, dioceses acting on behalf of governing bodies, and site trustees
- how to cohesively bring together the existing expectations around the standards, including where they are embedded in existing guidance such as Keeping Children Safe in Education, the Academy Trust Handbook and Good Estate Management for Schools

In response to feedback on these proposals, we will:

- Review specific elements of the standards where the requirements may be prohibitively expensive to meet. We will consider whether the standards need to be adjusted in these areas to ensure they are achievable and provide value for money. This will be balanced alongside the need to ensure all schools and colleges have reliable and safe technology.
- Continue to develop our *plan technology for your school* support service, focusing on the core six standards and additional functionality to support Responsible Bodies in their strategic role.

- Continue to engage the sector and market on how we can best support schools, colleges and Responsible Bodies to develop robust digital strategies which include long-term maintenance planning and allow them to manage their technology infrastructure in the most cost-effective way.
- Explore additional support for the sector on procurement, to help them buy the right technology at the right price.
- Share examples of best practice on harnessing the benefits of technology with the sector.

Annex A: Summary of responses received

The consultation received 210 responses, (200 online responses and 10 email responses).

Of those who answered the question 'Which of the following best describes who/which part of the sector your organisation represents?' 74 responses were from schools or trusts, including Multi-Academy Trusts, which represent multiple schools. There are 24,479 schools in England.[1] 15 responses were from colleges. There are 217 colleges in England.[2]

The introductory questions (1 – 13) helped us to understand more about respondents' profiles, including how respondents interacted with schools and colleges in England. A summary of responses can be found below.

Question 4

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Answer	Total	Percent
Individual	70	33%
Organisation	140	67%
Total number of responses for this question	**210**	

Question 7

Please select one description of your current role:

[1] Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK. Accessed 17/06/2025.

[2] List of colleges in the UK | Association of Colleges. Accessed 17/06/2025.

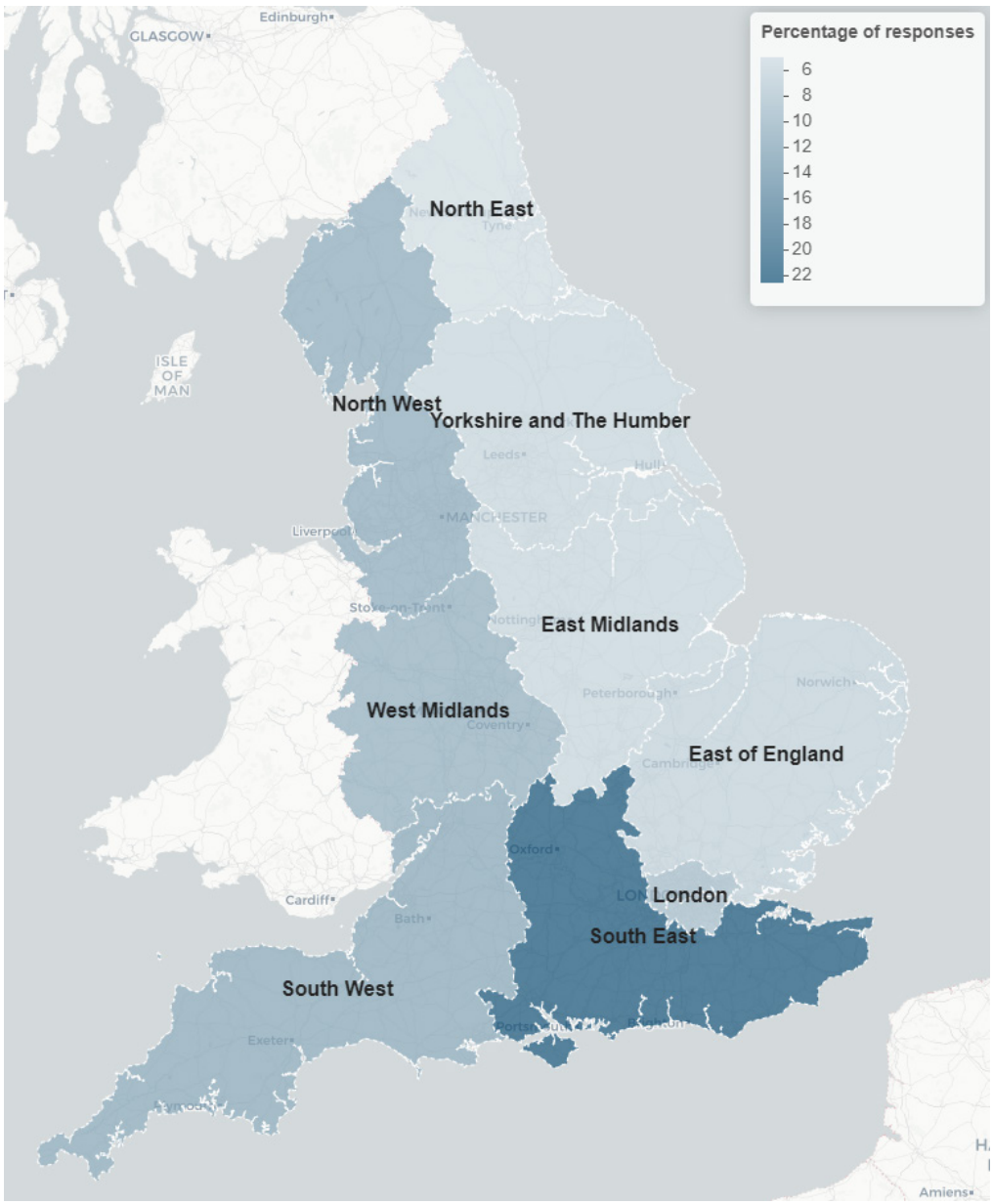
Answer	Total	Percent
Teacher	14	20%
IT lead	12	17%
Senior Leader	7	10%
Headteacher	5	7%
IT support	5	7%
Role descriptions with fewer than 5 respondents	9	13%
Other	17	25%
Total number of responses for this question	**69**	

Fewer than 5 responses were received from Network Managers, School Support Staff, Secondary Computer Science teachers or other subject leads, Governors, Parents/carers/guardians and School Business Managers. Of respondents who answered 'Other', various roles were mentioned including a School Resource Management advisor, a Researcher in Digital Education and Teacher Professional Learning, a School Data Protection Officer and a Trustee of an Academy.

Questions 8 &13

Which local authority in England are you based in?

To ensure anonymity, local authorities are mapped at the regional scale below. Overall, respondents were most likely to be based in the South East (22.5%), followed by the South West (12%), North West (11.5%) and West Midlands (11%). 4.5% of respondents worked nationally across England and 5.5% did not respond to this question.



Question 12

Which of the following best describes who/which part of the sector your organisation represents?

Answer	Total	Percent
Academy (including free schools)	44	34%
Further education colleges	14	11%
Organisations that support schools and colleges	13	10%
Supplier of a digital service of product	10	8%
Voluntary aided schools	7	5%
Foundation schools and community schools	6	5%
Voluntary controlled schools	5	4%
Role descriptions with fewer than 5 responses	13	10%
Other	18	14%
Total number of responses for this question	**130**	

Fewer than 5 responses were received from Local Authorities, Federations, Bodies representing schools or local authorities, Unions and representative organisations, Governing bodies and Sixth form colleges. Of respondents who answered ‘Other’, various organisations were mentioned including a Networking group for IT Support Staff employed directly by UK schools, trusts, colleges, and universities, a Tech Cluster and an Internet Service Provider and Fibre Infrastructure Builder.

Annex B: Methodology

The consultation was open for nine weeks, launching on 21 March and closing on 23 May 2025. The consultation was shared with a range of stakeholders including through trade union forums and working groups. The consultation was advertised through direct email communications, webinars and events (such as a techUK webinar and a Schools and Academies Show presentation), in addition to sector-wide newsletters from the Department (such as the Sector Email, SBP newsletter and the DfE update). The consultation was also included in the Secretary of State's email to the sector.

The consultation comprised 40 questions, combining 20 open-ended and 20 closed-ended formats. A total of 200 responses were received via the online consultation form, with 34.5% submitted by individuals and 65.5% on behalf of organisations. Response rates varied across the consultation questions, with closed-ended questions generally receiving more consistent engagement. Participation in closed-ended questions ranged from 23% to 100%, while open-ended questions were answered by between 14% and 85% of respondents. Open-ended responses were often detailed, reflecting a high level of interest in specific areas. An additional 10 responses were received via email and analysed separately.

All 210 responses received were read by a member of the policy team responsible for digital strategy and all responses were included in the analysis. The analysis involved quantitative breakdowns of 17 closed-ended questions, thematic analysis of 13 open-ended questions, and sentiment analysis for 7 questions to assess whether responses expressed positive, neutral, or negative sentiments.

Where appropriate, findings have been broken down by respondent type to ensure a balanced representation of perspectives. A total of 38 individuals and 60 organisations identified as representing a school or college. Another group comprised academy trusts, local authorities, college governing bodies, and dioceses acting on behalf of a governing body or site trustee, with 11 individuals and 34 organisations falling into this category. Additionally, 20 individuals and 38 organisations classified themselves as "Other" based on information provided in Questions 14 and 23.

This document summarises the main points raised by respondents, after grouping responses into categories or themes. The summary is not intended to be an exhaustive record of every point made, and the absence of a particular issue does not imply that it has been ignored or is of lesser importance. The consultation was not designed as a representative survey; respondents were self-selecting, and therefore the findings should not be generalised to the wider population.

Data analysts performed thematic summarisation, the process of iteratively identifying recurring themes in text, and sentiment analysis using large language models in secure environments— specifically, a Llama 3.3 model hosted by Databricks and GPT-4o through

Azure OpenAI. These AI models were selected as both perform very well on general language-understanding benchmarks. No personal or identifying information was exposed to the models; all responses were anonymised prior to processing to ensure compliance with data protection standards. These models were used to efficiently extract and synthesise recurring themes, assess the sentiment of open-ended responses (positive, neutral and negative), and reclassify responses into appropriate thematic categories. To ensure quality, a human-in-the-loop approach was used. Subject-matter experts performed checks of the model-generated themes and sentiment labels, validating their accuracy and mitigating the risks of over-reliance on automation.

Department for Education

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