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Navigating the Digital Transformation in Education: A Thought Leadership Perspective



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In the realm of education, the integration of technology has been a double-edged sword. While it holds the potential to revolutionise learning, there have been instances where schools have invested in technology without reaping the desired benefits, often due to the addition of new technology being added to existing systems without an effective digital strategy.

The Technology in Schools Survey underscores this point, indicating that schools make substantial financial investments in technology each year. However, without a clear framework and guiding principles related to technology selection, these investments may not yield the desired results. For instance, the mere act of purchasing new hardware due to commercial pressures, without considering its integration with learning, can lead to ineffective use of technology.

This issue is further highlighted by a BBC News report titled 'Digital Poverty in Schools'. The report brings to light the challenges faced by schools that provide laptops but still encounter barriers in terms of parents' IT skills and children having adequate space to study. This suggests that simply investing in technology is not enough; a comprehensive strategy is needed to address all aspects of digital learning.

Fortunately, there is a growing recognition of the importance of digital technology in education. According to the 2022-2023 Technology in Schools Survey, a significant number of schools now have a digital strategy in place, with 68% of secondary schools and 55% of primary schools leading the charge. This represents a significant increase from previous years.

However, the absence of a robust digital strategy could leave schools more vulnerable to cyber-attacks. The Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2024, published by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), found that 71% of secondary schools reported a breach or attack in the past year, compared to 52% of primary schools. This data suggests that schools are a significant target for cyber-attacks.

The move to digital has inadvertently made schools more susceptible to breaches. As schools strive to access technology to support efficient working practices and embrace hybrid learning approaches, their attack surfaces expand quickly. Without a proper digital strategy in place, schools could be more susceptible to cyber-attacks. The Department for Education (DfE) emphasises that cyber incidents and attacks can have significant operational and financial impacts on schools and colleges, often involving an intentional and unauthorised attempt to access, change, or damage data and digital technology.

It is therefore crucial for schools and colleges to understand how to work effectively and safely in a digital world. The DfE Meeting Digital and Technology Standards, which covers 11 categories of standards, provides a comprehensive framework that supports schools in leveraging digital technology effectively and safely.

To begin addressing some of the issues mentioned above, we will delve deeper into two of the categories: Digital Leadership and Governance and Cyber Security. These categories highlight how different standards can dovetail and complement each other, creating a holistic approach to digital education.



Risk management: The Digital Leadership and Governance standards, requiring regular audits and risk assessments. These assessments should include cyber risks, ensuring that the Cyber Security standards are being met.

Training and awareness: The Digital Leadership and Governance standards require training for staff and students on the effective use of digital technology. The Cyber Security standards require a cyber awareness plan, ensuring that everyone in the school or college understands the cyber threats and how to avoid them.

Data Protection: The standards emphasise the importance of protecting sensitive data. The Digital Leadership and Governance standards require the maintenance of up-to-date registers and the inclusion of digital technology in disaster recovery and business continuity plans. The Cyber Security standards require secure digital technology and data, control and secure user accounts and access privileges, and a plan to backup data.

Accountability: The Digital Leadership and Governance standards require the assignment of a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) member responsible for digital technology. This person would also be responsible for ensuring that the Cyber Security standards are being met.

So, how can Digital Education and Strategy Services help? We provide consultancy and training tailored to your school's needs. Our 'Meeting Digital and Technology Standards' services include:

Audits: We assess your current digital practices against the DfE standards, identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Digital Strategy: We help you develop a comprehensive digital strategy that aligns with your school's vision.

Cyber Security: We help you develop your cyber culture and improve cyber hygiene practices. Supporting cyber response planning through to empowering staff with the knowledge and skills they need to better protect themselves and your school from, and in response to, cyber threats.

Filtering and Monitoring: We help you to understand what regular checks can be carried out on filtering and monitoring systems to support an annual review. We support you to conduct an annual review on filtering and monitoring systems.

Don't let your school fall behind in the digital age. Contact us today to learn how we can help you meet the DfE digital and technology standards and unlock the full potential of digital education. Together, we can navigate the digital transformation in education and create a safer, more effective learning environment for our students.