

CASTLE NEWNHAM ALL-THROUGH SCHOOL

Our Big Tech Mission

Transforming technology for a brighter future

A guide for families to our school's digital journey: how we will listen, plan and decide together.



GUIDED BY OUR CORE VALUES

Community • Opportunity • Respect • Excellence

Proudly part of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)

We're starting with listening

OUR PROMISE

- ✓ People first
- ✓ Purpose before products
- ✓ Safety always
- ✓ Evidence over hype
- ✓ A strategy shaped with our community

We are delighted to launch our **Big Tech Mission**: a school-wide journey to explore how technology can best support our children, our staff and our wider community. Technology is already part of children's lives and the world they will enter as adults. Used well, it can help teachers explain ideas, give pupils meaningful practice, widen access to learning and build the digital confidence children will need. Used without a clear purpose, it can create distraction, inequality, extra workload or risks to privacy and wellbeing.

That is why we are not starting with a shopping list or a promise to put a device in every hand. We are starting with listening: to understand what is working, what is difficult, what our pupils need, and what families and staff believe matters most.

This booklet is a guide to the process and the principles we will follow. It is not a final list of products, devices or changes. Those decisions will come after listening, review and planning.

As with any technology, the infrastructure behind it matters. While we listen and plan, some essential investment is already underway, improving our networks, systems and core equipment, so we don't fall behind on the foundations we know we need and we're ready to act on what we hear.

We are also pleased to announce our partnership with **Emma Darcy**, who will bring her education-technology experience to guide this journey and help keep it ambitious, practical and centred on children.

“ **Thank you for being part of this. The strongest strategy will be one we shape together.**

Mrs Donna Neely-Hayes, Principal

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Our mission, our CORE values

C

Community

A strategy shaped with pupils, families and staff.

O

Opportunity

Technology that widens access, never a new divide.

R

Respect

Safety, privacy and wellbeing come first.

E

Excellence

Evidence over hype, and honest review.

Why technology, and why now?

Digital tools, online platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) are increasingly part of workplaces, public services and everyday life. Schools need to prepare children to take part confidently and critically, while making sure technology supports, rather than displaces, the relationships and strong teaching at the heart of education.



The question isn't whether technology is good or bad. It's: what problem are we solving, what benefit do we expect, and how will we know it's working?

What current guidance is telling schools



DfE digital standards

Core standards for broadband, wireless networks, network switching, digital leadership and governance, filtering and monitoring, and cyber security.



Plan technology for your school

A DfE service that helps schools review their current arrangements, identify priorities and track progress.



DfE guidance on using AI

Updated in May 2026, it emphasises careful planning, safety, understanding opportunities and risks, and aligning AI with safeguarding and wider digital strategy.



Education Endowment Foundation

Consider how technology will improve teaching and learning before introducing it. Impact depends on the teaching approach, the tool's purpose and the support given to staff.



Research and regulators

Highlight protecting children's personal information, checking how services use data, and making sure technology is safe and appropriate for children.



What this means for us

National guidance is our compass, not a substitute for knowing our own children. Our decisions will be proportionate, sustainable and grounded in our educational priorities.

Learning, people and purpose first

Eight principles will guide every decision we make.



Learning comes first

A device or app is not the goal. We begin with the curriculum, the learning needs and the teaching approach.



People matter most

Relationships, discussion, play, practical work, reading, writing and face-to-face teaching remain essential. Technology should complement good teaching, not replace it.



Safety is non-negotiable

Safeguarding, age-appropriate design, privacy, filtering, monitoring and cyber security are considered from the start.



Inclusion is designed in

We consider accessibility, SEND, language, home access, affordability and whether an approach could widen gaps between pupils.



Evidence over hype

We ask what reliable research says, what is still uncertain and how we can test whether a tool makes a real difference.



Staff need time and support

Successful change needs professional learning, planning time, technical help and opportunities to share practice.



Families are partners

Parents and carers should understand the purpose of changes, have ways to ask questions and be part of meaningful consultation.



Value and sustainability matter

We consider total cost, reliability, repair, replacement, environmental impact and whether existing tools already meet the need.

Purpose before products.

A device or app is never the goal in itself.

Eight areas, one question each



Curriculum and digital skills

Does technology enrich subject learning and build safe, critical digital fluency?



Teaching and learning

Does it help teachers explain, assess, give feedback or provide purposeful practice?



Safeguarding and wellbeing

Are children protected, supported and taught to make responsible choices?



Infrastructure and devices

Are systems reliable, secure, accessible and fit for purpose?



Our pupils at the heart

Every idea is tested against all eight areas



People and professional development

Do staff and pupils have the knowledge, confidence and support they need?



Inclusion and accessibility

Can all pupils participate, including those with additional needs or limited access at home?



Data, privacy and AI

Is information handled responsibly and are tools appropriate, transparent and safe?



Community and communication

Are families informed, heard and able to contribute?

A SIMPLE TEST FOR EVERY PROPOSAL

Will it help children learn, help teachers teach more effectively, improve access, protect wellbeing, strengthen safety or reduce unnecessary workload?

What evidence supports it?

What could go wrong?

How will we review the impact?

The Big Digital Listen

Our first stage is to listen before we design. We want an honest picture of where technology helps, where it gets in the way, what is missing, and what our community wants to protect as well as change.



RECEPTION TO YEAR 2

Have your say

With an adult to help you.



YEARS 3 TO 6

Have your say

Your ideas will help shape technology at Castle.



YEARS 7 TO 11

Have your say

Scan with your phone camera.



PARENTS & CARERS

Share your views

Scan with your phone camera.

What we will do with what we hear

1

Gather themes

Bring together everything we hear from pupils, families and staff.

2

Find strengths and gaps

Identify strengths to preserve and problems that need attention.

3

Look for differences

Compare experiences between groups, including pupils who may face barriers.

4

Report back

Share a summary of what we heard and how it will inform the next stage.



Your voice matters

Consultation isn't a promise that every suggestion will be adopted. It is a commitment to listen seriously, explain the choices available and show how community feedback has influenced the strategy.

Our four-stage journey

Deliberately staged, so we never rush from a good idea to a purchase before we understand the need, the evidence and the implications.

1

The Big Digital Listen

Understand experiences, needs and priorities

We gather views from pupils, families and staff, review what is already in place and identify strengths, gaps and questions.

OUTPUT

A community listening summary and initial priorities

2

Consultation

Explore the options together

We share emerging themes, invite feedback on possible approaches and test whether the priorities reflect our community's needs, considering differing views and practical constraints.

OUTPUT

Refined priorities and a clearer set of options to investigate

3

Considering and planning

Develop a responsible, evidence-informed strategy

We weigh curriculum impact, staff development, infrastructure, safeguarding, privacy, accessibility, costs, procurement, maintenance and how success will be measured. Where appropriate, we may trial an approach first.

OUTPUT

A proposed strategy, implementation sequence, measures of success and clear responsibilities

4

Implementation and review

Introduce agreed changes carefully and learn from experience

If a change is approved, we plan communication, training, support and monitoring, then review evidence and feedback, adapt where needed and explain progress to families.

OUTPUT

Phased improvements, regular updates and a cycle of evaluation



Technology isn't just an IT issue

It touches every part of school life. These areas need to work together.



Curriculum and digital skills

More than operating a device: searching thoughtfully, judging reliability, creating and communicating responsibly, understanding privacy and risk, and learning about computing, data, media and AI where age-appropriate.



Teaching and learning

Technology can support modelling, explanation, practice, feedback, collaboration and assessment, chosen for a specific purpose and alongside discussion, reading, writing and hands-on learning. Teachers' judgement stays central.



Safeguarding and wellbeing

Age-appropriate access, online behaviour, harmful content, digital relationships, reporting routes and screen balance. Filtering and monitoring support, but never replace, teaching, supervision and trusted relationships.



Infrastructure and devices

Reliable connectivity, secure networks, well-managed devices, technical support and planned replacement are the foundations. We'll review what we have before deciding what needs to change, and consider whole-life costs.



People and professional development

Staff need practical training, time to practise and share, and help when things go wrong. Pupils need guidance to become responsible, independent digital learners. Families need clear explanations.



Inclusion and accessibility

Digital tools can help pupils access text, organise tasks, hear information or practise at their own pace, but they can also create barriers. We'll weigh benefits and risks: one solution won't fit every learner.



Data, privacy and responsible AI

What data a tool collects, who can see it, how long it's kept and whether it's shared. AI outputs can be inaccurate or biased, and pupils must keep developing their own knowledge and thinking.



Communication with families

You should know why changes are proposed, what they mean in practice, what support is available and where to raise questions, in clear, accessible language with chances for dialogue.

What good use looks like

Simply adding more technology doesn't automatically improve learning. Outcomes depend on the purpose, how a tool is used and the quality of implementation. Our aim isn't to maximise screen time: it's to improve learning and opportunity.

DIGITAL ACTIVITY SITS ALONGSIDE

Explanation

Discussion

Retrieval practice

Reading

Writing

Hands-on learning

A digital strategy is a safeguarding strategy too

Children should be supported to explore, learn and create, while adults take their responsibilities for safety, privacy and appropriate use seriously.



Online safety

- ✓ Appropriate filtering and monitoring, reviewed in line with current guidance and our safeguarding responsibilities.
- ✓ Teaching pupils how to report concerns, respond to harmful or upsetting content and seek help from a trusted adult.
- ✓ Clear, age-appropriate expectations for acceptable use.
- ✓ Considering how new platforms affect communication, supervision, recording and the management of concerns.
- ✓ Reviewing supplier safeguards and the suitability of any tool before it is used with pupils.



Privacy and data protection

- ✓ Collecting only the information needed for a clear purpose.
- ✓ Checking privacy information, contracts, access controls, data storage and sharing arrangements.
- ✓ Carrying out data-protection assessments for higher-risk processing.
- ✓ Explaining, in accessible language, what information is used and why.
- ✓ Reviewing services when their purpose, features or data practices change.

AI: curious, critical and careful

AI may support planning, accessibility, feedback and learning, but it can also produce false information, reflect bias, encourage over-reliance or raise privacy concerns. We won't assume a tool is suitable just because it is popular or marketed for education.



Curious

Every use must have a clear educational or operational purpose. Staff follow school policy and current DfE guidance.



Critical

Pupils learn to question outputs, verify important claims and understand that AI can be wrong.



Careful

No personal, sensitive or identifiable information goes into unapproved AI services. Pupils use only tools approved for their age and context.

AI should not replace the learning process

Pupils still need to read, write, reason, create and practise independently. We will consider age suitability, content filtering, privacy, transparency, bias, accessibility and the potential effect on children's thinking and independence.



Screen balance and wellbeing

There's no single screen-time rule. What matters is age, purpose, the kind of activity, what it replaces, the child's needs and the balance of the day. We'll consider when screens genuinely help, and when discussion, movement, books, practical resources, outdoor learning or face-to-face time are better.

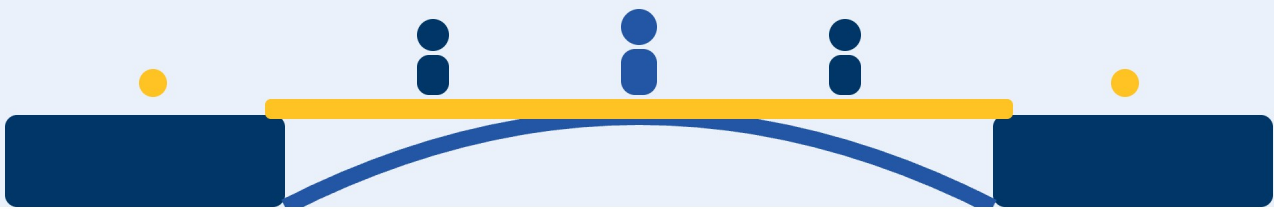


A partnership with families

We want children to develop good judgement, not fear technology. School and home can reinforce shared messages about kindness, privacy, checking information, healthy boundaries and asking for help.

Inclusion, accessibility and digital confidence

A successful strategy should widen opportunity, not create a new divide between children who have easy access to technology and those who do not.



What we will consider



Whether tools work with assistive technology and support pupils with SEND.



Whether text, audio, video and interfaces are accessible to pupils with different needs.



Whether pupils need explicit teaching to use a tool confidently and safely.



Whether homework or family-facing systems assume a suitable device, broadband or a quiet place to work.



How families can receive information and take part without being disadvantaged by language, disability, device access or digital confidence.



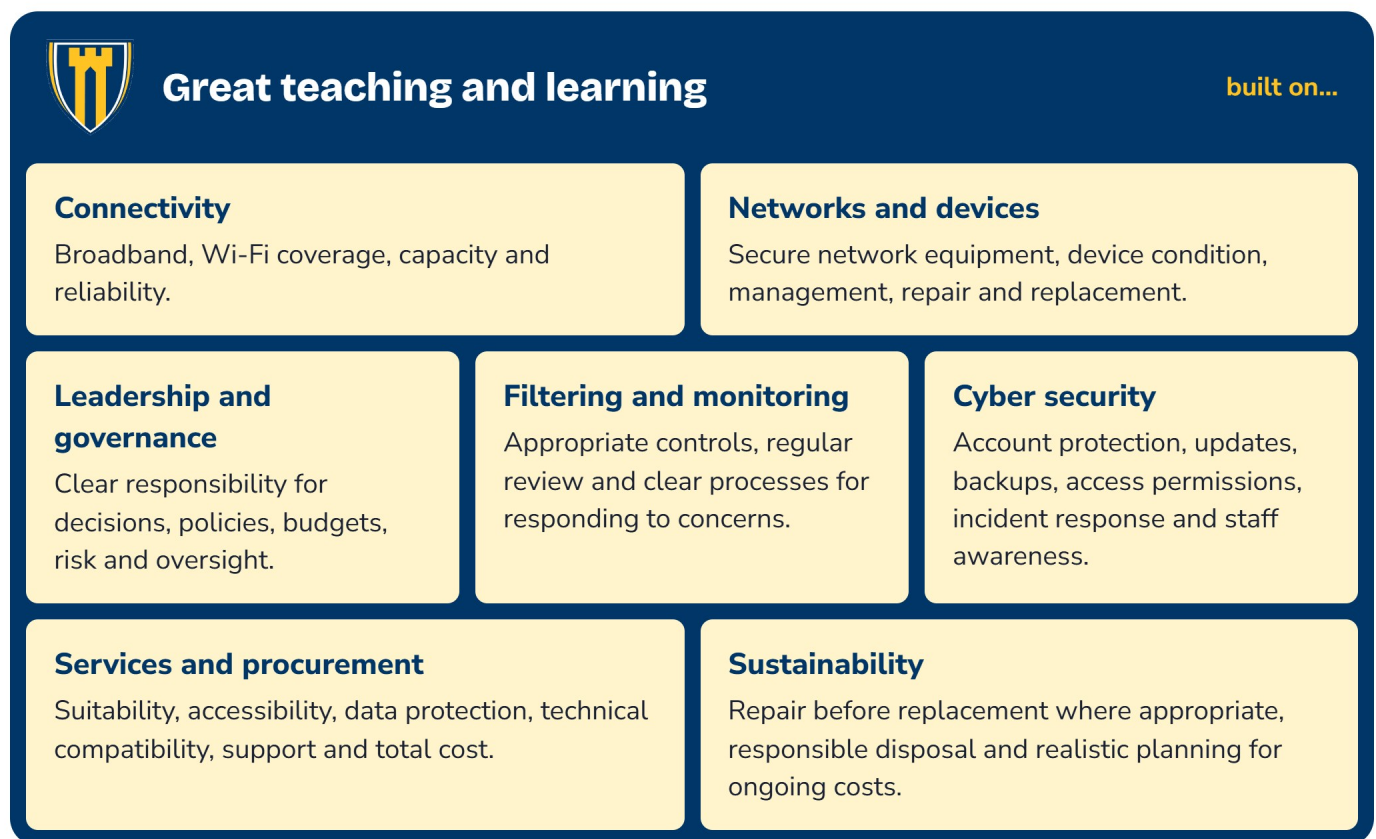
Whether alternatives or additional support are needed.

Infrastructure, devices and sustainability

The best learning idea can't flourish if the network fails, devices are unreliable or staff can't get help. Infrastructure is less visible than classroom apps, but it is essential to safe and dependable use. That's why some essential investment is already underway.

The foundations we are already reviewing

STRONG SCHOOLS NEED STRONG FOUNDATIONS



We will use the DfE's digital standards and planning resources to support our review. The aim is sound, joined-up decisions: not replacing equipment simply because it is old, or buying new tools before we know what need they address.

Partnership and success



Our partnership with Emma Darcy

Emma has spent around two decades helping schools use technology well. She led technology for learning across a Multi Academy Trust for ten years, and before that ran a city learning centre in Luton, working on technology projects with learners of all ages and is a trustee of Apps for Good.

AWARD

Gold, Pearson National Teaching Awards: Digital Innovator of the Year

AWARD

Global EdTech Awards: Most Impactful Senior Member of Staff

EXPERTISE

AI in schools, digital character, and measuring impact for EAL and SEND learners

Emma will support our thinking as we listen, explore the evidence and consider practical options, bringing challenge as well as encouragement: helping us ask the right questions, look beyond the latest trend and introduce technology in ways that are purposeful, safe and sustainable.

How we will judge success



Learning and curriculum

Improved explanation, practice, feedback, participation or pupil work; teacher judgement and assessment evidence.



Pupil voice

Can pupils explain how tools help them learn, how to use them responsibly and where to get support?



Inclusion

Are barriers reduced, and can pupils with different needs participate meaningfully?



Staff confidence and workload

Feedback on training, confidence, reliability and whether technology simplifies or complicates work.



Safety and privacy

Policy review, learning from incidents, supplier checks, filtering and monitoring, and data-protection practice.



Reliability and value

Service availability, support response, device condition, total cost and whether systems meet identified needs.



Family experience

Do parents understand the strategy, can they ask questions, and can they see how feedback has shaped decisions?

Honest review

We'll agree what to look for before judging impact, be honest about mixed results and adjust where a different approach would be better.

How you can get involved

The Big Digital Listen is the beginning, not a one-off exercise. Your contribution helps us understand the practical realities of family life, as well as the hopes we share for our children.

Research and useful links

These sources informed the principles in this booklet. Guidance changes over time; links checked [date].

DfE: Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Updated 16 September 2026

gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges

DfE: Plan technology for your school

Updated 8 September 2026

gov.uk/guidance/plan-technology-for-your-school

DfE: Using AI in education, support for school and college leaders

Updated 19 May 2026

gov.uk/government/publications/using-ai-in-education-support-for-school-and-college-leaders

DfE: Generative AI product safety standards

Updated 19 January 2026

gov.uk/government/publications/generative-ai-product-safety-standards

EEF: Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning

Evidence-informed recommendations

educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/digital

EEF: EdTech research agenda

Current research priorities, including generative AI

educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/research-agenda-themes-priority-areas/research-agenda-theme-edtech

ICO: Statement on the 'Edtech examined' report

24 June 2026

ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/media-centre/news-and-blogs/2026/06/ico-statement-on-edtech-examined-report

DfE: Using technology in education collection

Policy, guidance and research

gov.uk/government/collections/using-technology-in-education

A FINAL WORD

Our Big Tech Mission is about preparing children for the future while making the most of the present. We want technology to be thoughtful, purposeful, inclusive and safe, and to serve the things that matter most: learning, curiosity, creativity, confidence and human connection.

"Nothing can stop what we can achieve together"



Castle Newnham

All-Through School · part of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST)

SOUTH SITE · RECEPTION TO YEAR 4

Goldington Road
Bedford MK40 3EP

NORTH SITE · YEAR 5 TO YEAR 11

Polhill Avenue
Bedford MK41 9DT

GET IN TOUCH

01234 303403

[castlennewnham.school](https://www.castlennewnham.school)

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