

Education Review Office

The use of information Technology in Schools

Conclusion Abstract

The use of information technology in schools has the potential to raise student achievement across the entire curriculum. Improved levels of student achievement can arise as a result of increased collaboration between students and the enthusiasm and engagement of students when using information technology. However this potential will only be achieved if certain conditions are met. These conditions include careful and systematic planning, direct access by students to information technology equipment and the provision of teacher training that is coordinated with the purchase and use of equipment.

There is widespread interest in information technology in schools, but considerable variations in the extent to which schools are planning for and using information technology in effective ways. Many schools do not consider they have the skills and knowledge to make appropriate choices between the huge range of hardware and software options available, and consequently are not confident to make informed decisions to invest in information technology. As a result, students in some schools do not have the same access as others to the educational advantages which information technology offers.

The respective roles of the Government and boards of trustees in planning for the introduction and use of information technology in schools have not been clearly defined. Given the growing importance of information technology in education and the differing levels of information technology expertise in schools, there are strong arguments for the Government to provide more strategic leadership in this area than it does currently.

One issue that the Government should consider as a matter of priority is the provision of guidelines for schools on the use of information technology. This could be supplemented by the provision of technical advice and support in some cases.

More generally, the Government should consider the overall level of funding it allocates to information technology in schools (both for the purchase of equipment and for teacher training), in the context of its other educational priorities.

However, each of these steps will only have limited success if it is taken in isolation. The most pressing issue is for the Government to develop a coordinated strategy for the use of information technology in schools that will ensure that schools are provided with the guidance and support they need and any additional funding is used in ways that will maximise its effectiveness.