Becta

Inclusive learning is a process of increasing the presence, participation and achievement of all learners. If the provision is right, everyone will be included – and ICT can help you achieve this.

ICT is both a medium and a powerful tool in supporting inclusive practice. It provides wide-ranging support for communication, assisting many learners to engage with learning, including those who are hard to reach, and helps to break down some of the barriers that lead to under-achievement and educational exclusion.

inclusive learning
an essential guide

how can ICT support inclusive learning?

All pupils need to be able to access information, record their ideas and express their thoughts in order to learn. Some have sensory, physical or cognitive impairments which make it difficult to learn without additional support, whilst others are vulnerable to educational, and social, exclusion. Inclusive education aims to provide for all learners, whatever their individual learning needs, so they can fulfil their potential and be part of the school and wider community.

ICT offers a range of tools to support individual – and personalised – learning:

- Assistive technology provides alternative ways of communicating for those with severe disabilities
- Supportive software can enable learners with visual impairment to access the curriculum
- Multimedia provides learning support, through visual and auditory prompts
- Talking word processors, spelling checkers and templates support emergent writers
- Organisational tools can provide scaffolding
- Materials can be adapted to suit different learning styles.

ICT is also a motivational tool for disaffected learners, enabling them to learn in ways that suit them, and encouraging creativity. For the many learners who cannot be in school, ICT provides a medium through which they can maintain contact with education.

ICT is also enabling learners to choose not only how they learn, but also when and where. The Government's e-strategy sets the expectation that:

- by spring 2008 every pupil should have access to a personalised online learning space with the potential to support an e-portfolio
- by 2010 every school should have integrated learning and management systems.

The e-strategy will make school, home and the community much more closely inter-related: learning will be a partnership.

how Becta is supporting inclusion

Becta is responsible for delivering the e-strategy, and one of its four aims is to 'Engage 'hard to reach' learners, with special needs support, more motivating ways of learning, and more choice about how and where to learn'. Becta's SEN and Inclusion team, assisted by an external expert reference group, is reviewing all of Becta's work on the e-strategy, to ensure that it is inclusive. Becta is also supporting inclusion through a number of programmes of work:

- As e-learning develops, the ability of all learners to access learning through this medium is critical, and we are committed to defining the accessibility standards for the UK's software industry. Becta works closely with the software industry to ensure production of high-quality educational content that is both inclusive and accessible.

- Becta is currently managing a consultation on personalised content. Combining Becta's SEN and Inclusion team's expertise with that of practitioners who are experienced in working with SEN learners will help to develop a strategic approach to ensuring that all learners benefit from personalised content.

- Becta is now managing Computers for Pupils, a £60 million, two-year programme aimed at helping some of the most disadvantaged secondary pupils improve their education and life chances by putting a computer into the home. LAs identified as having eligible schools and pupils in their area have been given funding to buy equipment, as well as help and advice covering all aspects of the scheme.

- Much of Becta's effort involves developing e-maturity of the learner, the workforce and institutions. One of the key tools is the self-review framework, an online framework designed to help all schools audit their use of ICT and plan for further development. The self-review framework addresses inclusion and provision for pupils with special needs in all schools, and we are also engaged in helping special schools to interpret the self-review framework in their own context.
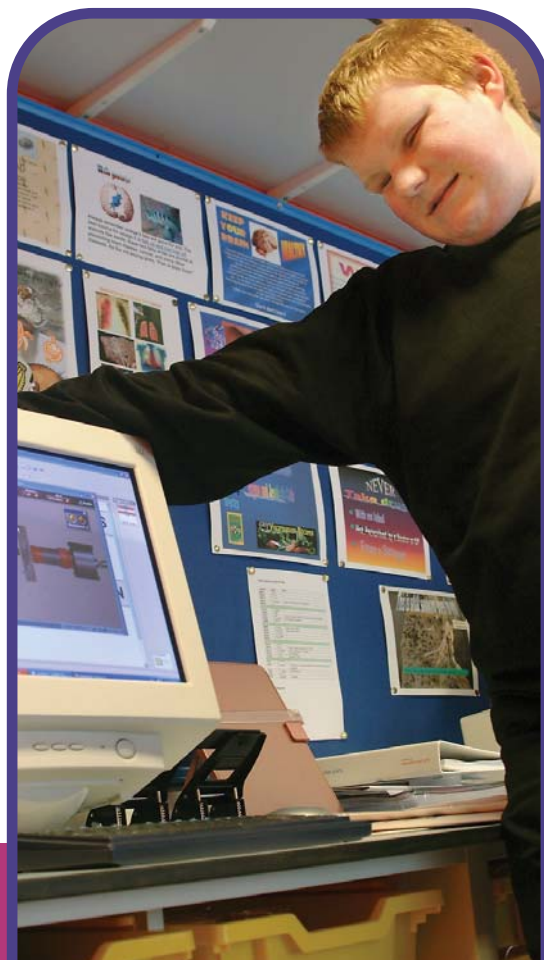
- A further undertaking is our consultation with both practitioners and developers around the subject of 'Reasonable adjustment'. An important milestone is providing guidelines for understanding 'reasonable adjustment' and what may be required to achieve this, in the educational software and inclusive learning environment.

- Becta has been instrumental in both the BETT Awards and ICT Excellence Awards since the start, and the SEN and Inclusion team has been closely involved with judging for both. Inclusion and access are now at the heart of the judging processes, not only 'special needs' software or teaching, but also software and education for all learners.

The e-confident school will provide each learner with a profile to let them safely access their personal learning space, set up to recognise their particular requirements, including their access needs.

what you should be doing

- ICT can support a wide range of learning needs – visit the websites listed or contact your LA advisory staff to find out how.

- Audit your use of ICT across the school, particularly to support pupils with special needs.

- Review all teaching resources, including software, to check whether it is inclusive.

- When choosing hardware and digital resources, ensure that they are accessible and do not exclude learners.

- Set up learner profiles on the network for safe access to personal learning spaces, which recognise particular requirements, including access needs.

- Investigate national and local initiatives aimed at providing home access to ICT for pupils who cannot afford it. Handheld devices can provide an inexpensive form of access.

- If your school is receiving funding from Building Schools of the Future (BSF), plan for an inclusive environment, with access to all learning spaces and learning materials.

further information

Removing barriers to achievement: The government's strategy for SEN **http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/ wholeschool/sen/senstrategy**

Becta's schools site has a section on inclusion in Learning and Teaching **http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/ inclusion**

Reasonable adjustment consultation **http://communities.becta.org.uk/ digitalresources/reasonableadjustment**

Computers for Pupils programme **http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/ computersforpupils**

The TechDis site has information on using ICT to support disabilities, including e-learning, mobile learning, and how to create learning materials that are accessible **http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index. php?p=9**