

Education Technology Investment Decision Framework

The Governor and Trustee Guide to governing technology in schools and trust

1. Strategic and educational alignment

Education Technology (EdTech) must serve a clear educational or operational need, not a tech trend.

- **Need identification:** Does this proposal address a strategic goal (e.g. closing attainment gaps, improving accessibility, reducing teacher workload)?
- **Teacher-led purpose:** Is the tech supporting high-quality teaching, or is it attempting to replace core pedagogical practice?
- **Evidence of impact:** Has the product been road tested demonstrating proven outcomes?

2. Financial sustainability and value for money

Look beyond the upfront price to evaluate the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

- **Full lifecycle budgeting:** Have ongoing expenses (such as subscriptions, peripheral replacements, maintenance, and CPD) been factored into financial planning?
- **Opportunity cost and benchmarking:** How does this spend compare with similar schools/trusts, and what alternative resource is being displaced?
- **Procurement and scale:** Can this tool be bought through pre-vetted frameworks or aggregated across the trust to secure volume discounts?

3. Technical readiness and infrastructure

Classroom software will fail if underlying systems cannot support it.

- **DfE compliance:** Does existing infrastructure (broadband, wireless network, network switches, and cyber security) meet DfE digital standards to support this?
- **Interoperability:** Does the tech integrate cleanly with current systems (e.g. MIS) to prevent data siloing and manual re-entry?
- **Asset utilisation:** Are existing assets currently fully utilised before purchasing additional ones?

4. Safety, compliance and AI governance

Governors are accountable for data security, statutory safeguarding, and ethical standards.

- **Data protection and GDPR:** Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been completed to confirm secure handling of pupil/staff data?
- **Filtering, monitoring and safeguarding:** Does the system meet statutory Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance and filtering standards?
- **AI safety and ethics:** If using Generative AI or automated tools, does the product adhere to DfE safety expectations regarding data privacy, bias, and output accuracy?

5. Adoption and key questions for school leaders

80% of EdTech project failures stem from poor implementation and lack of training, not technology flaws. It's important to ensure leadership allocates sufficient time and resource for staff CPD.

Core questions for board meetings:

- What are we trying to solve, and how will we measure success in 12 months?
- What time and funding is allocated for staff training (CPD) to ensure adoption?
- What is our exit or sunset strategy if this technology fails to meet its KPIs?