

March 2010

**SELF-REVIEW**

NEXT  
GENERATION  
LEARNING

**Becta** leading  
next generation  
learning

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The benefits of the self-review framework for

**special schools**

**The self-review framework (SRF) is for use by all schools and will have an impact in special schools every bit as much as mainstream settings.**



“Most special schools don’t realise how good they are at using ICT because they use it as a matter of course.”

**Castle Business and Enterprise College**

“The SRF will help to change the way that you view and organise ICT support for your pupils.”

**Selworthy School**

## Different approach same framework

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Special schools have always been creative in their approach to the curriculum and individual needs of their pupils. They should adopt the same approach when using the self-review framework.

**“Be creative in your interpretation of the criteria.”**

Richmond Hill School

There is a perception that the framework cannot be used by special schools, that evidence is not available to match the level descriptors. In this booklet, special schools who have used the self-review framework tell us the benefits it brought to them, how they approached using it and how they ensured it helped identify the impact ICT is having on their pupils.

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# Castle Business and Enterprise College, Walsall

**Type of school:**

This is a school for students who have moderate or severe learning difficulties.

**Age range:** 4–19**Number of Pupils:** 103**Headteacher:** Chris Fraser**Self-review framework lead:**

Chris Fraser and Di Freeth

**Self-review framework****completion:** March 2008**Website:**

[www.castle.walsall.sch.uk](http://www.castle.walsall.sch.uk)

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“It is an invaluable process to go through. The framework shows you where you are and the actions you need to take.”

## Making the decision

As soon as staff at the school heard about the self-review framework, they decided to make use of it. In their words, “we always like a challenge”. They soon found that using the framework raised the profile of ICT with everyone in the school. It also ensured that all staff realised that ICT was not just about computers, but encompassed a much wider range of technologies. At that time, there were pockets of excellence in ICT across the school, but the framework highlighted the fact that some staff were using ICT in a more limited way.

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## Working with the process

Staff used the framework to identify where ICT was being used effectively and where any gaps existed. It then helped them decide what they needed to do to address these gaps. Some gaps could be plugged quite quickly, such as by purchasing additional resources. Other issues took longer to address, for instance, the need to provide effective staff training.

The staff found that the framework showed them where they were in terms of their progress and it helped shape their vision. Working through the framework became a major whole-school audit. Staff worked in teams to complete relevant elements. By doing it in this way, they felt they had ownership of the emerging plans.

These plans fed into the school development plan and, in some cases, led to a policy review. Staff discovered that the framework had an impact on many aspects of their work. For instance, the assessment process became much tighter and more focused. Also, e-safety became a whole-school agenda.

## Counting the benefits

The school has used the ICT Mark accreditation as a way of recognising the hard work of everyone involved. It is also a focus of celebration. Students were involved as much as possible and they enjoyed the success of achieving the ICT Mark as much as the staff.

# Chadsgrove School and Specialist Sports College, Bromsgrove

**Type of school:**

This is a school for students who have physical difficulties. The majority also have severe or profound learning difficulties.

**Age range:** 2–19**Number of students:** 120**Headteacher:** Deb Rattley**Self-review framework lead:**

Angela MacVie

**Self-review framework completion:** January 2008**Website:**

[www.chadsgroveschool.co.uk](http://www.chadsgroveschool.co.uk)

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“We wanted to show others that we know where we are with ICT and we wanted to reflect on our own good practice.”

## Making the decision

Staff at the school wanted to understand where they were in terms of their progress using ICT. They saw the self-review framework as a tool, rather than simply as a means to an award. They used the framework to find out where they were with ICT and how best to make further progress. Their findings from using the framework fed directly into their school development plan, guiding both their medium and long-term plans.

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## Working the process

Staff approached the framework by working on one element at a time. The framework reassured staff that they were progressing on the right lines and, at the same time, it highlighted their weaknesses. This gave them a positive direction in their ICT journey.

Initially they found it difficult to apply some of the criteria, but soon realised they had to forget the usual interpretation and make sense of the criteria with their own students in mind. For instance, staff discussed in depth what creativity meant for a child with profound learning difficulties. They concluded that, for one child it might be using a program that allows them to link writing to pictures and for another child, it might be making a choice about which video to watch or demonstrating that they want an activity to continue. In each case, it is about using ICT to push that child's individual boundaries. Staff found that the framework challenged them to not only evaluate their ICT provision for each child, but also to continue to develop their use of ICT.

## Counting the benefits

The ICT Mark assessment provided time for all staff to focus on ICT and to chat positively about what they do. Staff felt that the framework provided an excellent opportunity for someone independent and outside the school to take an objective look at their work. The process confirmed that staff were where they thought they were – at the ICT Mark level.

## Redwood Park School, Portsmouth

**Type of school:**

This is a secondary school for students with learning difficulties. These include, mild learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, ADHD and autistic spectrum disorder.

**Age range:** 11–16**Number of students:** 140**Headteacher:** Tony Cox**Self-review framework lead:**

Kathy Hawkins

**Self-review framework****completion:** May 2008**Website:**

[www.redwoodparkschool.com](http://www.redwoodparkschool.com)

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“The school was ready for a challenge. The self-review framework proved the ideal ‘tool’ to analyse where the school was with ICT and how it could improve.”



## Making the decision

The school's ICT leader explored the self-review framework to see if it would be an appropriate tool for the school to use. The more evidence she gathered using the framework's aspects and descriptors, and the more familiar she became with the process, the more it became obvious that the framework supported ICT development very well.

It was important to collect as much evidence as possible and this proved to be really exciting. The ICT leader matched existing school documents to the elements within the framework. Additional documents were produced as required. She felt amazed at how much was achieved.

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## Working with the process

The framework reassured staff that they were on the right track. Bringing everyone on board at an early stage was a wise move because they felt part of the process from the start. The headteacher was very enthusiastic and supportive. Even the children sensed that something was going on, so it was also an inspirational experience from that standpoint.

The process began one step at a time, starting with the ICT vision. Everything else then slotted into place. The school resources had always been very comprehensive, but staff needed to use them more creatively.

The ICT adviser from the local authority became involved and this brought in added knowledge and experience, which proved to be invaluable.

Links to the framework are now contained within the school development plan and the ICT development plan.

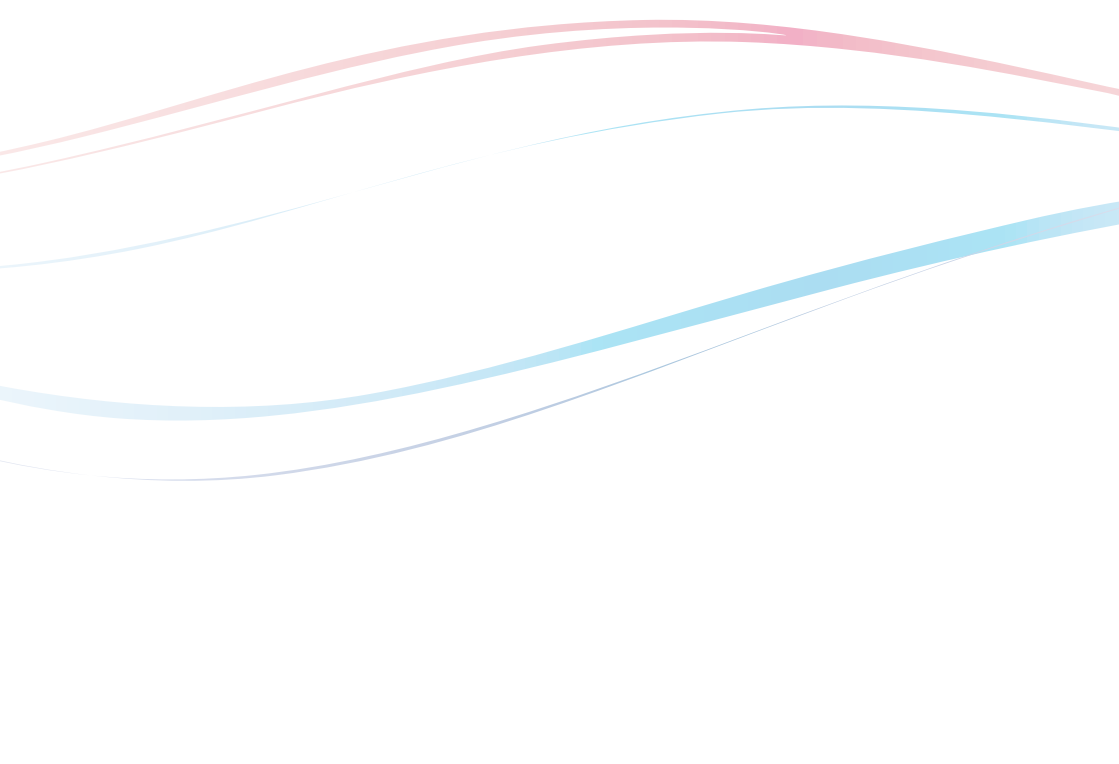
One or two aspects from the framework, while not exactly difficult to fulfil, needed to be carefully thought through. For instance, one element posed a challenge due to issues around the digital divide (that is, ensuring that all students had access to ICT). However, staff provided increased opportunity within school for those students who needed access and technical support.

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## Counting the benefits

The ICT Mark assessor and moderator were both very friendly and immediately put the staff at ease. After all the hard work that went into using the framework, achieving the ICT Mark was a wonderful way to showcase the school and have the judgements of staff confirmed. Everyone at the school, children included, proved very supportive throughout. Undergoing the framework process enabled weaknesses and strengths to be identified and addressed.

Staff have reported that to be successful, “you need to have a sense of commitment, motivation and enthusiasm”.



## Richmond Hill School, Luton

**Type of school:**

This is a school for students with severe learning difficulties and complex needs.

**Age range:** 5–11**Number of students:** 75**Headteacher:** Jill Miller**Self-review framework lead:**

Debbie Foulkes

**Self-review framework completion:** June 2008**Website:**

[www.richmondhillschool.co.uk](http://www.richmondhillschool.co.uk)

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"It is a framework to hang what you're doing on and give you a direction. Unless you're honest about where you are, you don't know where to go next."

### Making the decision

For three years, staff at this school embarked on an extensive learning journey. They went from being in the technological 'Dark Ages' to the point of being ahead of the game with ICT.

They decided to use the self-review framework to gauge their progress against that of other special schools. The framework provided a way of acknowledging this journey and what staff had achieved.

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## Working with the process

Staff used the framework as a crib sheet to show them what to do and where to go for information and support. They then generated an action plan, which became part of their school development plan.

Staff felt they had to be honest when they explored the impact on pupils. They found that progress in ICT was easier to demonstrate than the impact on attitudes and thinking skills. However, they realised that for their students, demonstrating an impact on thinking skills was about giving them opportunities to make choices. Making choices gives the child control and gives a valuable insight to what motivates them.

To provide evidence demonstrating extended opportunities, they upgraded the school website to make it more parent-friendly. They also set up an e-portfolio for each child on the school's learning platform. The e-portfolio included photographs and videos of the students, which was motivating and children enjoyed watching these videos with the whole family.

## Counting the benefits

Achieving the ICT Mark is a way for staff to feel that their hard work has been acknowledged and appreciated by people other than the school's senior leadership team – by people outside the school.

The assessment process was very straight forward. It seemed a natural conclusion to have an independent assessment to ratify the judgements of school staff.

## Selworthy School Taunton, Somerset

**Type of school:**

This is a specialist school for cognition and learning. Students have moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Many also have complex medical needs.

**Age range:** 2–19**Number of students:** 72**Headteacher:** Karen Milton**Self-review framework lead:**

Karen Milton

**Self-review framework completion:** March 2008**Website:**[www.selworthy.somerset.sch.uk](http://www.selworthy.somerset.sch.uk)

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“The self-review framework made the school think about ICT; it created order where before ICT was all a bit random. A national qualification such as the ICT Mark helps promote a positive view of disability.”

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### **Making the decision**

Karen Milton, the newly appointed headteacher, recognised that the use of ICT needed to be far more engaging for students. She had just arrived at the school and saw that ICT was neither enhancing learning, nor was it motivating students in any significant way. She felt that working towards a national accreditation would help to achieve this and give a boost to staff confidence. The self-review framework became the prime focus to achieve this outcome.



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## Working with the process

Senior managers agreed that using the framework was not a process that should be rushed. It required time for consideration and ideas needed to be shared among the staff. Working towards the ICT Mark was always in the background as a concept, but it became a natural conclusion after all of the hard work and effort that went into the staff's thoughtful use of the framework.

The school set up a Leadership and Management ICT Forum comprising Karen Milton (the headteacher), the deputy headteacher, ICT leader, governor, bursar and other relevant members of staff.

The process of using the framework showed staff where the school was in terms of its progress, and helped them identify the need for a clear audit. The benchmarking activities were helpful, offering a mixture of reassurance and opportunity. Staff discussed areas for future development and, in many cases, have implemented these.

The teaching staff became involved straight away. The teaching assistants took longer, but practical hands-on sessions encouraged their increased participation.

Many elements within the framework proved crucial, with the wide range of educational and social needs of the students. They provided many opportunities for staff to reassess their use of ICT.



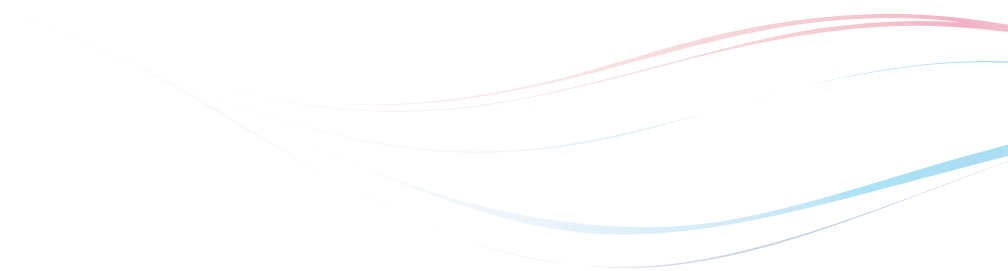
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Several aspects of the framework, such as peer assessment, some forms of accreditation, even self-motivation, needed careful interpretation, but the core principles applied throughout.

Staff used the framework to gain the ICT Mark, although there was some initial nervousness about the process. As it turned out, the ICT Mark assessment visit was not stressful and all anxieties were soon dispelled. The assessor was fair, knowledgeable and positive. Receiving the ICT Mark proved to be an opportunity for the school, its staff and students, to show off and celebrate their achievements.

### **Counting the benefits**

Now other staff are confident enough to take the lead in showing the benefits of ICT to visitors. ICT is now the main focus of the school development plan and staff are using the framework to continue to move the school forward in its ICT use.



## The Loyne Specialist School, Lancaster

### Type of school:

This is a specialist school for cognition and learning. Students have severe or profound learning difficulties.

**Age range:** 2–19

**Number of students:** 110

**Headteacher:** Carol Murphy

### Self-review framework lead:

Julie Purvis

**Self-review framework completion:** January 2010

### Website:

[www.loyneschool.org.uk](http://www.loyneschool.org.uk)

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“The ICT working group approach to completing the self-review framework online proved very effective and shared the responsibility. It gave everyone renewed confidence and reassured the staff.”

### Making the decision

Staff at the school knew that they needed to develop their use of ICT and thought it would be a good idea to begin with an audit. The self-review framework offered them an audit tool. This helped them re-examine their ICT strengths, which had already been acknowledged by external reviews. This process proved reassuring and highlighted areas that needed support and development such as electronic communication and home access.

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## Working with the process

Carol began by working through the Leadership and Management element of the framework on her own. She had previously attended a Strategic Leadership of ICT (SLICT) course, designed specifically for headteachers. This opportunity provided challenging ideas and improved her knowledge.

An ICT working group, comprising headteacher Carol Murphy, the ICT leader and other staff members, collaborated on the remaining elements of the framework.

The school used the framework to achieve the ICT Mark, taking advantage of the support available. For instance, the working group sought the support of an ICT Mark assessor to ensure that the framework descriptors were correctly understood and benchmarked. The group felt some guidance would be appropriate as special schools need to interpret some of the aspect descriptors in the framework in relation to their students' own particular educational needs.

## Counting the benefits

Taking part in the ICT Mark assessment and using the framework throughout, was a pleasurable and worthwhile experience. The process of working through the framework has renewed the school's commitment to the vital role played by ICT in the education of their special students. It has reinforced the school's progress and further development alongside a nationally accredited audit.

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