

# Development of a Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland

## The views of children aged 8 - 11

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Consultation by Children's Parliament  
for Scottish Government  
March 2016

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

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- St. Mary's RC Primary (Leith), Edinburgh.

## Introduction

### About the consultation

Between 24 September 2015 and 17 December 2015, the Scottish Government formally consulted on the development of a 'Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland'. The consultation document set out the Scottish Government's vision that all of Scotland's educators, learners and parents can take full advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology in order to raise attainment, ambition and opportunities for all. The views and aspirations of children and young people are crucial in this consultation process, and so on behalf of Scottish Government, Children's Parliament facilitated workshops with children to gather views on these prompt questions:

1. What digital technology do you use?
2. What do you use digital technology for?
3. Do you use digital technology at school? (What for? How do you use technology at school for learning?)
4. Would you like to use digital technology more often for learning? (How could you use it more?)
5. Help us imagine the digital classroom of the future.

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Above: a child's vision of a digital classroom of the future

## About the children

The discussion groups involved a total of 93 children, aged between 8 and 11 years old. A gender balance was sought and 47 girls and 46 boys took part. Children attended schools in Scottish Borders, Fife and Edinburgh.

## About Children's Parliament

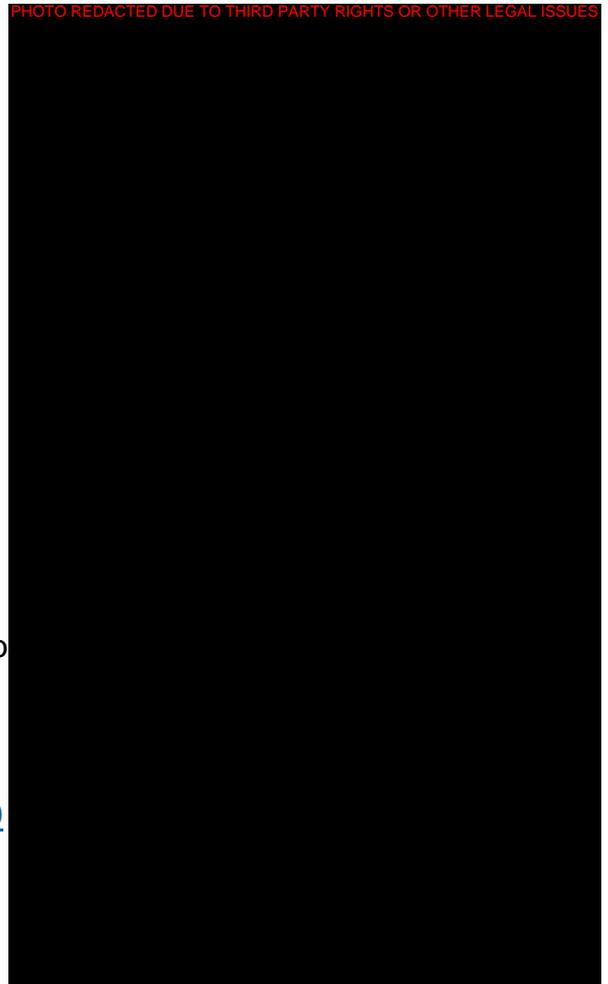
Children's Parliament is Scotland Centre for Excellence in children's participation and engagement. You can find out more about our work here: [www.childrensparliament.org.uk](http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk)

We are committed to working with children and adults to create a world where children are healthy, happy and safe. We work across the domains of home, school and community. Children's online lives and their use of and access to technology and social media are of interest to us.

In 2014 Children's Parliament conducted a consultation with children on their use of Glow, the national online learning platform available to children, young people and staff in Scottish schools; helpfully, some common themes have emerged. You can find out more here:

<https://glowconnect.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/cp-children-and-technology-report-2014.pdf>

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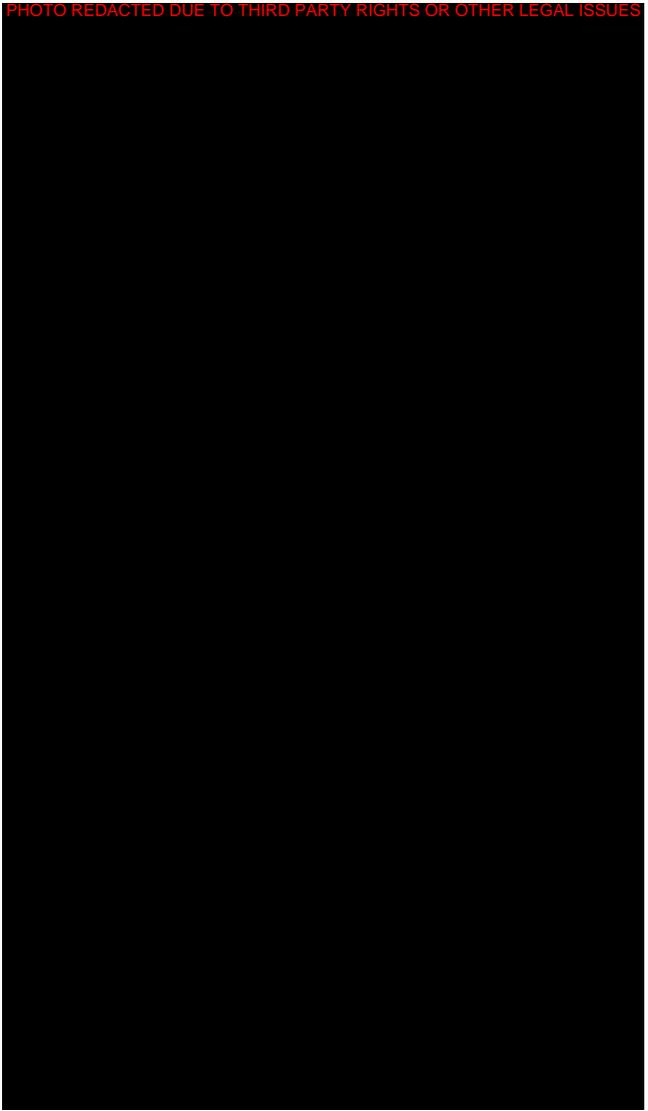
Above: examples of what children use digital technology for.

## What digital technology do you use?

When asked, children recorded as follows:

Amazon Fire Stick  
Apple Mac computer  
Apple watch  
Audio Books  
Computer (PC)  
Digital camera  
Drone – Quad Copter  
Nintendo DS (various versions)  
Go Pro (when mountain biking)  
I-Pads and other tablets  
I-Pod shuffle  
Kindle  
Laptops  
LeapPad  
Mobile phones including smart phones  
MP3 Player  
Nintendo 3DS XL  
Notebooks  
Play Station (various versions)  
Raspberry PI<sup>1</sup>  
Sky Box  
Smart Board (at school)  
SMART Table (at school)  
Smart watch  
TV including smart TV  
Various tablet computers  
Nintendo Wii  
X-box (various versions inc X-box live)  
You View

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Children confirm what we might expect, that they use a large number of devices and technology across their lives. They recognise that they have grown up surrounded by technology and that most families have multiple devices, some personal and some shared. Children like using the devices they have access to, they like being on-line, it is part of their day-to-day life. There was also a view that having the latest version of a device is seen as having some status. Not having the latest version or model can be used to isolate someone/leave them out.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.raspberrypi.org/help/what-is-a-raspberry-pi/>

## **Amount of time children spend using technology**

There was much discussion in the groups about what a good amount of time spent online or using devices was; children reported they have fun online, but that parents/carers are often trying to get them off or away from their devices. This is a regular point of conflict at home and rules or boundaries about children using devices or being online vary from family to family. For the most part, children agreed that it was possible to spend too much time online or playing games, that they could get a headache, or be grumpy or frustrated when required to stop. Some children talked about playing/being online into the night and feeling tired. However, for some children using digital technology is described as 'relaxing' and 'calming'. Children also identified that while adults can worry about them spending too much time online, children think adults do this too.

Coming from whichever viewpoint the consensus was that getting out to play, taking part in sports, reading books, all had an important part to play too. Children also recognised that some games or platforms like their Nintendo Wii can be active and shared experiences.

## **Usage of digital technology and parental guidance**

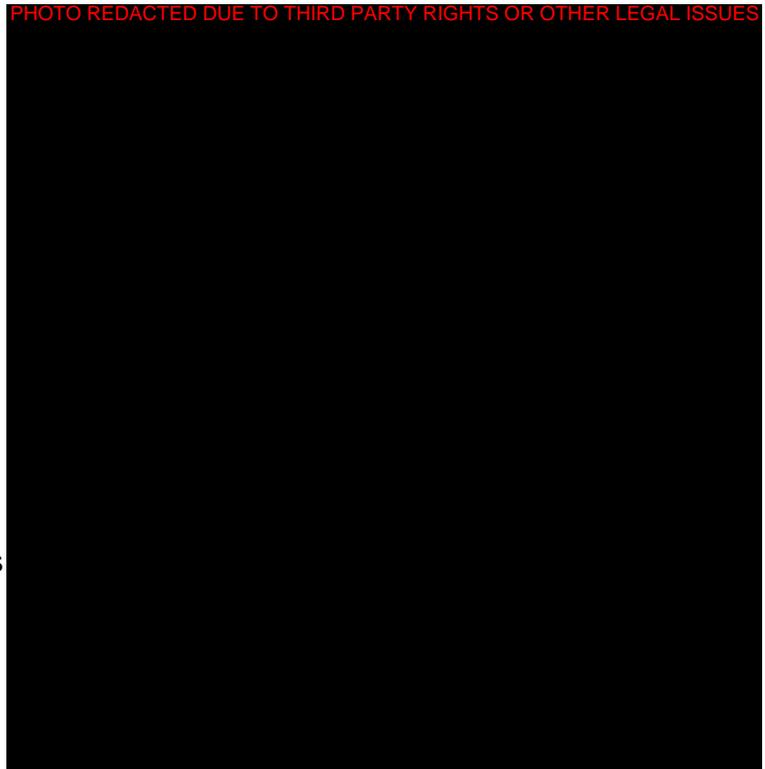
Children reported that they often know more about using digital technology/devices than their parents and carers. Adults were described as trying 'to catch up' with what children know. While many children say their parents offer guidance and supervision when they use technology or are online, it was common for children (mostly boys) to say that they played 15 or 18 rated games with parental knowledge.

## What do you use digital technology for?

For most children digital technology is linked to play, entertainment and keeping in touch with friends.

In particular girls reported using mobile phones to talk with and message friends. Boys were more likely to talk about gaming, including live gaming and chatting to other players as they do so; these online friendships (some may be people known from school or community, others may be online only friends) are important. Some children reported that their phone was important for playing games like pop-jam, song-flit, for watching films and for doing homework.

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The most commonly referred to platforms were very much about communication with others, chatting and messaging - Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facetime were all mentioned by children. Children are also referenced using devices such as a Kindle for reading.

When discussing their use of digital technology/devices it was clear that this was not only at home or at school but on the move, Wi-Fi in public spaces and on the bus facilitates this.

Children also reported that their parents access a lot of entertainment (Netflix, catch up TV) via their PCs/mobile devices.

By far the most used and discussed site was YouTube which children use to access a range of material. They watch music videos, use it to see other people playing games, watch 'funny videos' or use it as a general source of information on any topic where they can perhaps watch someone explain or do something. Some children make their own short films and post them on YouTube.

In terms of parental supervision children report that a parent/carer might watch something or check out the appropriateness of YouTube content before they watch. However, most children access YouTube freely. YouTube was also described as a

place where it was easy to see things you had not intended to, this might include 'joke' or adult versions of something they know, or upsetting images. Children can be frustrated at not being able to access YouTube at school but they recognised this was because of the inappropriate material that is easily viewed.

Downloading music and taking photographs or 'selfies' and making movies was important to most of the children. They wanted the opportunity to remember things and create their own content to share.

Facebook was used by some of the older children consulted (P6/7). Facebook was accessed via the child's phone. There were different understandings of whether they should use it in terms of the age permitted officially by Facebook. There was a general sense for children that Facebook was mostly an adult thing.

Controlling the amount of time spent on-line was a potential area of conflict at home. Some parents turn off Wi-Fi at home at a certain time to restrict access. Limiting or not allowing access can be used as a punishment for bad behaviour. For some children with no limits on the amount of time online or gaming, five or six hours a day might be possible.

In discussion, the key issue of 'being safe' emerged as important. Having a mobile phone is commonly viewed as essential to keeping in touch with parents/carers. Children were generally happy with this, although sometimes it felt a bit intrusive.

Children expressed an informed understanding of the dangers which could be posed by using a smart phone/device which allowed them to be online. They talked about 'hacking' 'pranking' and potentially receiving unwanted abusive calls or material on their devices. This can include calls and messages that were described as 'bullying'. A consistent message was that they would tell their parents or another adult if this happened, and described how they have received guidance and advice around this issue (internet safety) from their parents, teachers and external agencies who have visited the school, for example Police Officers and ChildLine. However, in these discussions there was also a sense that while children report they understand the 'dangers' of being online and say they would report it, they might also just move on from something upsetting, *shrug it off* so to speak, as reporting might lead to increased adult anxiety and controls on their online activity.

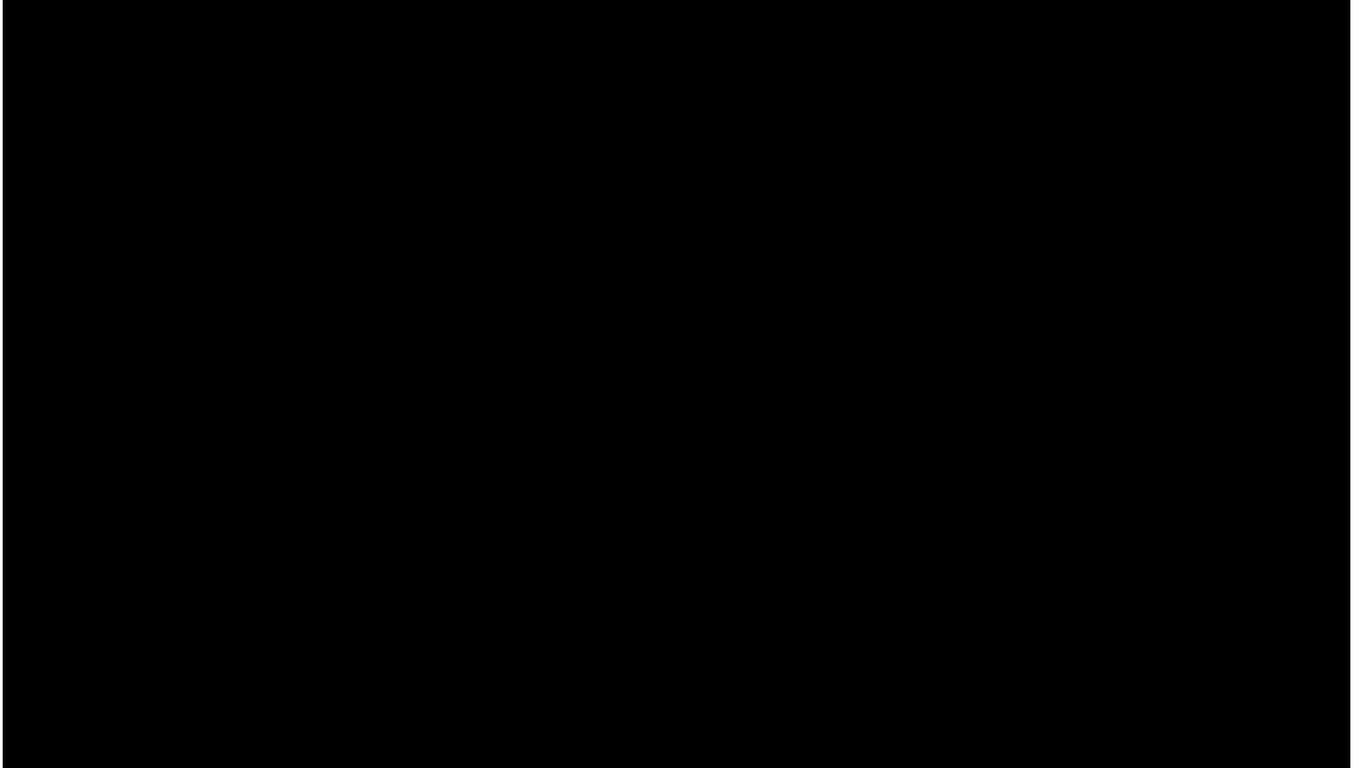
## Do you use digital technology at school?

As well as discussing the initial question '*do you use digital technology at school?*' children also discussed '*what for?*' and '*how do you use technology at school for learning?*'

While children have access to PCs and hand held devices at home, for some their first use or learning to use a device was at school.

In some classrooms the Smartboard is used a lot, but this is usually by the teacher. Smartboard usage might include a daily viewing of Newsround in many classrooms. Children like to watch the programme and say it generates good conversation. Other Smartboard use reported by children was for whole class games, VCOP (vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation), spelling, maths, researching whole class topics and watching films as an end of term treat.

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Some children might use a device to support their writing or learning.

In some schools, technology/devices are not located in the classroom, they might be housed in a 'IT room' or are shared or borrowed across classes. When a device is accessible children go on-line for 'topic work' so that they can research on a given theme or question. They might also use a PC or iPad in class to write up a story or report, perhaps using Microsoft Publisher or PowerPoint. The children also made reference to sites like Education City and Sumdog which they enjoy using. Some

children used spelling and maths games and reading quizzes online on Netbooks or other educational games; Audacity, Top Marks, Windows Movie Maker, Anagramarama (used to build words) and for the accelerated reading programme or for science and science research.

A small number of children have had some input on programming. The class teacher's own confidence and what they know and choose to share with the children informs the range or complexity of what children access and use in the classroom.

There is some frustration that online content can be blocked because of firewalls in school; this gets in the way of the child working autonomously/researching in school.

Most children involved in the consultation have their own phone although they might not all have internet access. Personal phones/devices are not used in the classroom.

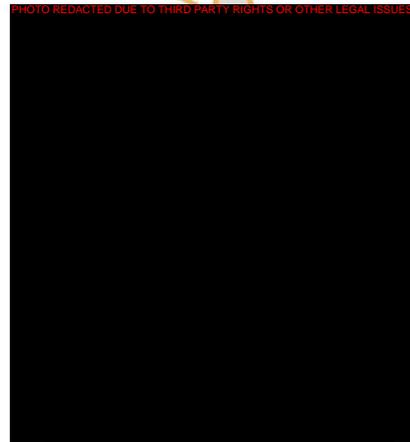
There was discussion around the use of Glow and other education sites and games used within the school. Children enjoy using Glow when it works, but cite problems with the technology or having difficulty gaining access with passwords not being recognised. This appears to have impacted on the children's use of Glow. A general view was that Glow was heavily moderated and very much about formal learning rather than a place/space that children would go independently. For more on children's views of Glow we would refer to Children's Parliament work from 2014: <https://glowconnect.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/cp-children-and-technology-report-2014.pdf>

In some settings being online or using devices appears to be used as a reward to children who have completed their class work, perhaps in Golden Time. Children reported that they did not have enough time to go online, and reward time on computers or other devices was too short.

## Would you like to use digital technology more often for learning; and how?

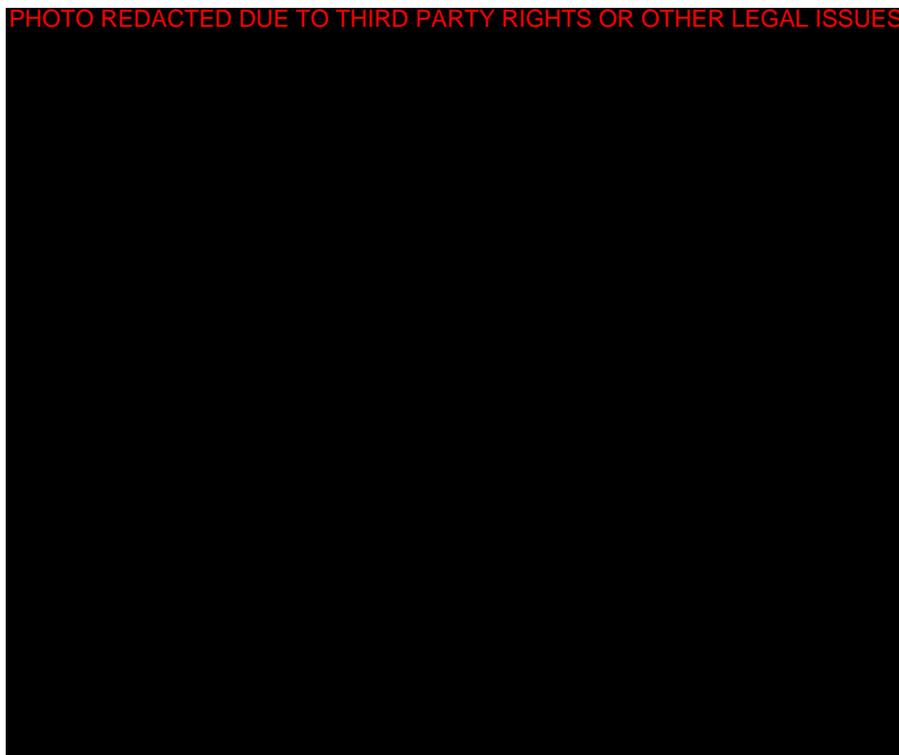
Views on this question varied – from children who were interested and excited by the prospect of more online learning or use of technology/devices to those who felt they had enough engagement with technology.

For those who were not keen on more technology-based learning there was a view that this would feel like you were on your own, reflecting their use of technology at home which was often a private thing, perhaps in the privacy of a bedroom.



Above: a child's view on how often digital technology should be used in school

For children for whom digital technology is seen as enhancing learning, this was seen as having the potential to make learning more fun or engaging with the capacity to make better links between learning in the classroom and work at home. Looking forward, children thought that accessing iPads or other classroom technology should be seen as the usual or normal thing to do, and not just something offered as a reward or part of Golden Time.

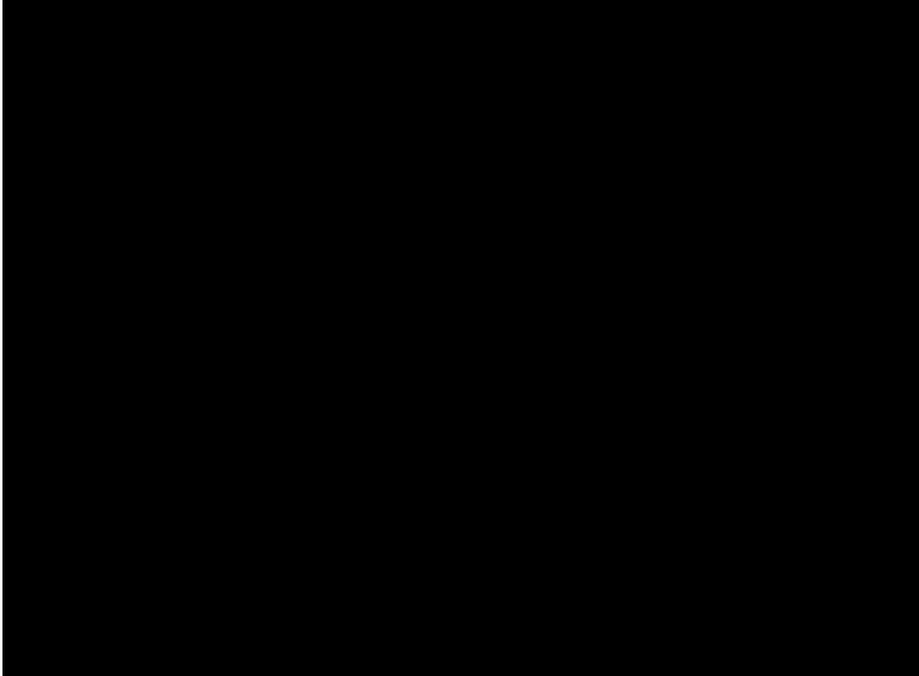


Above: a child's vision that every child will have their own digital device

Children identified several ways in which they could use technology more in their classroom and for learning:

- Skype or a similar platform would be good to help them engage and communicate directly with children from other parts of the world.
- Children who would like a quiet space could have that space enhanced by calming technology.
- In general children would like more technology directly available in their classrooms, with separate relaxation and study areas where technology can be accessed.
- The games children perceive as 'educational' could be more like other games they play, with an emphasis on making them 'feel more fun'.
- In general, there should be more fun/educational apps that support learning. Children would like to be able to suggest apps and sites that help them learn, and have these used/unblocked in school.
- Children could do more art and design using technology/devices available in school.
- If every child had their own iPad/tablet they could decide when to use them in their learning.
- Children would like to be able to learn languages with apps on tablets, phones or iPad.
- Children would like the opportunity to use their phones in class for games or quizzes or to clarify words and get help when the teacher or support assistant is busy.
- Children wanted more access to technology to provide support if they needed help when peers and teacher were not available.

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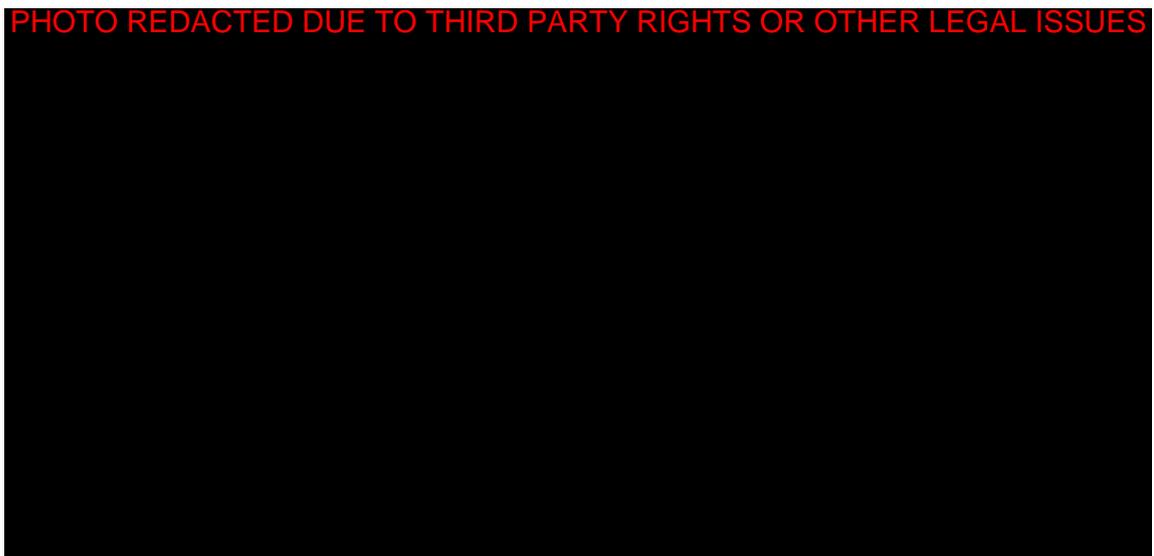


Left: a child's vision of how digital technology could be utilised in the classroom

## Imagining the digital classroom of the future

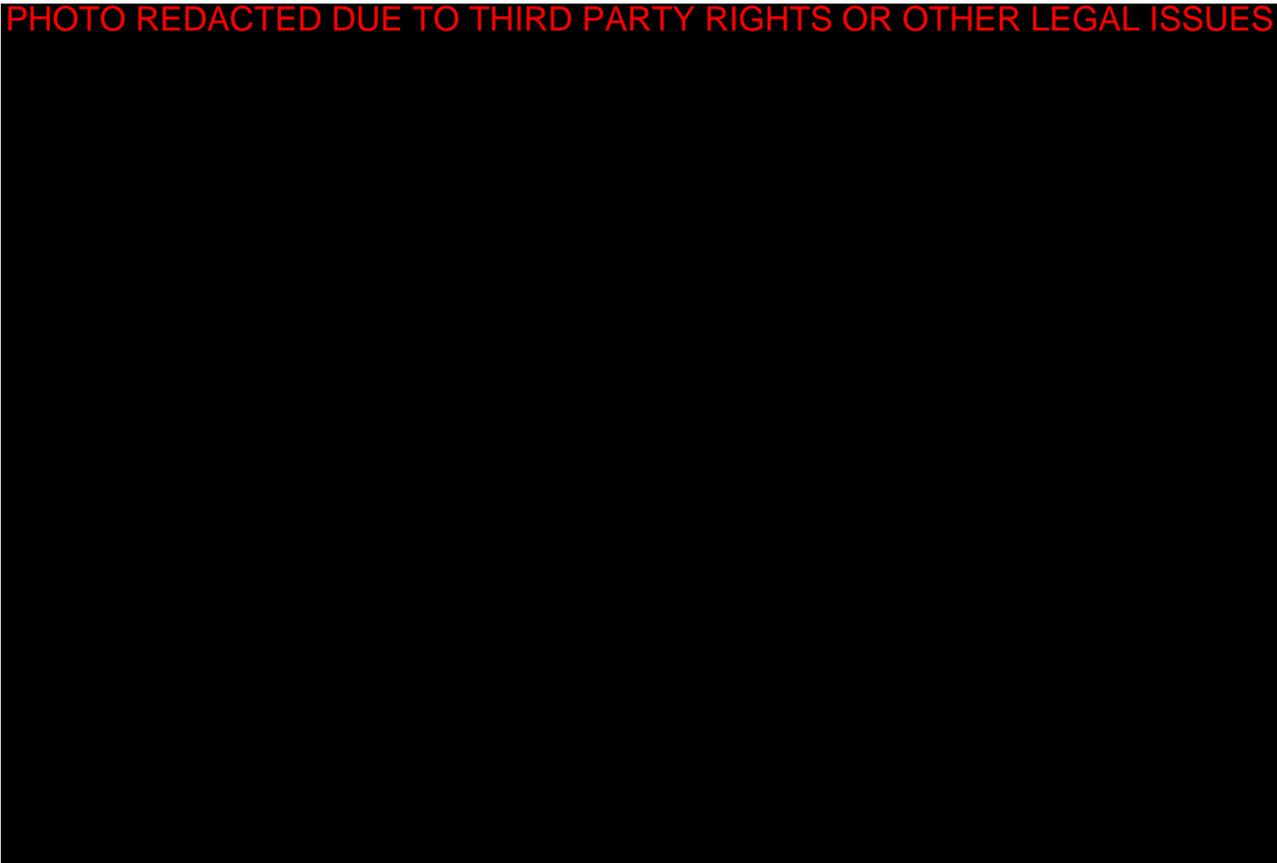
Children made suggestions about the classroom or digital learning experience of the future which could include:

- Bringing in your own tech/devices to use them in the classroom.
- Personal iPad/tablet.
- Interactive technology – an avatar - that allows you to ask questions and get advice on your learning.
- A pen or device that you could talk to that would write down what you want to say, this would help children that do not write well; they could email their work to the teacher.
- Ability to listen to your own choice of music when working.
- Make it possible to learn a language of your choice.
- Audio books.
- The latest text books downloaded.
- Using less paper in the classroom would be good for the environment.
- 3D printers.
- Teacher available on Skype when you are not learning in the same place.



Above: A child's vision of teaching delivered through Skype

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While many of the children's ideas did relate to technology/being on-line many also highlighted their desire for broader environmental or relationship-based improvements to learning, citing the need for:

- A personal learning space.
- Classrooms that are larger and have blinds/lighting that works dependent on the weather.
- A classroom where there is lots of physical activity and moving around.
- More opportunities to be creative.
- More books.
- Classrooms where there is help for everybody, with more adults to support learning.

## Conclusion/Key messages

- Children use devices and technology across life at home and school. For most children digital technology is linked to play, entertainment and keeping in touch with friends.
- The amount of time spent online/using technology at home can be a point of conflict; rules or boundaries vary from family to family.
- Children feel they often know more about using digital technology/devices than their parents. Parents do offer guidance and supervision although children might play 15/18 rated games with parental knowledge.
- Children's favourite site is YouTube which children use to access a range of material and create their own content.
- Children have an informed understanding of the possible dangers posed by using a smart phone/device which allows them to be online. They say they would report concerns however; they might not do so if reporting leads to increased adult anxiety and controls.
- In some schools, technology/devices are not located in the classroom, they might be housed in a 'IT room' or are shared or borrowed across classes.
- Children might use individual devices for topic work or educational apps/games. The class teacher's own confidence and what they know informs the range or complexity of what children access and use in the classroom.
- In some classrooms the Smartboard is used a lot, but this is usually by the teacher. Children might use it for games to support learning in literacy and numeracy or researching whole class topics and watching films.
- Most children involved in the consultation have their own phone although they might not all have internet access. Personal phones/devices are not used in the classroom, but children would like to be able to do so.
- Children enjoy using Glow when it works; they often have difficulty with passwords.
- In some settings being online or using devices is a reward for those who have completed their class work. Children report they do not have enough time to go online, and reward time on computers or other devices is too short.
- Digital technology is seen as enhancing learning; it makes learning more fun and engaging, and helps make links between learning in the classroom and work at home. Looking forward, children thought that accessing iPads or other classroom technology should be seen as the usual or normal thing to do.
- The games children perceive as 'educational' could be more like other games they play, with an emphasis on making them 'feel more fun'. In general, there should be more fun/educational apps that support learning.
- Children want more access to technology to support learning when peers or teacher are not available. If every child had their own iPad/tablet they could decide when to use them in their learning. Children could do more art and design using technology/devices available in school.
- While many of the children's ideas for enhancing the learning experience relate to technology/being on-line, many also highlight their desire for broader environmental or relationship-based improvements to learning, including more personalisation and more help and support for all learners.



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