

Education Walsall

Schools Forum

Standards Fund Grant 121a – National Digital Infrastructure for Schools

1. Introduction

The DfES has created an additional one-off standards fund around the National Digital Infrastructure for Schools with the following funding aims:

- Help move institutions to a position where ICT is treated as a utility
- Drive aggregation of demand across institutions and between Local Authorities
- Achieve the highest quality services and best value for money for the optimum collective spend at regional or multi-authority levels.

The amount provided to Walsall LA is £177,636 and this is proposed to be spent on the following projects:

Project	Cost
Aggregated Procurement	£19700
Remote Backup	£58940
FiTS	£3800
Primary FiTS	£46100
Collaborative Data Usage	£48800

Following consultation with representatives from bodies such as Becta and WMNet and the analysis of the current position of Walsall schools, the following projects are proposed as detailed overleaf:

2. Remote Backup

The existing Remote Backup service would be extended to allow all Nursery, Primary and Special schools to back up documents, in addition to the current MIS data. This would be managed on a quota system and exact availability would be set once the current MIS backup rollout is complete.

The existing licences would be converted from annual to perpetual so that the ongoing costs to schools are reduced.

Total Project Estimate - £58940

3. Aggregated Procurement

DfES now expect ICT procurement to be via collaborative arrangements provided by Regional Broadband Consortia and Becta's national framework agreements.

Collaborative procurement is an area that has not been used significantly within Walsall in the recent past, but does offer potential benefits to all schools, with both the cost savings on equipment, the time spent on procurement and also an improved process of monitoring spend with suppliers to benefit all schools.

This project is designed to scope out the expected procurement from all schools over the period up until March 2008, and then create a scheme that allows all schools to benefit on an ongoing basis with limited central costs.

It is also intended that these frameworks will be in place that schools can continue to use over subsequent years.

Total Project Estimate - £19700

4. FiTS

The Framework in Technical Support (FiTS) programme, created by Becta, allows schools to make best use of their internal technical resource, as well as any 3rd parties involved.

This programme has previously been run with a number of Walsall secondary schools with great success but this funding would be used to provide courses from an accredited FiTS training provider to the remaining schools, plus top-up training \ consultancy for those schools that have already undertaken the programme.

This training would be provided by one of the BECTA accredited training partners direct to schools, with Education Walsall ICT consultancy in addition.

Total Project Estimate - £3800

5. Primary FiTS

As well as the FiTS programme detailed above, Becta are shortly to announce Primary FiTS which is aimed at Primary, Special and Nursery schools.

Walsall were one of the pilot authorities for Becta and from this pilot programme Walsall, this has enabled school to make better use of ICT whilst reducing technical burdens which is a core part of the Standard Fund guidelines.

This project will aim to involve schools through professional development for Teaching Assistants within schools, and also individual consultations with schools, and the production of a number of training materials which are intended to continue to be used by schools after the completion of this funding period.

Due to the number of schools within this area, this position is expected to last for 12 months and will take the form of a secondment or fixed-term contract.

Total Project Estimate - £46100

6. Collaborative Data Usage

Within the standard fund guidance, the DfES have listed this as a priority for authorities and schools to begin working towards.

This project would have 2 workstreams – 1 looking at the data requirements centrally and at schools and how this data can be best used within a central database towards the current School Integration Frameworks which are under pilot testing.

The 2nd stream would be responsible for the technical requirements for all schools and creating a working model.

The initial stream is expected to take up to 6 months as this will involve liason with other local bodies in Walsall such as Walsall Council.

The technical stream would require the use of an outside consultancy with specialism in the Single Sign-on area, additional hardware plus additional technical work and extensive testing with the various firewall and network infrastructures that are currently in place with schools.

Total Project Estimate - £48800

7. Recommendation

Members of Schools Forum are recommended to approve the project proposal.