



Walsall Children's Services

Report to: Schools Forum

Date: 16 June 2009

Subject: Harnessing Technology Grant

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Purpose of the report: To provide details of the Harnessing Technology Grant for 2009-2010

1. Introduction

The 2009 – 2010 capital allocation for the Harnessing Technology ICT standards fund grant is £1,016,288 along with match funding from Walsall Council of £216,630.

The spending guidance advises that 25% can be retained by the authority for centrally procured services or aggregated purchasing such as the provision of broadband through regional broadband consortia. This is used in Walsall for the costs of maintaining the central infrastructure for the schools internet provision and connection onto regional broadband and national education networks.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Central retention

As last year, it is proposed to retain additional funding over and above the 25% retention amount centrally where appropriate to meet the key investment priorities which include:

Self Review Framework – £40k

Shibboleth - £50k

Internet connections to schools - £140k

Sharing, collaboration and celebrating ICT best practice projects - £30k

Further details of each of these projects are included below.

2.2 Allocation to schools

It is proposed that the remainder of the funding (£664,688.50) will be allocated to schools based on local circumstances .

It is therefore proposed that this is a formula of a fixed amount per setting, proposed at £1000, plus an amount per pupil, currently estimated at approximately £12 per pupil based on the school census returns from January 2009.

Schools forum is asked to decide whether academies should be funded at the same proportion.

Once agreed, all eligible schools will be notified of the agreed approach plus details of their eligible amount and guidance as to how the grant can be spent.

3. Specific projects

3.1 Self Review Framework

This further extends the project agreed in 2008-09 to support all schools in completing the Self Review Framework and continuous funding would further allow additional support to all schools in working towards a digital entitlement for all Walsall learners.

Use of the SRF assists schools in completing the Ofsted self-evaluation framework, produce an ICT development plan and better plan any spending and financial commitments around ICT.

The funding agreed by Schools Forum in 2008-09 has been used to provide both training sessions for groups of schools and also individual school visits to support further progress and the SRF is seen as a core element of both BSF and PCP schemes.

Schools where the SRF has been used have already seen positive Ofsted comments around their progress and development planning.

Further funding will be used to continue to support schools through group training and individual consultancy and the aim for this year would be for every school to sign up to the Next Generation Learning Charter.

3.2 Shibboleth

This is a new project to meet the investment priorities within the 2009-10 Becta guidance. This is a mechanism that enables learners to obtain anywhere\anytime access to web-based educational resources from different sources using a single secure login.

This project is costed on an initial estimate to produce the central infrastructure required.

3.3 Internet connections to schools

This further extends the project agreed in 2008-09 to continue the upgrade of connectivity bandwidths appropriate to particular circumstances and needs and this links to the overall aim of working towards a digital entitlement for all Walsall learners and builds additional capacity that is required by the additional use of internet resources for teaching and learning.

There is now a further requirement in that BT have advised that there will no longer support the circuits in place at secondary schools after September 2010 and these will need to be replaced before that time. It has been confirmed that the BSF guidance does not allow this cost to be met within the BSF ICT funding so this will need to be met either from Harnessing Technology funding or schools own budgets.

3.4 Sharing, collaboration and celebrating ICT best practice projects

This is a new project to promote sustainable sharing of skills and resources for Walsall learners and staff within schools, building school to school support networks and partnerships, the interchange of ideas between schools as well as supporting the role and use of ICT envisaged within the Primary Curriculum review and BSF\PCP programmes as working towards the digital entitlement aim for all Walsall learners.

It is proposed that the use of this funding should be agreed by the ICT Task Group which has representation from across Walsall schools.

4. Recommendation

Forum members are asked to consider the proposals and approve the recommendation.