



Link Academy Trust

Digital Learning Strategy & Vision

MARCH 2021 - 2024



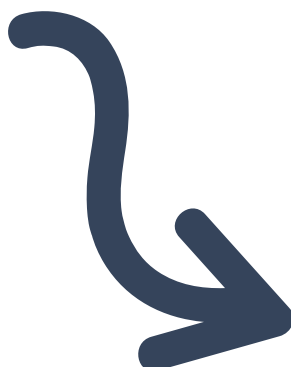
CONTENTS

Link Academy Trust vision
and values, including a
Local and National
reputation for the innovative
use of IT and Digital Media.



Developing a current Digital
Learning vision balancing
the use of technology
alongside quality first
teaching to provide an
excellent education packed
with opportunity.

Planning the Actions to
build the Digital
Learning vision
to ensure consistency
and a shared purpose.



Devising the Technical
Roadmap to ensure an
excellent experience
that launches
children into
remarkable lives



In this Age of Technology, we recognise that IT has an increasing impact on our lives in so many spheres - we must prepare pupils for the 21st Century and their future employment from the earliest age

Achieving fluid Digital Learning to all Trust academies bringing consistency and adaptive technology to the learning environment utilising Cloud-based technology.

Constantly improving, keeping pace with rapid changes - understanding that Digital Learning can have a significant impact on pupil's ability to learn through cutting-edge teaching.

We will always endeavour to provide a safe and secure environment for pupils to learn using technology everyday.



THE LINK ACADEMY TRUST ASPIRES TO BE NATIONALLY RECOGNISED FOR PUTTING OUR PUPILS FIRST BY:

- Delivering educational excellence underpinned by strong moral values
- Each learner exceeding their aspirations in a quality learning environment
- Highly motivated, research-led, passionate teaching
- Schools being at the heart of and an integral part of their community
- Being a partner of choice

Small Schools, Big Opportunities-

- Unforgettable experiences- setting the foundations for life
- No ceiling, the highest possible achievement for all
- Individuality valued, collaboration not competition
- People matter, every interaction, every moment

Our mission is to deliver the best for our children, families and communities through:

- Innovative approaches to learning
- The development of partnership and collaborative working to create a cutting edge approach
- An uncompromising approach to health, safety, nurturing and inclusion

We will achieve this by investment in:

- High quality provision for staff and their pathways to success
- School environments that provide stimulating learning spaces
- Strong business planning to maximise the Trust's geographical range and collective expertise

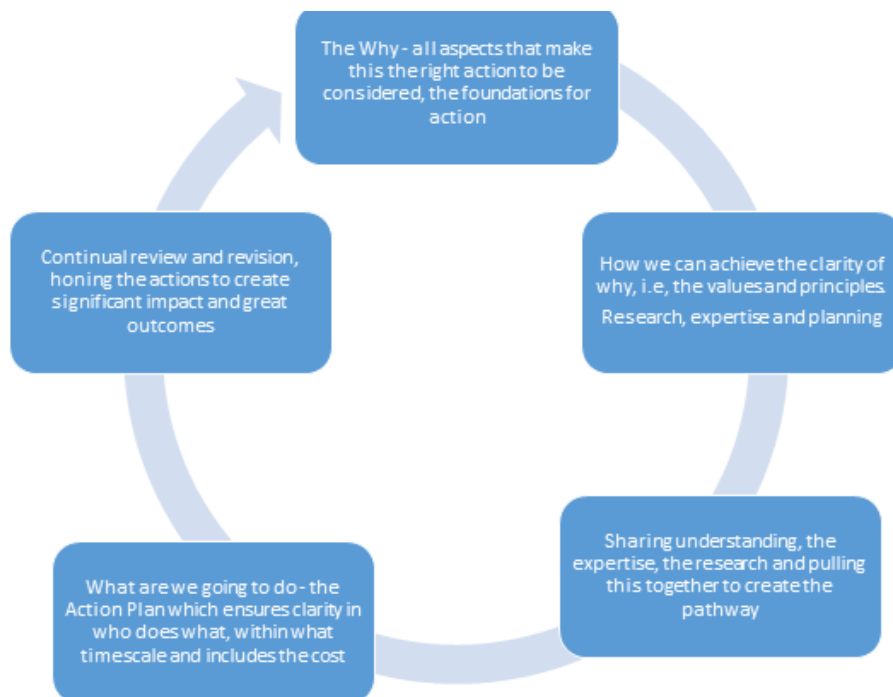
The growing role of education as the engine of economic change makes the work happening to transform our schools and classrooms fundamental to global progress. For me it starts with mindset. We need to first inspire students to embrace a limitless future and to see their learning as purposeful to what they can make and do. Anthony Salcito, Vice President, Worldwide Education, Microsoft

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this document is to significantly overhaul, develop and capture the Link Academy Trust's Digital Learning Vision and Strategy in this rapidly, ever-changing digital environment to prepare all stakeholders for the technological future.

The Trust have recognised that the current requirement to deliver effective online learning for families in pandemic lockdown has highlighted the need to review and consider, in depth, how we provide learning and the Trust's Digital Learning provision going into the future,

This will be achieved through a series of collaborative meetings drawing on Trust-wide experience, knowledge and understanding and from external partners and IT professionals. Trust priorities, research and the latest technologies will combine to provide a road map. Key documents such as the Academy Trust Strategic Improvement Plan, latest Ofsted reports, National initiatives and research will all contribute to the development of a comprehensive approach to IT provision into the future.



The Trust's strategy will detail the overall vision for the future status and requirement of IT in schools; this will be translated into a set of actions which will include technology review; actions will then be plotted onto a roadmap, which will identify the key milestones as we work in partnership towards the comprehensive Digital Learning strategy and vision. The document will need to adapt to changes in available technology, curriculum, pedagogy and lessons learned as we progress and will be subjected to rigorous scrutiny, monitoring, review, evaluation and improvement on a regular cycle.

Some aspects we will focus on include:

- Hardware, both in school and what our families have access to
- Connectivity, particularly rural schools and the new solutions to improvement
- Software- research into the choices of learning platforms and appropriate programmes
- Staff expertise and ongoing training requirements
- Pupil understanding and expertise in using and accessing Digital Learning
- Safety
- Parent understanding and ability to support learning
- Availability of learning, and how to find appropriate learning resources in a time efficient way

Digital Learning Vision

After a number of discussions we have identified the following three key parts to the Trust's Digital Learning Strategy & Vision. These three core components will be used to ensure we are focusing our effort in the right areas and that we continue to work towards the overall objective.

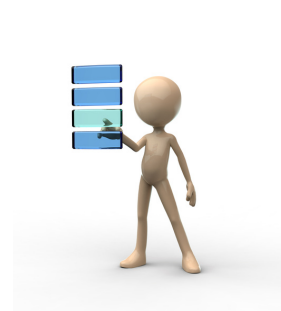
These core components will then be broken down into smaller, more manageable objectives and will be translated into a set of activities that can be monitored and tracked. Allowing us, at a glance, to track progress against objectives within our academies as well as being able to have a view of up and coming projects.



STABILITY

The network should be stable, up-to-date, robust and fit for purpose. Solutions should be linked into the overall vision of the Trust and collaboratively working to create a clear Roadmap that is both flexible and timely.

The Trust will continue to work with its Digital Learning strategic partner and external professional groups to further develop our Digital Learning vision into the future years.



USABILITY

Teaching staff should have the confidence in technology to be able to walk into any of the schools classrooms and use Digital Learning provision without hesitation or worry. The make or model of hardware or software should not be a limiting factor to learning and teaching. The developments will be dependent upon teachers having increasingly a broad range of basic skills required to use the technology. Staff should be able to leverage the technology to achieve increases in creativity, efficiency, effectiveness and attainment.

There will be regular opportunities for the highest quality professional development throughout the year, so teachers extend their confidence with 21st century technologies.



PUPIL ENGAGEMENT

Pupils are engaged when the technology is used in a meaningful way to enhance the curriculum and they can confidently access a wealth of learning experiences. The Trust plan to invest in new technology transforming engagement with pupils in all key stages, in a range of products and devices to enhance and extend the curriculum and Trust's vision for 21st century learning.

Moving towards our Digital Learning Vision

Digital Learning, as in any organisation is a multifaceted area with many parts interdependent upon the other to work efficiently. We have identified the key areas below and briefly described the actions taken over the last few years to improve the Digital Learning provision whilst identifying the next steps.



INTERNET PROVISION AND FILTERING

Historically, all schools within the Trust have had their internet provision and filtering provided by SWGfL however in 2018, in a phased approach, schools were moved across to Virgin Media for the provision of internet services with filtering provided by a cloud based solution called Netsweeper.

Actions:

- Remaining schools to transfer to the Virgin/Netsweeper model (new joiners)
- Ascertain current internet speeds and investigate direct managed lines.
- Continue to engage with the RuralGigaBit programme and any other funding/improvement schemes.
- Plan any improvement actions and budget for these.
- Research current solutions as they become available.



SERVERS

A server is key to ensure the network in the school still operates to allow access to all users, data storage and resources for teaching and learning. This is the hub of everything available within the school Digital Learning network.

Currently school servers are of varying ages and condition.

Actions:

- Survey existing servers and produce a replacement programme in order to upgrade to be the most efficient they can be.
- All schools to move any data across to Microsoft cloud storage.
- Continue to consider latest innovative solutions for any alternative provision.



WIRELESS

Wireless provision that enables all devices to connect to the network and internet from anywhere in the school. To ensure an up-to-date and stable wireless solution is in place for the school to utilise. With plans to increase device numbers further in the future, the wireless solution will need to be reviewed to support new technology and supply suitable coverage in the future.

Action:

- Complete a Wifi survey at each school.
- Create an Action Plan - time/cost to deliver phased improvements



LAN

The infrastructure and Local Area Network (LAN) within the school's runs the physical network cable connections to desktops and wireless access points for a wireless solution to work.

Action:

- Continue to ascertain the age and resilience of the current switches in the schools and implement a replacement programme. This will ensure the physical infrastructure within the school remains reliable and stable to support IT.
- Record outcomes to maintain a clear 'picture' of LAN provision.



INTERACTIVE SCREENS

The schools had SMART boards and projectors for classroom audio visual that was old technology for a number of years, which were starting to fail. Instead of funding the repair costs or replacement bulbs for this equipment, the Trust engaged in a rolling programme between 2018-20 of replacement with new interactive TV's which work out more cost effective over the coming years.

Actions:

- All learning spaces to have interactive screens.
- CPD: Training sessions available to support staff using interactive screens.
- Maintain a clear record of when installations were done and plan future replacement programme.



REMOTE ACCESS / CLOUD

Accessible solutions and technology is key to saving time, offering flexibility and retaining security. With remote access to files and resources on the Cloud, the school can offer flexible working to all staff and pupils using a range of devices with confidence.

The Office 365 product enables easy access to key applications and documentation storage from anywhere enabling the schools to adopt cloud based learning, offering a wide range of applications available for every year group. A meeting with the Microsoft Education team has identified free training covering:

Teams for Education – Level 100 (Beginner)

- Overview of Teams: Teams for Business Vs Teams for EDU
- Activity Feed, Personal Settings, Search bar & commands
- Teams and Channels
- Ways of communicating and chatting
- Collaborating, co-authoring documents & SharePoint
- Microsoft Help function
- Q&A and further demos
- Training and staff development

Teams for Education – Level 150 (Intermediate)

- Overview and recap of Beginner session:
- Formative assessment: Kahoot!
- Managing you time and classes effectively with Outlook Calendar integration
- Meet virtually with your class and send messages in chats and channel conversations
- Scheduling a virtual meeting for your class
- Building an effective modern classroom:
- Message your class
- Start a conversation with one student or a group of students
- Reply to a conversation
- Deliver announcements to your students
- Spark collaboration in the classroom with Microsoft Whiteboard
- Flip your classroom with PowerPoint and Microsoft Stream
- Microsoft Help function
- Q&A and further demos

Teams for Education – Level 200 (Advanced)

- Overview and recap of Intermediate session
- Making your Teams more personal with Tabs
- Assignments and Grading:
- Creating and reproducing assignments and grading rubrics
- Centralised assignments and grading for ease of tracking and monitoring
- Insights into student engagement with assigned work
- Digital environment for prompt feedback loops
- One Class Notebook to rule them all
- Facilitating collaboration over long periods of time
- Creating a digital binder to help organise both private and public curriculum
- and resources
- Providing students with a venue to discuss assignments with peers, ask questions, or explore learning challenges posted by their teacher
- Customised workspace with Microsoft and third-party apps as needed
- Embed apps such as: Kahoot, Flipgrid, Bunccee, Wakelet etc
- Microsoft Help function
- Q&A and further demos

A basic training programme will be provided as part of staff 'directed' time with the offer of extended CPD where appropriate. Staff will be encouraged to undertake awards and the highest quality training with a budget set aside for this.





STAFF DEVICES

The Digital Learning vision supports mobile based technology and future plans to use online based resources, using devices within school or from home. Each teacher has access to a quality laptop. It's important to plan to refresh devices every 3-5 years, due to the high usage and rapid technical development. A significant uplift in staff devices occurred in 2020. A standard approach to supply a mid-range laptop to support all staff requirements going forward. The Digital Learning Subject Leaders will annually review staff device suitability and effectiveness in line with new software and hardware developments.

Action:

- CPD: Training available to support new devices for staff.
- A rolling programme of device update and renewal.



PUPIL DEVICES

A mixed environment of devices across the school, provides a varied and useful experience to take forward into secondary school. It's also key that the schools don't rush into purchasing a certain type of device and make the key curriculum decisions first, which will then drive the technology required to compliment the applications that will be used. I pads have been reconfigured and a VPP setup for application handling and roll out.

It's important to plan to refresh devices every 3-5 years, due to the high usage and rapid technology development. Identifying the right devices for the schools based on the curriculum decisions. Investing in new technology like the Microsoft will provide confidence for teaching staff, that new devices can meet the requirements to deliver a full IT lesson with no issues.

Actions:

- Investigate devices for pupil deployment
- CPD: Training available to support new devices for pupils.
- Establish a school by school need for renewal and develop and ongoing 3 year plan.
- Consider where 'new' purchases should be deployed in order to increase access for older children (Y5 & 6)



CURRENT HOLDINGS

Over the last three years, the Trust has taken steps to improve IT facilities in schools whether that is upgrading servers or providing laptops for staff and pupils. However, this approach was conducted in a reactive way to the demands of the teaching environment and as items have become defunct. The diagram below illustrates the number of devices currently held within the Trust. The quantities vary from school to school and the age of the equipment of some devices make them of little use.



In addition, over the last two years interactive whiteboards have been replaced in classrooms with interactive screens achieving a 96% coverage.





ROAD MAP

In order to provide consistency in provision and to achieve the Trust's vision of every people having access to modern devices the Link will embark on a 3 year programme of upgrading Digital Learning resources. The road map below illustrates the steps we will take.

