



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State

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Thank you for your letter, dated 18 June, on the important subject of digital equipment and skills for teachers.

The Department and I recognise the importance of broadband infrastructure in education, and we are working with industry and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to accelerate the full-fibre internet connectivity rollout to all schools in England.

Intelligence from industry suggests that there are thousands of schools with below average connection speeds for the UK, limiting their access to the infrastructure needed to support modern ways of working.

Access to gigabit capable broadband for communities and schools is being addressed through programmes rolled out in partnership between the Department for Education and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. We are investing an unprecedented £5 billion to support the deployment of gigabit broadband in the hardest-to-reach areas of the country, this coverage will include even more rural schools that would otherwise not be reached without government action.

We have recently launched the Connect the Classroom pilot programme, which supports schools in upgrading their WiFi networking to ensure that outdated systems do not prevent them from realising the benefits of technology and the use of cloud-based services.

To address your question regarding the number of teachers without adequate skills to deliver education digitally, I am pleased to inform you that the EdTech landscape survey, published earlier this month, found that the digital skills of teachers have improved over the last year, and many teachers indicated that the new technology they learned to use for remote education will help teachers to deliver better in-class education.

Regarding plans to ensure all teachers have adequate digital equipment and skills, to enable them to educate effectively in today's digital world, I am pleased to inform you that phase one of the EdTech Demonstrator programme has met the individual training needs of over 4,000 schools and colleges, with over 11,000 more accessing live weekly webinars and tutorials.

The Department launched the programme in April 2020, which comprised of a network of schools and colleges providing peer-to-peer support on making the best use of technology.

The next stage for the Demonstrator network will be to bridge the gap between crisis response and long-term implementation of technology, focusing on upskilling the profession to realise the wider benefits of technology. The existing cohort of Demonstrators will be critical to ensuring that the recent £400 million investment in technology made by Government is maximised, supporting schools/colleges to adopt longer-term, sustained use of technology. This can help to accelerate and enhance wider school/college strategies, including school improvement drives and resource and business management.

The Department for Education also introduced a training course, 'Sustaining Digital and Remote Education', A Toolkit for School Leaders, developed by Sandringham School, an established research school and an EdTech Demonstrator, available freely to all schools at www.digitallyempowered.co.uk

The course explores what constitutes effective curriculum implementation, barriers to learning faced by students, and the type of resources, both digital and paper-based, that are available to schools. The Toolkit encourages school leaders to consider impacts on teacher workload, flexible working, and safe and effective working practices.

By sharing best practice principles derived from evidence-based research, complemented by Sandringham's particular experiences using digital technologies, the Toolkit supports schools in developing and implementing effective remote education strategies. Teachers will also be helped to consider how best to target resources, including digital resources, towards education recovery.

New trainees are entitled to at least three years of evidenced-based professional development and support across Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and into induction.

Since September 2020, new trainee teachers benefit from the ambitious ITT Core Content Framework. This framework describes the fundamental knowledge and skills that all new entrants to the profession need to effectively teach and support all children at the end of their teacher training. This sits alongside the new two-year early career support, underpinned by the Early Career Framework.

In line with these frameworks, individual teacher training providers design

courses that are appropriate to the needs of trainees and for the subject, phase, age range and context that the trainees will be teaching in, which may include the use of digital learning.

There are excellent examples of ITT providers helping trainees develop an understanding of digital pedagogy and workload reduction digital tools. Some ITT providers are also using blended approaches to delivering training. As we develop an evidence-based strategy for technology in education, we are identifying examples of good practice using technology during ITT amongst providers.

The Department for Education has also set out guidance to support schools to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their remote education provision, as well as training from Sandringham College's Sustaining Digital Education Toolkit and the EdTech Demonstrators Programme, which provides peer-to-peer support for school to share best practice in digital pedagogy.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Williamson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education