

## Website Content Good Practice Template

### AREA TITLE: CHILDREN'S WORKFORCE

#### AREA TITLE: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

##### About...

##### **Introduction**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides tools which can support learning and communication for people on the autism spectrum. The Government's good practice guidance suggests that local authority's ICT policies encompass the needs of children on the autism spectrum and that schools should include a thorough ICT assessment of the strengths and needs of individual children on the autism spectrum including an analysis of which equipment and communication aids are accessible to the child.

The National Autistic Society (NAS) points out that computers in particular have a number of advantages including the fact that:

- they are predictable and, therefore, controllable
- enable errors to be made safely
- offer a highly perfectible medium
- give possibilities of non-verbal or verbal expression
- can be an aid to effective communication
- can help develop concentration.

However, ICT represents just one of the supporting tools for learning and leisure. The NAS warns that ICT by itself does not provide a magic solution or 'cure' for people on the autism spectrum and there are dangers involved. For example while using a computer may reduce the anxiety of some children and distract them from disruptive or challenging behaviour, there is a risk of reinforcing such behaviour if they learn that by behaving disruptively they will get to play on the computer. Conversely, computer-time and use of favoured software can be used as a reward to reinforce desired behaviour.

Using the computer for a long time can be isolating and can encourage repetitive actions. Government guidelines recommend positive strategies to minimise obsessive use of computers. It can be difficult to get the child off the computer once a routine of using it for long periods has been established. Used purposefully and for set periods of time ICT is a great tool for learning. Children can work with others on a computer, learn to take turns and have a positive experience of communicating and interacting. Electronic books and CD-ROM software can be enjoyable and can encourage concentration. Games and other software can encourage interaction with other users as well as the computer.

##### **Resources**

Children and adults on the autism spectrum can be very different so computer software and resources needs to be tailored to their needs. Many will use standard computer hardware, for example word processors which can help pupils who have difficulty with handwriting. Hardware can be adapted to match the needs of those who have difficulty with standard equipment so touch screens, keyboards and joysticks can overcome difficulties with fine motor skills or help those who find the standard equipment too complex.

Voice output communication aids have been found to be motivating for some children on the autism spectrum who have little or no speech. Pictures or

symbols can be translated into spoken words at the push of a button. The computer is an ideal way to work with symbols and pictures alongside sound. Special programmes can provide support for writing with on-screen word and picture banks, word prediction software and sentence builders; speech feedback can help with checking work. Software can be used to help children develop the concept of cause and effect.

### **ICT and the National Curriculum**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a National Curriculum subject throughout the compulsory school years. Knowledge and skills it covers include:

- Technical skills and understanding when to use them, such as how to gather information about a particular subject from a variety of sources (people, books, internet, radio, television etc)
- Gathering and processing information safely and responsibly
- Questioning the information found and learning to process new information
- Problem solving and using different sources of information to do this.
- Accessing information and experiences from a wide range of people, communities and cultures
- Applying ICT effectively in other areas of learning, everyday life and in the world of work ahead.

Get help  
from...

[The Advisory Unit](#): Computers in Education provides advice and training in the use of ICT to support pupils who have severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). It helps teachers make decisions about suitable ICT provision for their schools, for instance, by undertaking an ICT audit with a written report.

[ACE Centre](#) works with children with complex disabilities who require assisted/augmented communication aids in order to communicate and to learn. It provides training, assessments and resources.

[ACE Centre North](#) offers free information and advice on Assistive Technology for people with physical/ communication difficulties.

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## Links

**ICT at Key Stages 1 and 2** Information from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for teachers of ICT at Key Stages 1 and 2 about how to translate the ICT Programme of Study into manageable units of work.

**ICT at Key Stage 3** Information from the DCSF for teachers of ICT at Key Stage 3 about how to translate the ICT Programme of Study into manageable units of work.

**BECTA** The government agency leading the national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning.

**Primary Focus Magazine** The termly online journal for primary school practitioners published by NAACE. (NAACE is the professional association for those concerned with advancing education through the appropriate use of ICT.)

**Computer Education Magazine** The termly journal, published by NAACE, for all education practitioners involved in the teaching of ICT.

## Case Studies

**ICT Case Studies** A range of case studies about how different schools have used ICT to enthuse and encourage pupils across a wide range of subjects.

**ICT in the curriculum** Examples from BECTA (see above) about how ICT skills can be developed across a range of subjects for a range of pupils with practical help and advice.

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