Coláiste
Bhaile Chláir

Assistive Technology Policy and Procedures in Coláiste Bhaile Chláir

Use of Assistive Technology in Coláiste Bhaile Chláir (CBC)

CBC strives to be a happy, safe, caring, and inclusive community where everyone is supported to reach their potential.

One of the resources at our disposal to help us with this is Assistive Technology. Assistive Technology is any device, piece of equipment or system that helps bypass, work around or compensate for an individual's specific learning needs.

Assistive technology is playing an increasingly important role in the education of pupils with unique needs. Computer-based AT applications have the ability to help overcome some of the barriers created by a learning difficulty and can allow pupils to read, write and communicate more effectively. The availability of assistive technologies can help to 'level the playing field', in terms of academic achievement.

Who can use Assistive Technology?

If a student has a recommendation for assistive technology in a professional report an application may be made to the SENO as per Circular No 0010/2013.

<u>If this application is successful:</u>

The equipment will be purchased using funds ONLY provided by the NCSE (National Council for Special Education)

Although the equipment will be sanctioned for a particular pupil the equipment will, as a rule, remain the property of the school and will be available for allocation to subsequent pupils with similar disabilities.

Some professional reports recommend that students get access to AT in the school. Students may have access to these resources during classes but the school cannot guarantee that AT will be available.

Irrespective of AT being granted and or used in school it may NOT guarantee its use in state examinations.

Coláiste
Bhaile Chláir

What may Assistive Technology be used for?

New Assistive technology equipment is constantly being developed. There is now an exceptionally wide range of technological or software support available which can provide assistance to pupils in schools and which has potential to assist children in their academic performance, learning, completion of homework, or which could assist them to achieve a degree of improvement to their educational performance.

Assistive technology also can:

- allow pupils who cannot manipulate a pen to write
- enable pupils that have difficulty in speaking to communicate
- assist pupils with visual impairments to read through Braille, or with the assistance of text-magnifying devices or through voice output
- make a computer respond to voice commands through voice recognition software
- help pupils with learning disabilities to read and write through specialised software
- allow a blind person to read a novel through a scanner with voice output
- control computers with simple head pointers or mouth-wands
- provide the tools to enable a person to experience success, where their usual experience may be regression
- to access the school curriculum.

There is now an exceptionally wide range of technological or software support available which can provide assistance to pupils in schools and which has potential to assist children in their academic performance, learning, completion of homework, or which could assist them to achieve a degree of improvement to their educational performance.

What can Assistive Technology not do?

AT is not a magic solution and its use may end in disappointment if too much emphasis is put on technology and not enough on how the pupil is likely to react to it, or whether it will work in the busy school environment.

It is important to avoid failure as this results in a setback for the pupil and parents.

Assistive technology may be limited in use because:

- it is only one of a range of options needed to help pupils expand their potential
- some high-tech AT requires a lot of learning that may be outside the cognitive or physical abilities of the pupil
- some solutions are achievable by more simple, inexpensive low-tech devices, or other strategies
- pupils may not 'buy-in' to assistive technology if it emphasises their disability

- specialists don't always know best. Parents' and teachers' intuitive knowledge is sometimes equally valid, but given less weight than the 'experts' judgements
- some AT is very expensive
- it is there to support revision rather than to replace it.

Parents /Guardian(s) need to consider

Deciding on assistive technology options will, therefore, often involve consideration of the home circumstances, along with the home-school relationship.

- It is essential that space be provided in a suitable location in the home for a computer, desk and peripherals. Wifi access is also very important.
- What are the home-school transport arrangements? Is transporting a laptop safely possible and in a protective case?
- The student must print out homework prior to class.
- If purchasing AT keep in mind the battery life of the unit. Will it last all day if fully charged in the morning? A laptop specification is available on request
- Parents are responsible for supervision of students when using AT at home.
- Upskilling in the use of AT and participating in upskilling opportunities provided by the school and elsewhere.

Training

- Students in receipt of AT will be met to outline the possibilities of AT during the term after the receiving of the device/technologies
- Video training will be made available to parents & guardians of first years to outline the possibilities of AT. Where additional support is needed AP2 will work with parents and guardians in a 1:1 manner.
- Students are required to practice typing at home using online typing programmes. Typing tuition will not be provided during school hours.
- Students must practice using AT at home.
- Students are required to attend a training session which outlines the procedures for using AT during examinations.
- Students and parents are encouraged to attend AT seminars made available by outside agencies.
- First year tutorials will have a focus on the of AT to ensure students are familiar with the supports available.

Use of AT in house examinations

- Students who have access to AT may use the technology in all house examinations as far as resources allow.
- Students must follow agreed procedures.

Coláiste
Bhaile Chláir

- Students must use the username and password provided for use in house examinations

Use of AT in State examinations

- The State Examinations Commission grant accommodations for State Examinations.
- Using AT for homework and or classwork does not confer the right to use it in State Examinations.

Repair / Replacement of Assistive Technology

Parents/Guardians are requested to contact the designated AT teacher if AT is not in working order as soon as this becomes known via the ICT helpdesk

For those granted AT by the NCSE Circular 10/2013 states that

- "The school's management authority will have responsibility for maintenance, repair, insurance etc. of the equipment.
- A designated teacher in the school should take responsibility for the management of the equipment and for monitoring its effective use within the school.
- In the event that GRETB's IT consultants deem the AT granted by the NCSE is beyond economical repair an application may be made to the SENO for its replacement as per Circular No 0010/2013.

For those using their own AT

- It is the Parents/Guardians own responsibility to repair/replace the AT.

Students must adhere to the following procedures when using AT

1. Although the equipment will be sanctioned by the NCSE for a particular pupil the equipment will, as a rule, remain the property of CBC and will be available for allocation to subsequent pupils with similar disabilities.

2. All Assistive technology and peripherals must be clearly labelled by parent with the student's name.

3. All assistive technology must be fully charged before arriving in school in the morning.

Coláiste
Bhaile Chláir

4. The safety of the equipment when transporting it to and from school and while in school is the responsibility of the student. The school cannot be held responsible for any damage to the equipment on or off the premises while in the students care. It will be the parent's responsibility to replace the equipment if damaged while in the students care.

5. Parents must take responsibility for internet safety when the child is using assistive technology at home.

6. At break times or when not in use students may put equipment into their locker for safe keeping.

7. The Assistive Technology must not be used by any other students other than the student to which it belongs.

8. While in class students must remain on task i.e. follow the instructions of the teacher and not use the equipment to access other material. If this does not happen then the student will be sanctioned.

9. The school will provide students with a standard set of software (relevant to the student's needs)

10. The school management reserves the right to amend these procedures.

11. It is the student's responsibility to keep copies of all important information held on the Assistive Technology in the cloud.

12. AT must only be used for educational/school purposes.

13. AT must be brought to school every day and used in classes.

14. Where the school or the pupil has no further requirement for the equipment, the SENO, or visiting teacher in conjunction with the SENO, may allocate it to another school in the interests of meeting needs to the greatest extent possible.

15. The laptop will be used in accordance with the schools Acceptable Usage Policy

Coláiste
Bhaile Chláir

Appendix 1: Procedure for Assistive Technology Grant Application for students entering first year

1. AEN Anchor will visit feeder schools to collect information about student with additional needs.
2. In April/May anchor will collect relevant information including educational psychologists/occupational therapists reports.
3. In May/June reports will be reviewed to determine the technology required and relevant quotes collected.
4. Parents are informed and their consent is obtained.
5. In a timely manner application will be made to the SENO.
6. Upon receipt of application approval equipment with be purchased.
7. Equipment and support will be made available to the student in accordance with the schools AT policy.

Appendix 2: Procedure for Assistive Technology Grant Application for students already enrolled

1. Upon receipt of educational psychologists/occupational therapists reports, these are reviewed to determine the technology required.
2. Relevant quotes collected.
3. Parents are informed by AEN anchor and their consent is obtained.
4. In a timely manner application will be made to the SENO.
5. Upon receipt of application approval equipment with be purchased.
8. Equipment and support will be made available to the student in accordance with the schools AT policy.