

Edinburgh Schools to get 21st Century Communications

☒ Council run schools and the majority of community education centres are set to get access to WIFI as part of a £5.3 million investment IT services. All establishments will get increased capacity for email and other electronic storage along with remote access to files and better management of software while schools will see significantly improved internet speeds.

The major refresh will also replace 9,000 now ageing computers with new and improved equipment. Schools and community learning establishments will have the opportunity to supplement these computers. A completely revamped IT infrastructure will allow for the development and growth of IT and provide the flexibility needed to meet the needs of learners and teachers, now and in the future.

City Education Leader Councillor Marilyne MacLaren said:

“Edinburgh is among those leading the charge to modernise and revolutionise school IT facilities and I am delighted that we’ll be in a position, with our pupils, to embrace all the benefits and opportunities that modern technology can provide.

“Young people make full use of sophisticated technology in their personal lives and we want it to be an integral part of their education too. They are highly skilled when it comes to making best use of computers, handheld devices and software and we want to help them capitalise on that skill and enthusiasm to enhance the way they learn.

“Despite difficult financial times, we’re investing to ensure that our equipment, our networks and our software are primed so that our pupils can take full advantage.

The new infrastructure will make it much easier for pupils, student and teachers to access IT and the internet using the entire spectrum of devices, ranging from mobile phones through to tablets and laptops.

For example, during a physics lesson, pupils learning about sound levels could download a sound level test app onto their ipod or phone to use as part of experiments. Pupils working in groups could use school or pupil owned tablets, laptops or PC's to look up websites to gather information and share with the rest of the class. Adults learning at community centre could use their own devices to connect to WiFi to research and enhance their learning experience.

The Council, in partnership with BT Global Services, currently provides IT service and support for over 50,000 staff, teachers and students across the local authority's nursery, primary, special, and secondary schools and community learning centres.

The last major refresh of educational ICT services was in 2006/07. At that time, the useful life of the hardware was estimated to be between four and seven years.

A report which details the refresh has been made public on the Council's website today and will be considered by councillors at the Finance & Resources committee on Tuesday 1 November 2011.

If agreed, the ICT refresh will begin late summer 2012 and will be completed by Autumn 2013.