



Assistive Technology Policy and Procedures in CBS Roscommon

Use of Assistive Technology in CBS Roscommon CBS Roscommon 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 deficits. 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.

If this application is successful: 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.

If this application is NOT successful: Following a request from the Parent/Guardian to purchase the equipment themselves the School staff will consider if it is beneficial to the student that the AT recommended in the professional report be purchased. In addition, some professional reports recommend that students get access to AT in the school. Students may have access to these resources during tuition 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.

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.

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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

- An introduction will be provided for (First Year) students and their Parents and Guardians during the 1st term of 1st year to outline the possibilities of AT.
- 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.

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.
- 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.

Printing

- Students may print in school.
- A printer for printing out homework at home is recommended.

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

- 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 CBS Roscommon and will be available for allocation to subsequent pupils with similar disabilities.
2. All Assistive technology, cables, laptop bags, mice, keyboards etc. must be clearly labelled by parent with the student's name. Equipment purchased should normally be kept in the school. However, the pupil in question may, with the consent of the management authority, use the equipment at home.
3. All assistive technology must be fully charged before arriving in school in the morning.

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. Parents should consider whether or not to include the AT on their home insurance.
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 the office for safe keeping. The management authority will ensure safe custody and careful handling of the equipment.
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. All homework prepared on the equipment must be printed out at home, stapled into the correct copy or placed neatly in a folder and handed to the teacher for correction. Any homework not presented in this manner will result in sanctions being applied.
10. The school will provide students with a standard set of software (relevant to the student's needs) and available digital books.
11. AT must only be used for educational/school purposes.
12. AT must be brought to school every day and used in classes.
13. 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.

Signed: _____

Date:

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: _____

Date:

Principal

Appendix:

Re: Use of laptops in School

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to you in relation to an application we made to the Department of Education to fund the purchase of assistive technology equipment for your child. The application was examined by the SENO, having regard to the needs of the pupil, the school facilities and the criteria set out in Circular 0010/2013. On the basis of this examination, the grant funding towards provision of the equipment was approved. We have now purchased the laptop/hearing equipment/ipad.

It should be noted that the equipment sanctioned above is the property of the school. When the pupil leaves the school, the equipment should be reassigned by the SENO to another pupil in the school or transferred to another school. We will allow your child to use the equipment at home for school tasks but he will be requested to bring it to school for some activities and for in house exams. We request that the equipment is looked after with due care when at home.

Please note: The granting of a laptop by the NCSE or reports stating that it is essential in order to access the curriculum, does not automatically entitle the student to use their device in Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate exams. An application must be made separately by the school to The State Examinations Commission when your son is in third year or sixth year (if it was not applied for in third year).

We wish to encourage your son to use his laptop or keyboard at school, as this has been recommended by his Occupational therapist/psychologist/visiting teacher, as essential to accessing the curriculum. The device can be used for all classwork, projects, CBAs and tests. All of your child's teachers have been informed that they may opt to use it and should accept e-mailed or typed work, where feasible. They can use a laptop for in-house exams, as long as the wifi is turned off for the duration of the exam.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will return your call as soon as possible.

Kind regards,
The AEN team

I have read the above information and I am aware that the laptop remains the property of the school. I am also aware that the granting of a laptop by the NCSE does not automatically entitle the student to use their device in Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate exams. An application must be made separately, by the school to The State Examinations Commission when your son is in third year or sixth year (if it was not applied for in third year)

Parent/Guardian signature _____ Student Signature: