

News story: New technology to spearhead classroom revolution

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has challenged the tech industry to launch an education revolution for schools, colleges and universities.

In some schools state-of-the-art technology is bringing education to life by helping children take virtual trips through the Amazon and control robots, while also slashing the time their teachers are spending on burdensome administrative tasks.

However, only a minority of schools and colleges are currently taking advantage of these opportunities. Today the Education Secretary is calling on industry – both the UK's burgeoning tech sector and Silicon Valley giants like Apple and Microsoft – to help tackle the five biggest issues facing schools and classroom teachers today.

These include developing innovative teaching practices, cutting teacher workload and promoting lifelong learning.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

I've been fortunate enough to see technology being used in revolutionary ways. Students are able to explore the rainforest, steer virtual ships or programme robots from their classroom, while teachers are able to access training, share best practice with colleagues and update parents on a pupil's progress without being taken away from their main focus – teaching.

Schools, colleges and universities have the power to choose the tech tools which are best for them and their budgets. But they cannot do this alone. It's only by forging a strong partnership between government, technology innovators and the education sector that there will be sustainable, focused solutions which will ultimately support and inspire the learners of today and tomorrow.

There are five key opportunities for the sector to create a step change in education, improving teaching and slashing workload. These include developing innovative:

- Teaching practices to support access, inclusion, and improved learning outcomes for all
- Assessment processes, making assessment more effective and efficient
- Methods for delivery of teacher training and development by upgrading educator support so they can learn and develop more flexibly
- Administration processes to reduce the burden of 'non-teaching' tasks
- Solutions to lifelong learning to help those who have left the formal education system to get the best from online learning

In one of his first speeches to the sector at the World Education Forum, the Education Secretary set out his determination to raise the status of teaching as a profession and ensure teachers are able to focus their time and effort on the pupils in the classroom.

Shireland Collegiate Academy in Birmingham helps staff by reducing unnecessary burdens. The school uses many apps and software packages to facilitate the day-to-day running of the school, saving their teachers 'hours and hours of time'.

Sir Mark Grundy, head teacher at Shireland Collegiate Academy said:

At Shireland Collegiate Academy we have used technology to support staff, students and families for a number of years. We have supported many schools in replicating our processes, and having the interest and advocacy of the Department for Education around using technology for school improvement will make an enormous difference.

Education technology leaders are already working with schools, colleges and universities to help them to embrace technology, with many doing so successfully. The Education Secretary is asking the tech sector to demonstrate how to roll this out more widely across the country, backed up by evidence of the impact they are having on schools, colleges and universities.

Through a package announced in the Autumn Budget, more schools are able to access ultrafast broadband speeds, connecting them to the world of technology and all the things it has to offer.

Over the autumn, the Department for Education will be working closely with the Chartered College of Teaching, the British Educational Suppliers Association and other industry leaders as they develop online training packages, establish an online portal providing free software trials for schools, and bring together industry and school leaders through a series of regional 'demonstrator' roadshows.

Commenting on today's announcement Caroline Wright, Director General at the British Educational Suppliers Association said:

I am delighted that the Department for Education's plans place teacher training and support at the heart and soul of their future approach to EdTech and recognises that EdTech, when introduced as part of a whole school strategy, has the power to help improve pupil outcomes, save teacher time and reduce workload burdens.

The measures outlined by the Secretary of State for Education today, to support classroom teacher training and development in the effective use of technology, are whole-heartedly welcomed and supported by the EdTech industry sector which BESA represents.

In the coming months, the Department for Education will be working with businesses and schools to ensure they have the infrastructure in place to be in a position to implement some of this technology to improve the school day for both pupils and teachers.