

Schools to benefit from education partnership with tech giants

Thousands of schools will benefit from a ground-breaking partnership with tech giants to gain access to education platforms.

Expert technical support to access Google and Microsoft's education platforms, along with free training on how to use the resources most effectively, will be available for schools immediately. This will include online resources, support getting set up, webinars and peer to peer support between schools.

This follows the Government's pledge to provide laptops and tablets for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people across England.

The Government has committed over £100 million to boost remote education, including by providing devices and internet access for those who need it most, ensuring every school that wants it has access to free, expert technical support to get set up on Google for Education or Microsoft's Office 365 Education, and offering peer support from schools and colleges leading the way with the use of education technology.

Today (24 April), the Government has written to local authorities, trusts and other relevant organisations overseeing schools and children's social care outlining the process for ordering the devices. The Government has already placed a bulk order and organisations will be able to register to receive their allocation from today, while institutions that administer the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund will be able to apply for a top-up.

Schools Minister Nick Gibb said:

As schools, parents and children adapt to the changing environment we are all faced with, it is vital that we provide them with the right support so young people are able to continue their education.

Through close partnership with the education sector and two of the world's biggest tech companies, we are working to ensure that children can continue their studies while they are at home.

Laptops and tablets for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils are on their way and will begin being distributed in weeks, enabling those most in need to access online resources.

To further support schools and colleges in delivering the best possible remote education, twenty institutions with outstanding technology practices have been awarded between £70,000 and £150,000 through the EdTech Demonstrators programme.

The programme was announced last year to boost peer-to-peer support on the effective use of technology and has now been tailored to help schools and colleges provide education remotely. The reach of this programme will be expanded over the coming weeks, and schools and colleges can register their interest in receiving support from today.

Guidance for schools on choosing the right education platform to meet their needs will be hosted by The Key, including best practice case studies and myth busting. The guidance will walk schools through the key assets of both Google and Microsoft's platforms and provide an option to register for Government-funded expert support in getting these platforms set up.

Liz Sproat, Head of Education, Google EMEA:

This is a challenging time for UK schools, educators, parents and students and this initiative by the Department for Education provides vital support to schools seeking to enable remote learning.

We are delighted that our suite of tools, resources and our partners can help schools maintain learning during these difficult times.

Cindy Rose, CEO Microsoft UK, said:

Schools across the UK are facing unprecedented challenges as their staff demonstrate incredible resilience, imagination and passion to ensure children are safe and able to keep learning while at home.

We're proudly working with the Department for Education to support the roll out of remote learning technology to those who need it. For some time now, Microsoft has offered Office 365 for Education free for schools and we continue working on a number of fronts to support the education community with the latest technology during this difficult time.