



Errigal College Letterkenny

Assistive Technology Policy November 2024

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Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement:

To enable each student to achieve his/her educational potential, in partnership with parents, based on the principles of caring, dignity, mutual respect and equality.

We are an ETB school, state, co-educational and multi-denominational, underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education
- Care
- Equality
- Community
- Respect



Use of Assistive Technology (AT)

Errigal College 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 need.

Assistive technology is playing an increasingly important role in the education of students with unique needs. Computer-based AT applications can help overcome some of the barriers created by a learning difficulty and can allow students 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 funding solely provided by the NCSE (National Council for Special Education).
- Although the equipment will be sanctioned for a particular student, the equipment will, as a rule, remain the property of the school and will be available for allocation to subsequent students who meet the criteria.

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 AT equipment is constantly being developed. There is now an exceptionally wide range of technological or software support available which can provide assistance to students 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 students who cannot manipulate a pen to write
- enable students that have difficulty in speaking to communicate
- assist students 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 students 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.

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 student is likely to react to it, or whether it will work in the busy school environment.

Assistive technology may be limited in use because:

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

Examinations

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.

Use of AT in State Examinations

The school applies for reasonable accommodations for State Examinations (RACE) and the State Examinations Commission assesses and grants those accommodations. Using AT for homework and or classwork does not automatically mean that a student will qualify to use AT in State Examinations.

Repair/Replacement of Assistive Technology

Parents/Guardians are requested to contact the designated SENCO or ASD Coordinator 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

- 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 Donegal ETB's IT consultants deem the AT granted by the NCSE is beyond economical repair an application may be made to the SENCO 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:

- Although the equipment will be sanctioned by the NCSE for a particular student the equipment will, as a rule, remain the property of Errigal College and will be available for allocation to subsequent students who meet the criteria.
- 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.
- Parents must take responsibility for internet safety when the child is using assistive technology at home.
- At break times or when not in use, students may put equipment into the SEN/ASD office for safe-keeping.
- The Assistive Technology must not be used by any other students other than the student to which it belongs.

- 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.
- The school will provide students with a standard set of software (relevant to the student's needs) and digital books, if available.
- The school management reserves the right to amend these procedures.
- AT must only be used for educational/school purposes.
- AT must be brought to school every day and used in classes.
- Where the school or the student has no further requirement for the equipment, the SENO, or visiting teacher in conjunction with the SENCO or ASD Coordinator, may allocate it to another student in the interests of meeting needs to the greatest extent possible.

Signed: _____

Donal Coyle

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: _____

Danny McFadden

(Principal)