

STATES OF JERSEY



DIGITAL SKILLS (S.R.9/2014): RESPONSE OF THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

**Presented to the States on 6th October 2014
by the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture**

STATES GREFFE

**DIGITAL SKILLS (S.R.9/2014): RESPONSE OF THE MINISTER FOR
EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE**

Ministerial Response to: S.R.9/2014
Ministerial Response required by: 29th September 2014
Review title: Digital Skills
Scrutiny Panel: Economic Affairs

INTRODUCTION

I would like to convey my thanks to the Economic Affairs Scrutiny Sub-Panel for undertaking this review. The report is constructive and the findings and recommendations will be considered.

FINDINGS

	Findings	Comments
1	The Sub-Panel was concerned by the relatively low volume of submissions received directly from the digital industry, but acknowledges that it is itself relatively small in scale at present and is well represented by Digital Jersey.	NA
2	Stakeholders have predominantly reacted positively to Digital Jersey's 'Developing a Digital Jersey' Strategy although particular concerns were raised regarding highly ambitious job creation targets.	NA
3	Despite some set-backs, Digital Jersey is an increasingly active organisation, now responsible for a wide-range of initiatives and engagement throughout the digital and social communities. The successful launch and subsequent opportunities provided by the Digital Hub are of particular note.	NA

	Findings	Comments
4	The 'Vision for IT in Education' is subject to a short timeframe, 2013-2015, but contains long term objectives.	Agreed.
5	Work on a new IT Strategy for schools began considerably before September 2012, but the final 'Vision for IT' was not launched until October 2013.	Agreed.
6	Reaction to the Education, Sport and Culture 'Vision for IT in Education 2013-15' has been broadly supportive, although there has been some criticism that this Vision should have been produced sooner.	Funding was reduced in 2012 due to CSR cuts which delayed the production of a new strategy.
7	The significant opportunity presented by fibre connections to initiate change in the way IT is taught and used in all schools is recognised. However, such a change is not so dependent on fibre that an earlier IT strategy could not have been developed and implemented.	Disagree. Thinking Differently is the 4th IT Strategy. Whether fibre had been introduced or not our strategy would have been the same. See response to finding 8.
8	Unlike previously implemented Education IT Strategies, the 'Vision for IT in Education 2013-15' is not predominantly about hardware and software, but about changing the nature of teaching, changing the role of teachers and changing the relationship between the teacher, the learner and the learning.	Agreed.
9	Development of all individual school business plans was originally due to be completed by January 2014, subsequently extended to March, with implementation beginning from the start of the year. It is concerning that in June 2014, Education, Sport and Culture still had 10 schools requiring minor amendments to plans and 6 schools identified as needing	It was always expected that schools would respond in different timescales due to the different nature and readiness of the schools. Rather than forcing schools to adapt a substandard business plan the department has been working with them to ensure all schools have an innovative and realistic vision.

	Findings	Comments
	more help.	
10	Requiring individual schools to develop their IT Business Plans represents a significant change from previous 'top-down' culture in the Education, Sport and Culture Department. Whilst recognising the advantages this presents to schools to tailor to their needs, this has been a significant challenge, even more so for some schools than others.	Agreed.
11	The first phase of funding (£1.5 million) for the implementation of school IT Business Plans will be made available to schools for the start of the school year in September 2014. However, whilst this money is available, funding for the second phase will need to be secured through the next Medium Term Financial Plan.	Agreed.
12	The Panel has been disappointed during parts of this Review with avoidable delays on the part of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture in ensuring his Department's adequate and timely engagement with the Scrutiny process. This has significantly impacted our ability to complete the Review within the intended timeframe.	I appreciate how important it is to engage with Scrutiny and have done so at the first available opportunity. We accept that this may have led to delays within Scrutiny's timescales but do not believe that these delays were avoidable.
13	With all schools being different, not all are expected by ESC to complete and implement their IT Business Plans at the same speed. ESC is actively targeting more support at the schools that are less confident or equipped to develop such a process.	Agreed.
14	Some schools have worked in clusters to develop their business plans. This involves a secondary school grouping together with feeder primary schools to	Agreed.

	Findings	Comments
	minimise inconsistencies in the digital skills levels amongst the feeder schools themselves, and between a Secondary school and its feeder Primaries.	
15	Whilst there are notable potential advantages, initial concerns have been identified about ESC's approach of requiring schools to develop their own IT business plan, including how this might affect consistency and the need for appropriate support to be provided by ESC to schools.	By allowing schools to develop their own business plans they are able to reflect the local context of the school and children within it whilst working to the same framework. This is usual practice for education; a good example of this being that every teacher plans lessons differently whilst working to the same curriculum.
16	To encourage consistency, all school IT business plans must be approved by Education, Sport and Culture to secure funding, with assessment criteria and guidelines having being shared with all schools from the beginning of the business plan process.	Agreed.
17	It is too early to judge either way whether Education, Sport and Culture's approach of requiring schools to develop their own IT Business Plans, rather than top-down, has been successful.	No comment.
18	Stakeholders are unanimous that a digital divide amongst schools and pupils must not be allowed to grow. If consistency is not managed as effectively as planned by Education, Sport and Culture, then the current Vision for IT in Education might inadvertently exacerbate this problem.	Agreed. We have always been aware of this issue and are working to ensure that this does not happen.
19	There is currently no social premium within Education, Sport and Culture's IT funding model to try to assist those schools and pupils facing the biggest challenges regarding IT.	Disagree. The current allocation of IT funding reflects the social and deprivation context of the children attending the school (which is calculated using the 'Carstairs deprivation index').
20	Education, Sport and Culture's approach to e-safety has changed. Previously top-down, schools	Agreed.

	Findings	Comments
	now have the option to develop an individually tailored policy if they so choose, within Education, Sport and Culture guidelines.	
21	Despite changes to the model of establishing e-safety policies in schools, pupil safety must always remain the absolute priority.	Agreed.
22	Education, Sport and Culture has in post an e-Learning and e-Safety co-ordinator to provide schools with relevant information and training, to establish appropriate individual policies and to oversee consistency.	Agreed.
23	The challenge of changing the teaching culture, methods and environment within schools to achieve the aims and objectives of the 'Vision for IT' is widely acknowledged and not underestimated.	Agreed.
24	Teacher training features prominently in the thinking and plans of Education, Sport and Culture and identification of each school's need is a core requirement of the IT Business Plans.	Agreed.
25	It is not yet apparent that there has been significant delivery of teacher training despite the upcoming implementation of the 'Vision for IT' from September 2015.	Disagree. There has been significant investment within the primary school sector to prepare schools for the new computing curriculum, by training teachers alongside children as part of the coding project. In addition training has been provided to Secondary schools on coding, raspberry pi's and lego robotics. This is just the start of a planned training programme.
26	All pupils have an entitlement to appropriate standards of teaching. This will be monitored by Education, Sport and Culture with regard to teachers' use of technology.	Agreed.
27	Education, Sport and Culture will in part use the Professional Partnering Programme to help	Agreed.

	Findings	Comments
	monitor implementation of the Vision for IT and maintain appropriate standards in the use by teachers of technology to effectively enhance learning.	
28	There were previous differences of opinion between Education, Sport and Culture and Digital Jersey about the appropriate level of focus on developing suitably skilled school leavers to help meet industry requirements.	No comment.
29	Education, Sport and Culture and Digital Jersey are now in agreement that students exiting school at 16 should have a range of skills. This should be a combination of specific curriculum based knowledge and more generalised skills including teamwork, problem solving and communication.	Agreed.
30	Digital Jersey has commented positively on the direction of travel established in the development of digital skills for school pupils by the Vision for IT in Education.	No comment.
31	IT skills in schools will be developed in 2 distinguishable ways via the 'Vision for IT'. Firstly, general digital skills of all pupils should be improved through the change in teaching culture and methodology, and secondly, and more directly, by the introduction of a new IT curriculum from September 2014.	Agreed.
32	Despite some courses at Highlands College, the formal provision of professional digital skills education post 16 is limited. It appears that the digital industry has recognised a need to bridge this gap through its own initiatives.	Working in conjunction with Digital Jersey and the Skills Executive, Highlands College is committed to delivering programmes that are aligned to short and medium term demand from industry.

	Findings	Comments
33	It is widely accepted that some specialised inward migration will be required to stimulate and support the growth of a thriving digital sector in Jersey.	No comment.
34	States policy requires a 1:4 ratio of inward migration v's local appointments in the sector.	No comment.
35	Local employment opportunities in the emerging digital sector are more than just skilled IT positions, and include more general business support roles.	No comment.
36	There are concerns that the timelines of the Digital Jersey strategy and Education, Sport and Culture Vision do not appear to converge as would be necessary to meet Digital Jersey's short and medium term goals regarding local jobs.	Digital Jersey was represented on the ESC strategy group.
37	The new IT curriculum begins from September 2014. It will be a number of years before the first pupils will leave school with the benefit of its full cycle.	The speed of learning in IT means that the benefits are realised before the full cycle.
38	Steps have been taken to try to bridge the short-medium term gaps in skills development between Digital Jersey's strategy and Education's Vision for IT. This has involved some collaborative initiatives between Education, Sport and Culture and Digital Jersey and significant industry based projects, such as those seen at the Digital Hub.	Agreed.
39	Jersey is not alone in recognising the opportunities presented by continually evolving technology, and the need to develop appropriate skills to seize them. Malta and Estonia are often cited as particularly clear examples and are demonstrably more advanced than Jersey in delivering	Agreed.

	Findings	Comments
	associated strategies.	
40	Presently only 7.5% of interactions between Islanders and government are carried out in a digital form, electronically. The States aim to increase digital interactions with Islanders to nearer 75% by 2018.	No comment.
41	£7 million is available under current funding for delivery of Phase 1 of the e-government programme, including the establishment of a full service e-government platform by the end of 2016.	No comment.
42	Phase 1 of the e-government programme links existing core systems through an 'enterprise service bus', allowing them to talk to each other. This establishes a single citizen portal whereby citizens will be able to digitally interact with the States.	No comment.
43	'Tell Us Once' is a core objective of e-government and will require Phase 1 to deliver the necessary capacity for States IT systems to effectively and appropriately talk to each other.	No comment.
44	There is an ongoing longer term funding requirement for the second phase of e-government between 2016 and 2019 which will be subject to a successful bid from the next Medium Term Financial Plan.	No comment.
45	There is confidence amongst the stakeholders that the target of increasing online/digital interactions with Islanders from 7.5% to near 75% by 2018 is very realistic and should be achieved in the relatively short to medium term.	No comment.

	Findings	Comments
46	To help the 25% not accounted for by the States e-government interaction target of 75%, the need for digital skill development initiatives and plans is recognised.	No comment.
47	To avoid creation of a community digital divide it will be essential to train and prepare the population to use the e-government platform effectively, both in terms of skills and connectivity.	No comment.
48	Digital Jersey has a particular responsibility through its social objectives to address digital divide concerns for the whole community, not least the '25%' group.	No comment.
49	Digital Jersey has accepted that its business plan and strategy does not have adequate depth around general skills development in the overall population and is working to address this situation.	No comment.
50	The States also have a responsibility towards the '25%' group and aim to undertake associated education and infrastructure provision through libraries, Highlands College and the Parishes. The States will also continue to offer traditional platforms for service delivery.	No comment.
51	The involvement of the Parishes will be critical in achieving some of the targets regarding e-government, particularly for vulnerable sections of society.	No comment.
52	Failure to improve the digital skills of the 25% might exacerbate digital divide and may further disadvantage already vulnerable groups in turn undermining major objectives,	No comment.

	Findings	Comments
	such as the growth of e-health.	
53	In the short term, most e-government services will be provided online and require insubstantial connectivity to enable basic web browsing.	No comment.
54	More advanced e-health type applications will require higher levels of connectivity, which should be assisted by infrastructure initiatives such as Gigabit Jersey.	No comment.
55	In implementing its Gigabit Jersey programme, JT has installed its fibre network to all schools in readiness for Education, Sport and Culture's tender process to provide a new IT network for schools and to over 10,000 homes.	No comment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
1	The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture must ensure momentum is maintained in the implementation of the 'Vision for IT in Education' to avoid the significant potential consequences of ' <i>if you miss it by a month you have missed it by a year</i> ' regarding the academic year.	ESC	Accept		Dec 2015.
2	The Minister for Economic Development must ensure that appropriate gathering of statistical information and key performance indicators are undertaken in relation to, and by, Digital Jersey, to inform progress against objectives on an ongoing basis.	NA	NA		

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
3	The next Minister for Education, Sport and Culture will need to prioritise the development of a long term strategy to complement and underpin the long-term objectives of the 'Vision for IT'.	ESC	Accept		Dec 2016
4	The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture must ensure that appropriate gathering of statistical information and key performance indicators are undertaken in relation to the Vision for IT in Education to inform progress against objectives.	ESC	Accept		Ongoing.
5	It is imperative that the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture secures the required funding in the next Medium Term Financial Plan to keep momentum behind the planned pedagogical changes and associated digital skills development.	ESC	Accept	Bids have already been submitted for the next MTFP and are subject to political agreement.	Dec 2015
6	The Chief Minister should ensure that Ministers fully comply with the Code of Practice for Scrutiny Panels and the Public Accounts Committee, paying particular attention to the need to provide timely and adequate information to Panels.	NA	NA		
7	The Minister for ESC must ensure that appropriate support to schools continues to be provided throughout the delivery phase of the 'Vision for IT', and beyond, in order to help achieve its long term ambitions.	ESC	Accept	Ongoing.	Dec 2015

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
8	All schools should be required by ESC to work in appropriate clusters.	ESC	Reject	Schools are able to decide the most appropriate method delivery.	
9	ESC should facilitate scheduled meetings of all Head Teachers (Primary and Secondary) to share best practice in IT. The same should occur for all Heads of IT, either at the same scheduled meetings as Head Teachers or separately.	ESC	Accept	This is already happening.	
10	Education, Sport and Culture must work to provide consistency across the Island schools to ensure that the acquisition of digital skills is not a post code lottery.	ESC	Accept	Ongoing.	
11	An examination should be undertaken by the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture about the merits or otherwise of introducing a social premium to the funding of the IT strategy for education from 2016.	ESC	Reject	The 'Carstairs deprivation index' is used.	
12	School e-safety policy should also educate and equip students to be safer users of the internet outside of school.	ESC	Accept	This already happens	
13	It must be ensured that teachers are provided with ongoing training support, and that training and standards of teaching using IT are subject to ongoing monitoring.	ESC	Accept	Ongoing.	Dec 2015
14	A structured, comprehensive programme of identified teacher training requirements should be developed and be ready to implement by Education, Sport and Culture from the start of term in	ESC	Reject	A training options programme is in the process of being developed centrally which schools can buy	

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
	September 2014.			into according to individual need. Schools have the option to undertake whatever training requirements their staff need.	
15	Education, Sport and Culture will need to ensure that new expectations regarding the use of technology to effectively enhance learning are fully communicated to the Professional Partners.	ESC	Accept	Ongoing.	Dec 2015
16	Through assessment of appropriate statistical monitoring and working in partnership with the digital industry, Education, Sport and Culture should be flexible provide appropriate higher education courses and learning opportunities tailored to the digital sector.	ESC	Accept	ESC and Highlands College, the sole public sector provider of higher education, will continue to liaise with the digital sector to ensure that the digital curriculum is fit for purpose. The recommendation is accepted however it must be recognised that there is a difference between the digital education provided as part of the mainstream curriculum and digital training for specific sectors of the industry which may be provided	Dec 2015

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
				by the private sector.	
17	Through assessment of appropriate statistical monitoring and dialogue, the Ministers for Education, Sport and Culture and Economic Development must work together to help support the growth of the digital sector and achieve associated local employment opportunities.	ESC	Accept	Ongoing.	Dec 2015
18	Where inward migration occurs, it should be specialised in nature.	NA			
19	The Minister for Economic Development must continue to be highly attentive of the work of other jurisdictions pursuing digital initiatives (economic and social), in order to help inform and shape how Jersey can become a recognised world presence as a digital economy and society.	NA			
20	To help the success of the highly important 'Tell Us Once' principle, individual departmental IT systems and strategies should be subject to validation by a central co-ordinator to ensure compatibility.	NA			
21	It is imperative that the Minister for Economic Development secures the required funding in the next Medium Term Financial Plan to keep momentum behind the e-government programme.	NA			
22	The Minister for Economic Development should ensure that Digital Jersey adds adequate depth around	NA			

	Recommendations	To	Accept/ Reject	Comments	Target date of action/ completion
	general skills development in the overall population, including the more vulnerable groups, to its business plan and strategy.				
23	There is a need to ensure that the States and Parishes work in unison and with sufficient resources to achieve provision of the required community support for e-government, so that it can be successfully implemented without creating a digital divide.	NA			
24	If not achieved already, the Minister for ESC will need to provide necessary impetus and resources to make sure that all schools connect to the fibre network now available to them at the earliest possible opportunity.	ESC	Reject	The WAN contract is currently out for tender and remains on plan for full commissioning before year end.	

CONCLUSION

I am pleased that the Panel has recognised the importance of Digital Skills within schools.

My department is committed to delivering the 'Vision for IT in Education' and this is reflected in the culture of our schools and the policies that support their work. Therefore, I accept that many of the Panel's recommendations will have a positive impact and help us develop further.