



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Findings from Questionnaire issued to Principals as an element of the overall consultation process for the development of the new Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027

Department of Education
April 2022

In order to ensure a comprehensive review of the existing Digital Strategy for Schools and to take account of new and emerging themes from the point of view of all relevant stakeholders, a wide ranging Consultation Framework was announced on 05 April 2021*. This framework consisted of

1. Open public call for written submissions
2. An easily accessible digital questionnaire for all teachers, principals and students
3. Focus groups on specific themes with main stakeholders (for e.g. education partners, industry, students, parents)
4. Establishment of a core Consultative Group, which included the management bodies, unions, parents' representative bodies and industry representatives. The Consultative Group met on a regular basis with other key stakeholders invited to attend depending on the themes discussed.
5. Bilateral meetings with other Departments and Agencies and the EU.

The following document sets out the responses received in relation to the principals questionnaire, which was available on the Departments and the gov.ie website from 10 May to 18 June. The responses received formed an integral part of the overall Consultation Framework and were key to development of the new Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 and will also help ensure its successful implementation.

There was a total of 168 responses submitted, which is broken down as follows:

- 104 primary principals
- 37 post primary principals
- 27 unspecified.

It is also worth noting that response levels varied for some of the questions.

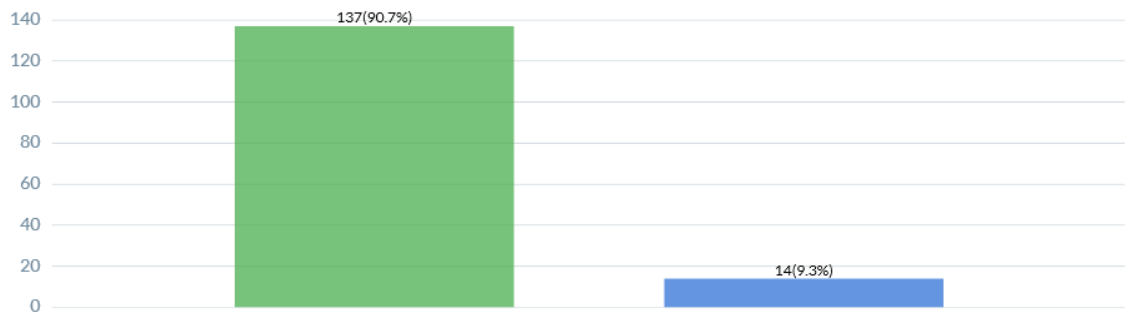
*<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2021-press-releases/PR21-04-05.html>

Findings

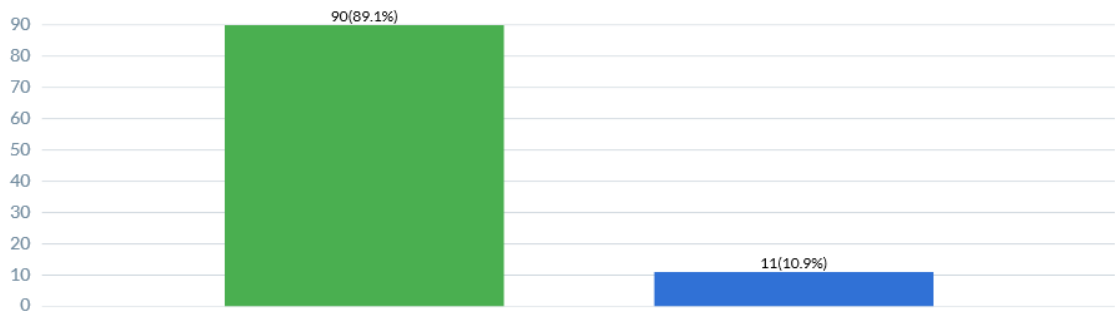
Q1 The Digital Learning Framework (DLF) represents one of the key supports provided under the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020. In implementing the DLF, schools and teachers are given a structure which allows them to identify where they are on the journey towards embedding digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment, and enable them to progress in that journey. Have you implemented the DLF in your school?

■ Yes ■ No

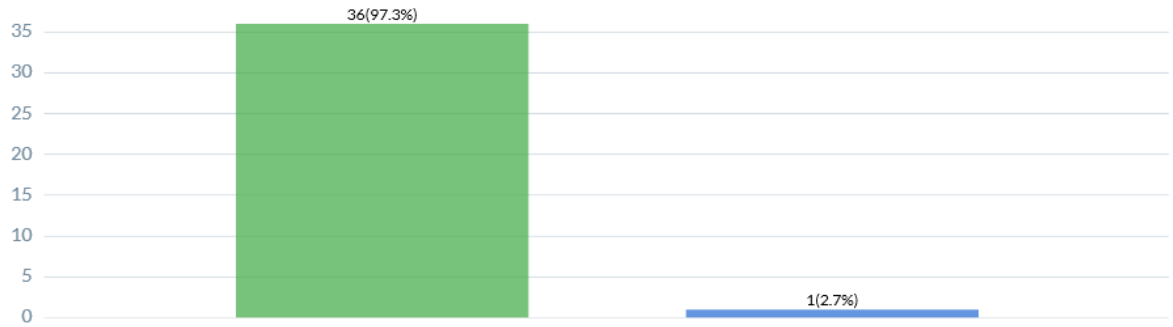
All



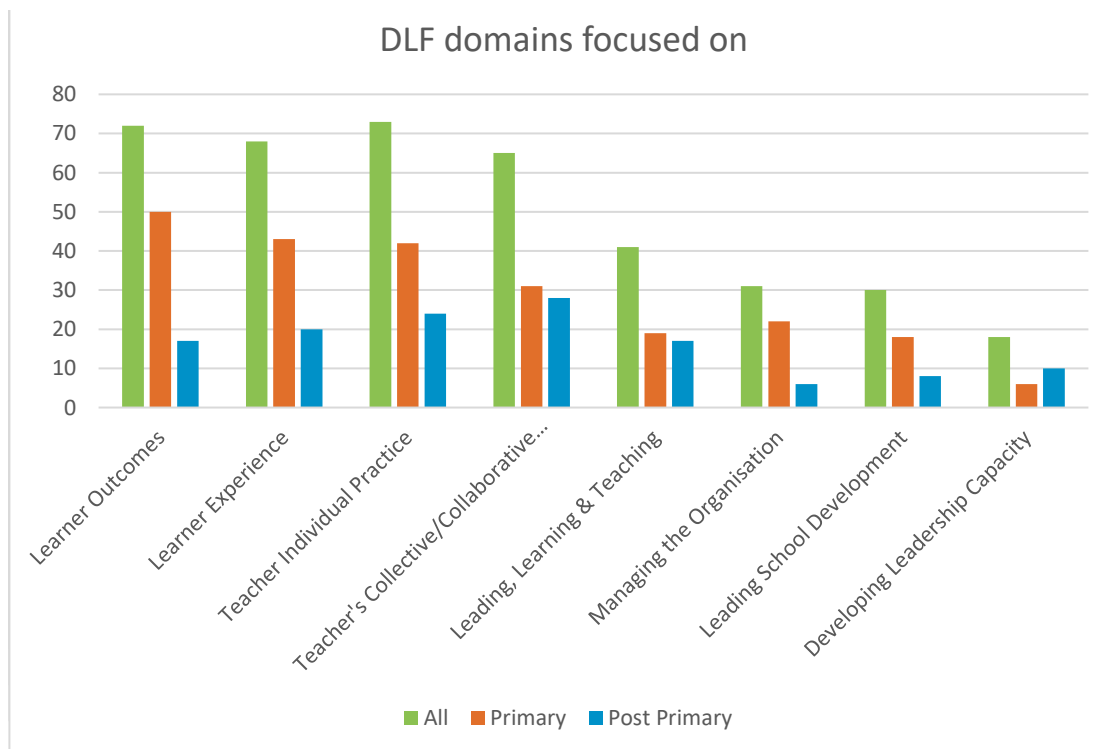
Primary



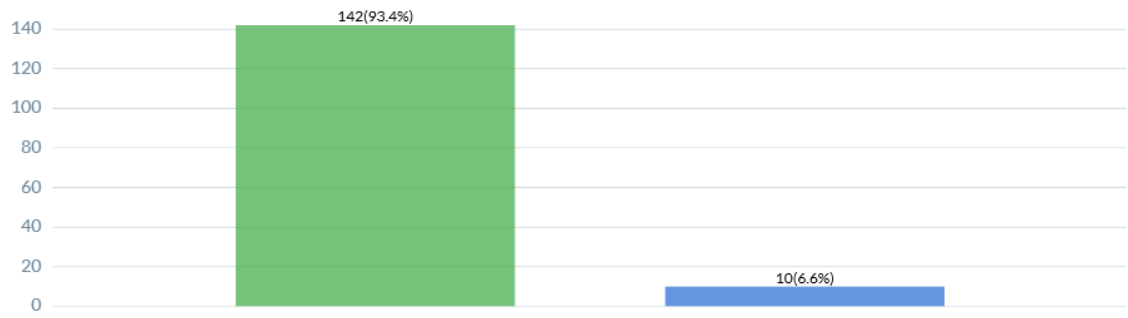
Post Primary



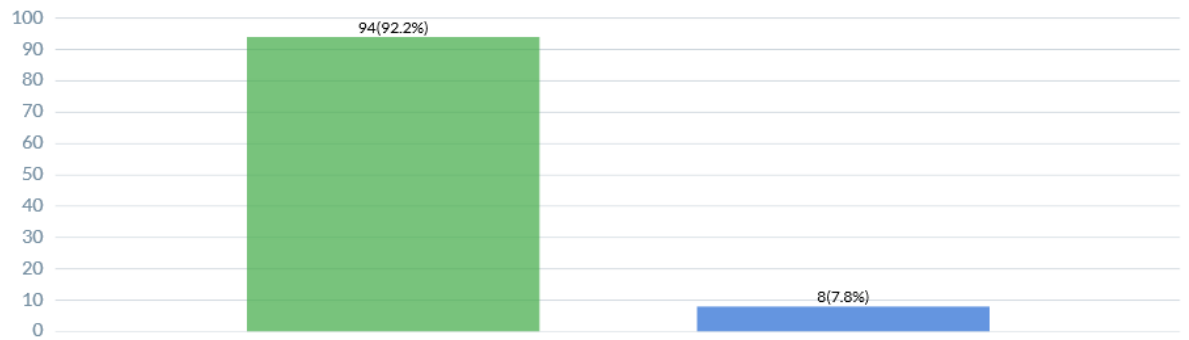
Q1a If yes, which of the domain(s) of the Digital Learning Framework has your school focused on?



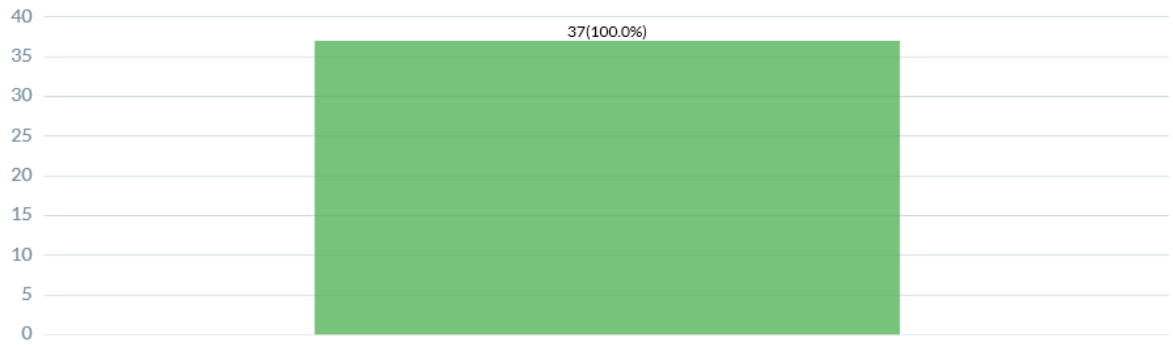
Q2 Do you have a Digital Learning Plan in your school? ■ Yes ■ No
All



Primary

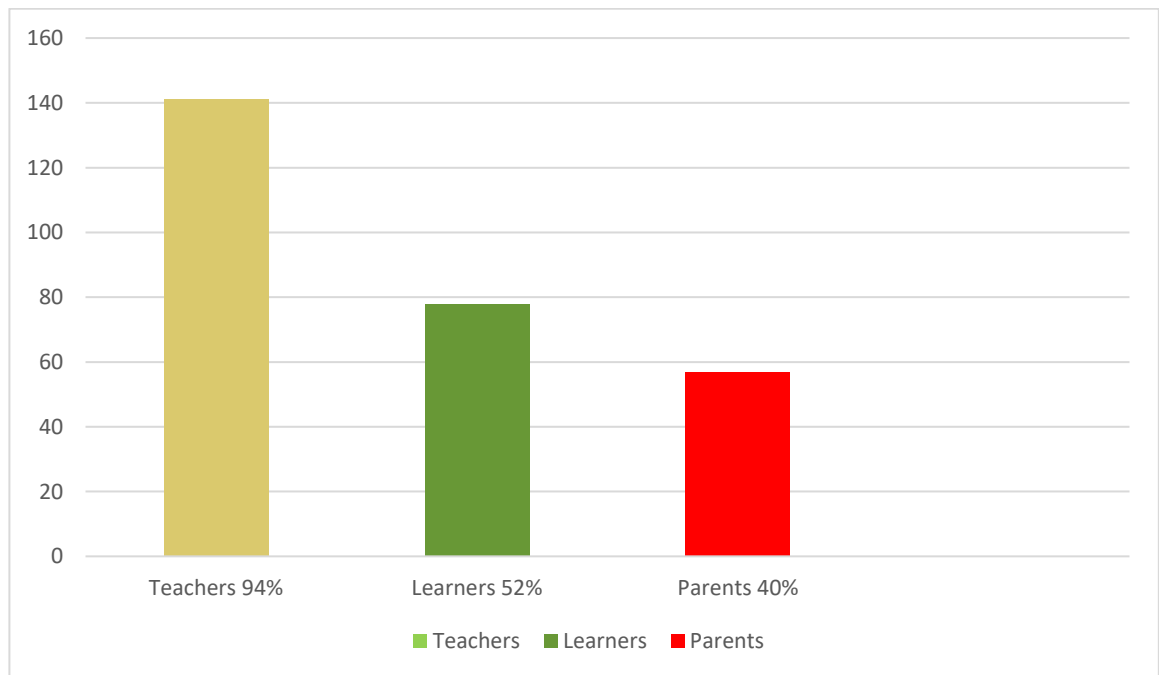


Post Primary

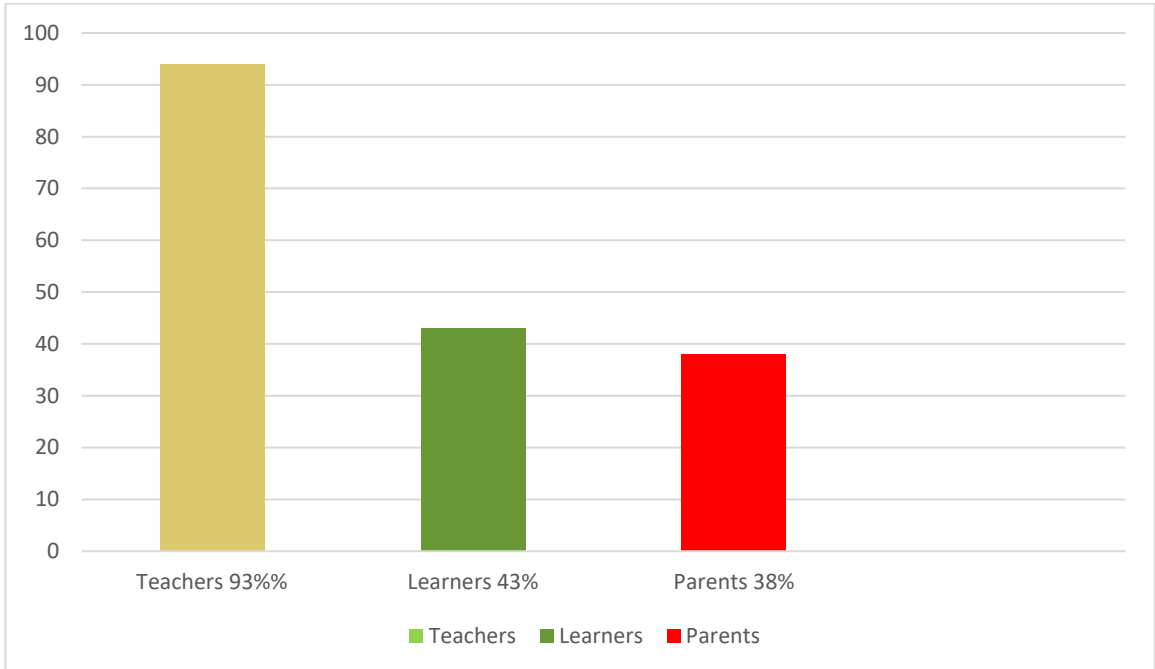


Q3 Has the Digital Learning Plan been developed with:

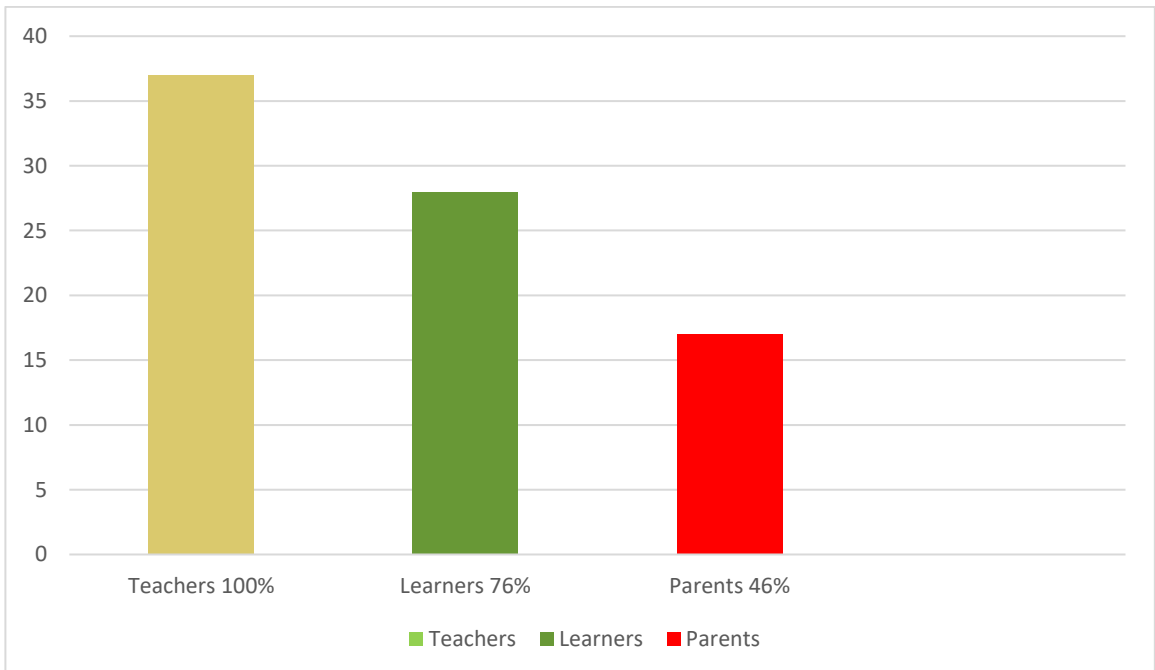
All



Primary

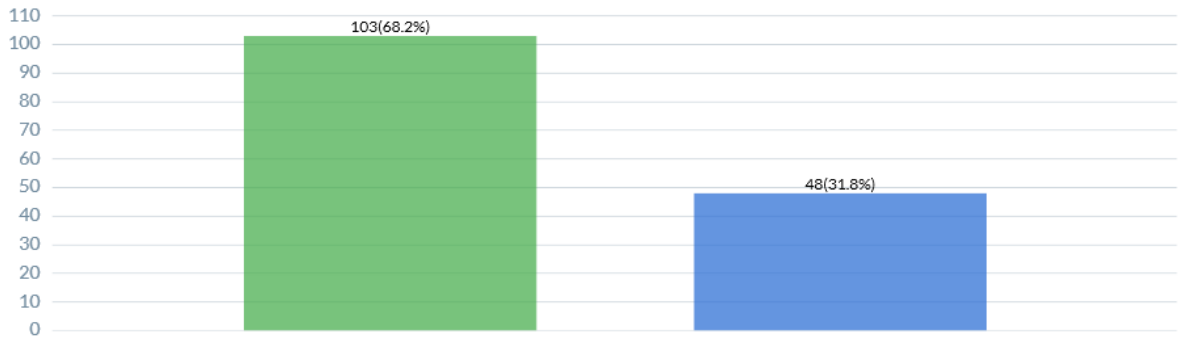


Post Primary

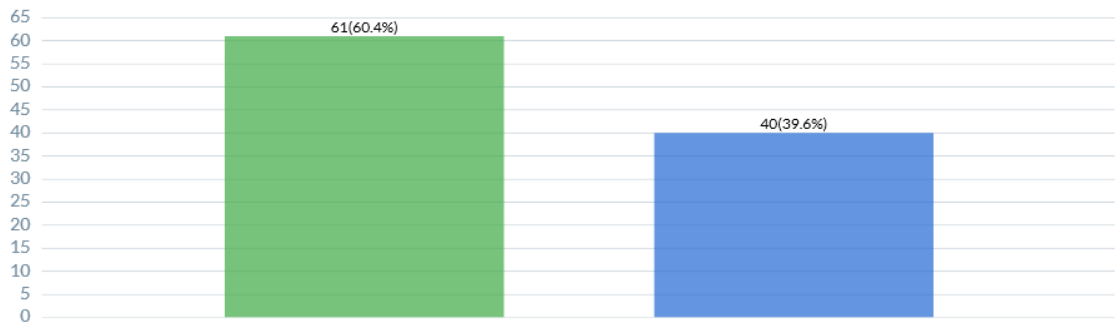


Q4 Have you established a Digital Learning Team? ■ Yes ■ No

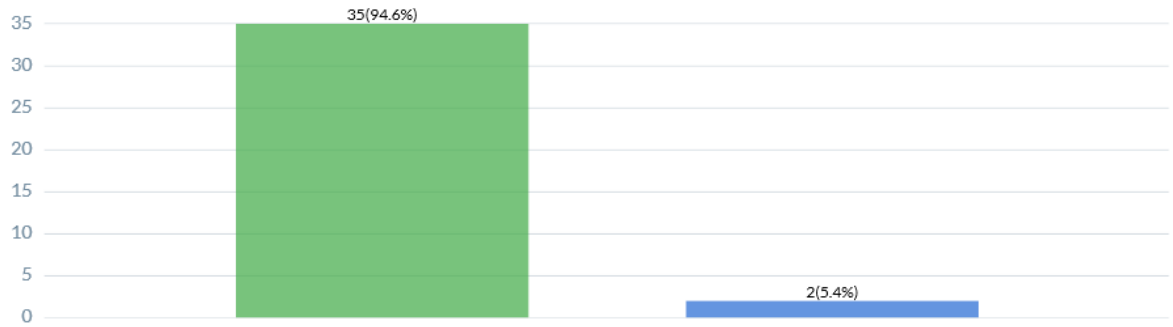
All



Primary



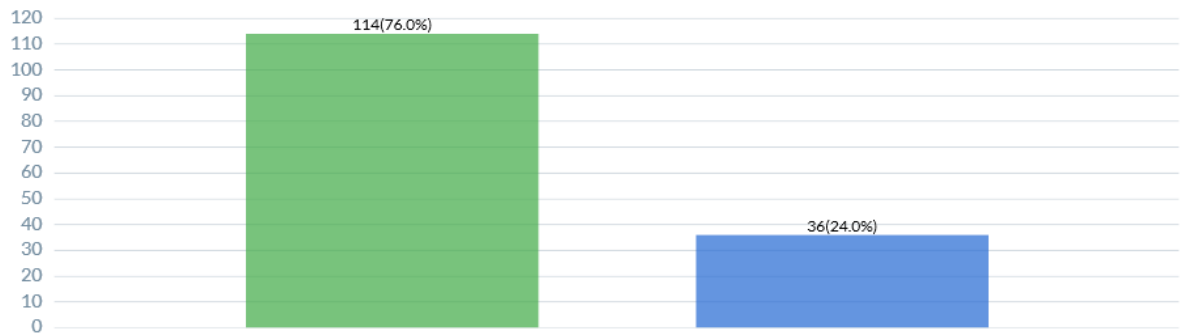
Post Primary



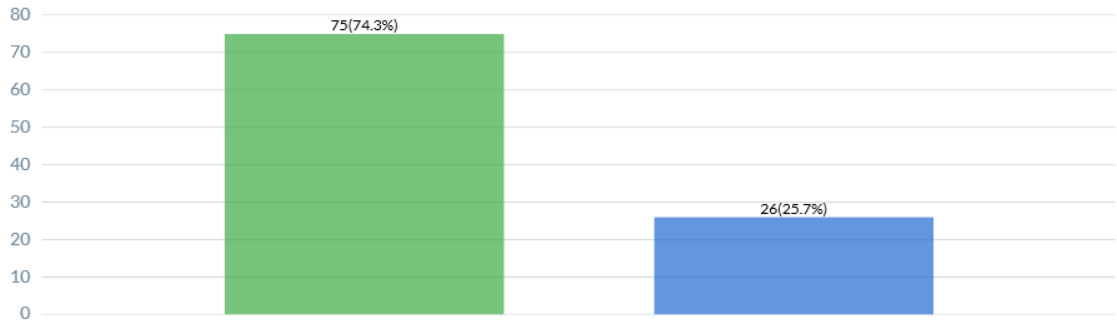
Q5 Has the Digital Learning Plan been approved by the schools Board of Management?

■ Yes ■ No

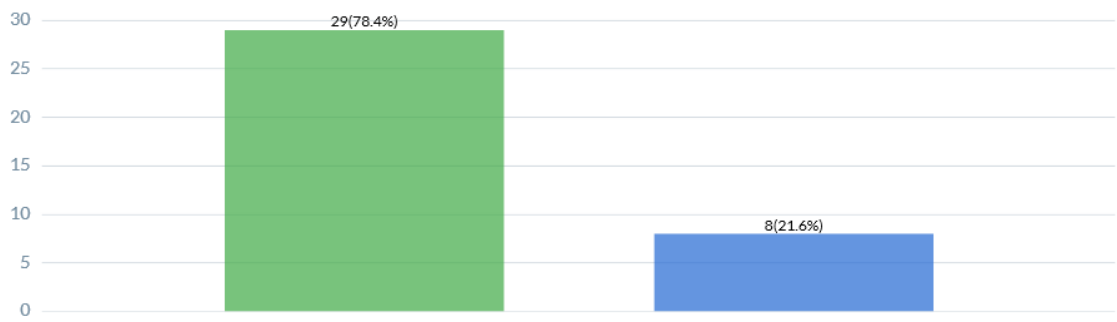
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Primary

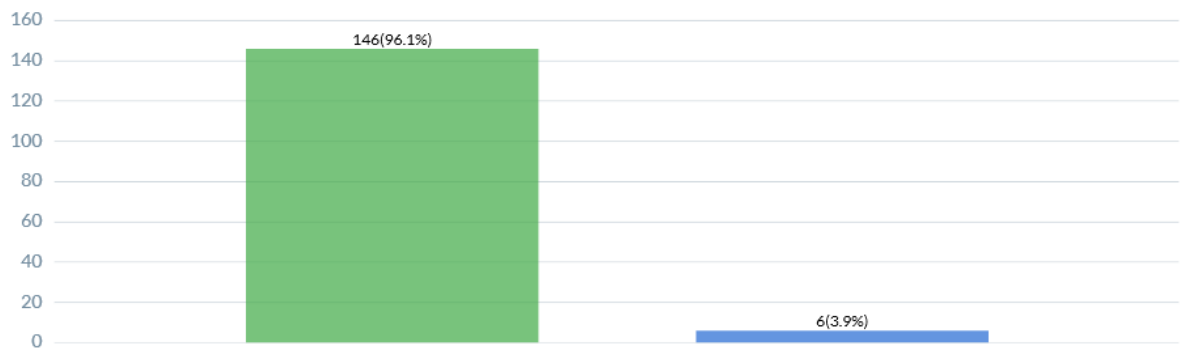


Post Primary

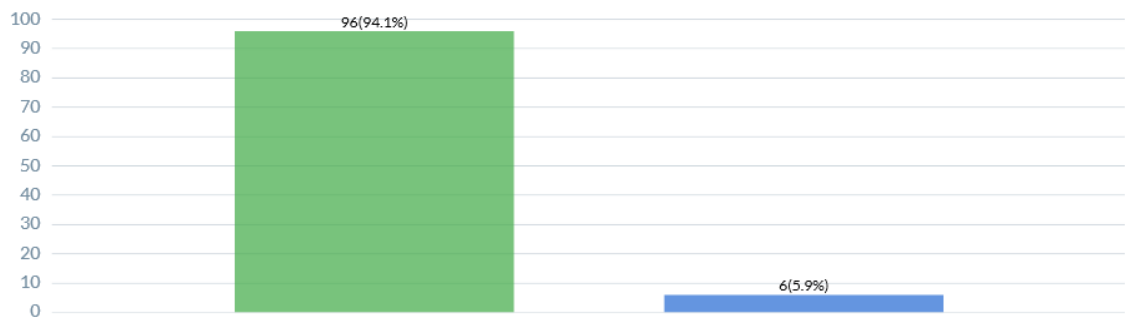


Q6 Digital technology is an important part of teaching, learning and assessment in your school: ■ Agree ■ Disagree

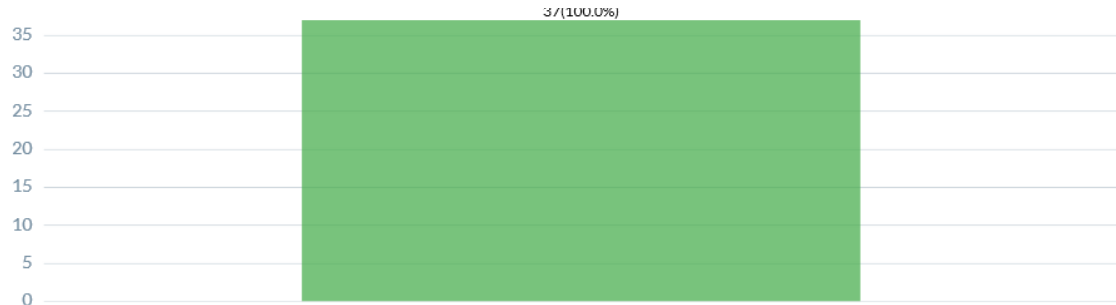
All



Primary



Post Primary



Q7 How do you align your planning and progress in the use of digital technologies across teaching, learning and assessment as part of the SSE process?

There was a wide range of responses here. In the main respondents indicated that they aligned their planning and progress through:

- Project work.
- Peer Support.
- CPD.
- SSE crossover with Digital Learning Plan and work of the schools Digital Learning Team.
- Action planning, staff meetings.
- Use of digital technologies.

Q8 How do you support the Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)/Continuous Professional Development (CPD) needs of your teachers and what, if any barriers or obstacles have you encountered engaging with these supports?

Both primary and post primary principals gave similar responses to this question as follows:

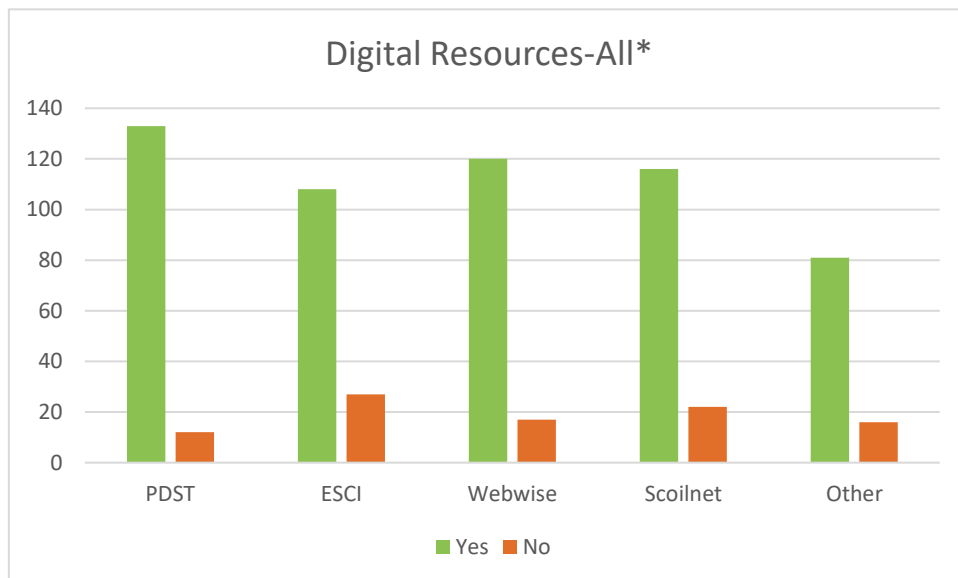
- SSE process to inform teacher CPD approach.
- Provision of time through Croke Park Hours.
- In house/share best practice/collaborative practice/share relevant CPD/sharing expertise

- Technology mentors/digital leaders/in house/digital learning team supporting the staff
- Encourage teachers to partake and engage with CPD
- Trained teachers to become digital leaders
- Provided all teachers with a digital device
- Ask staff and students and parents what works well and what needs to improve

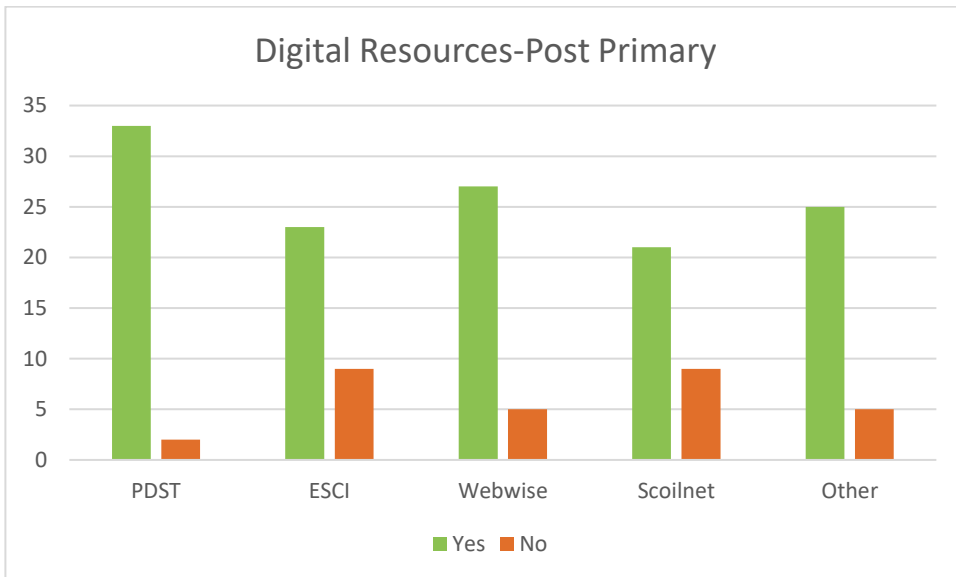
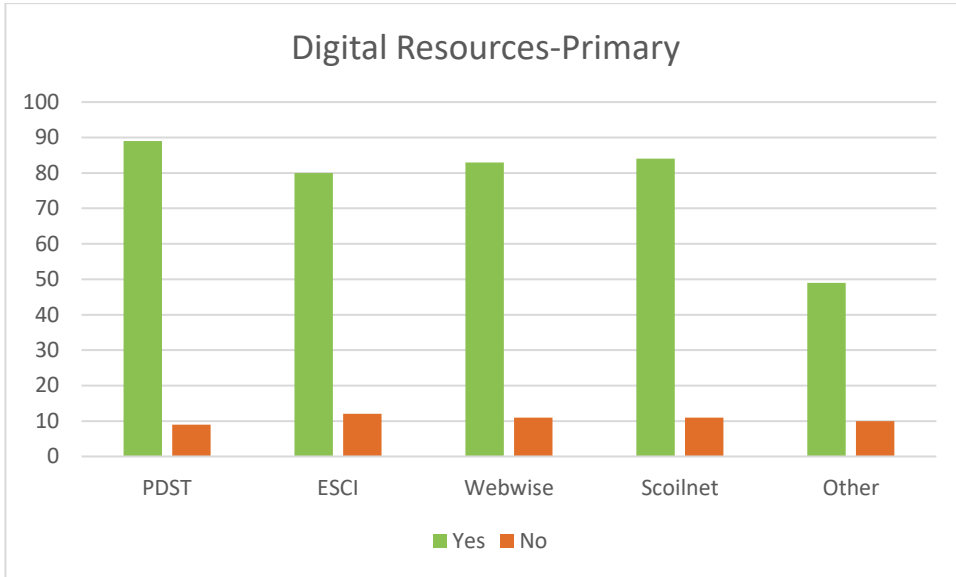
The main barriers encountered included –

- Covid 19
- Financial resources
- Lack of equipment
- Time for CPD/put training into practice
- Substitution cover
- ICT support
- Lack of interest in CPD.

Q9 Have you used any of the digital supports/resources listed below?



*150 responses



Q10 Do you feel the current resources provided meet your needs? Are there other resources/supports provided for teacher professional learning that you and your teachers use regularly and if so, what are they?

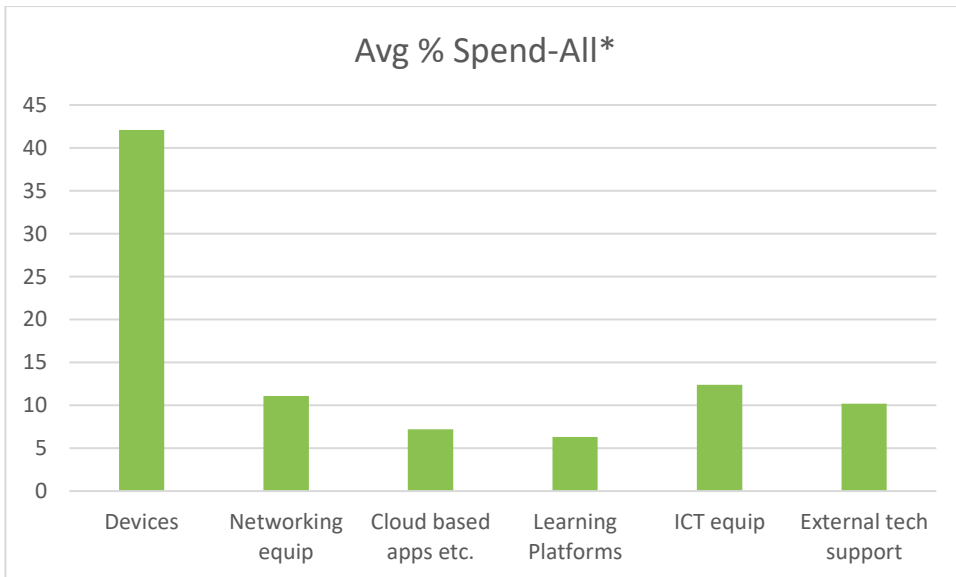
At both primary and post primary responses were mainly positive and there was a lot of praise for the work of the PDST in providing support. Other supports/resources used were: Wriggle, Zoom, Class Dojo, Camara Ireland, Twitter, COGG, Kahn Academy, Google Trainer and Youtube.

Q11 Are there particular areas of TPL/CPD on the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning that you feel should be focused on in the future?

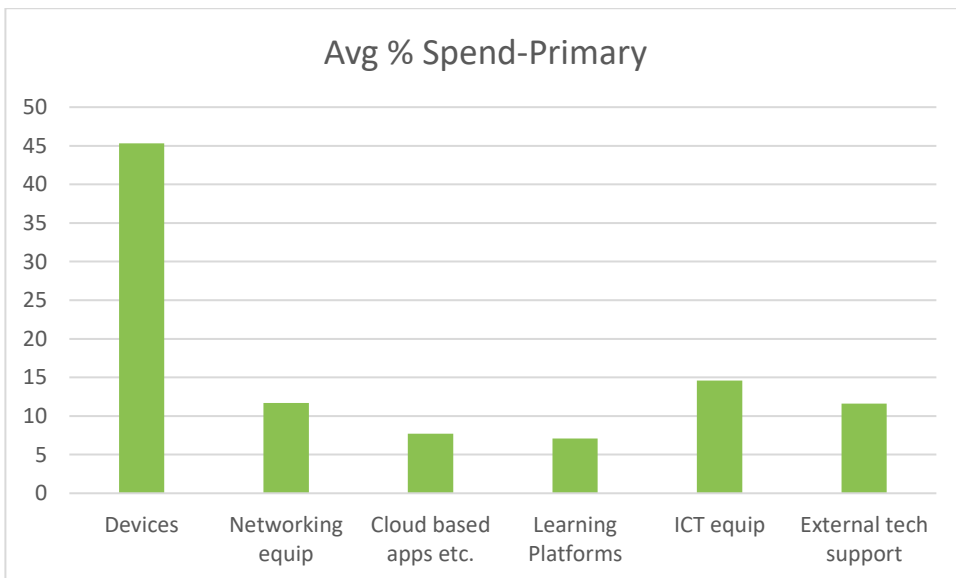
Both primary and post primary had similar responses:

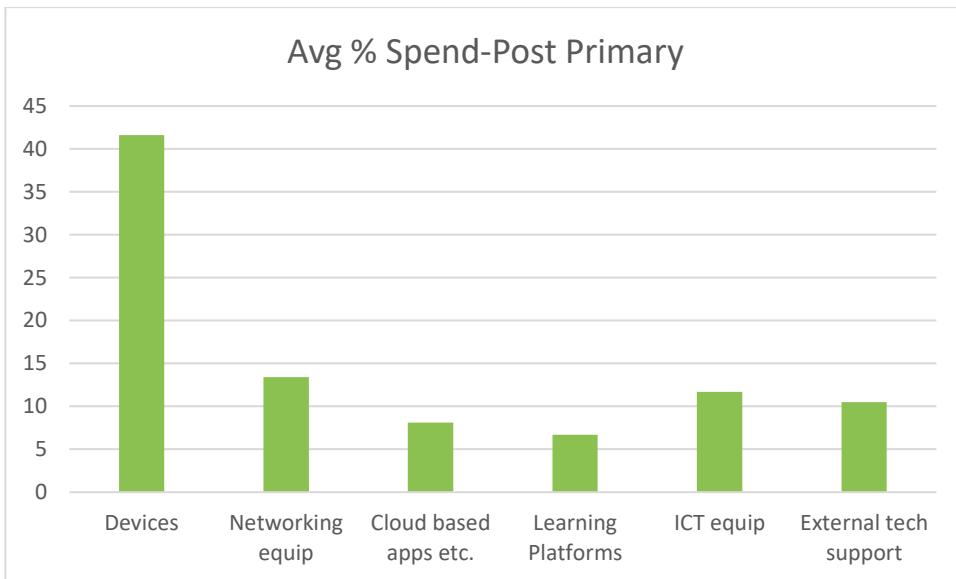
- The use of Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality
- CPD- differentiated from basic skills on up to coding and subject specific on use of digital technology
- Assistive technology
- Assessment
- Embedding digital technologies in the curriculum
- Content creation
- Remote teaching and learning
- To support Special Education Teachers (SET)/team teaching (only referenced at primary level)

Q12 Please provide the approximate percentage of expenditure from the ICT Grant in a typical school year on the following categories:



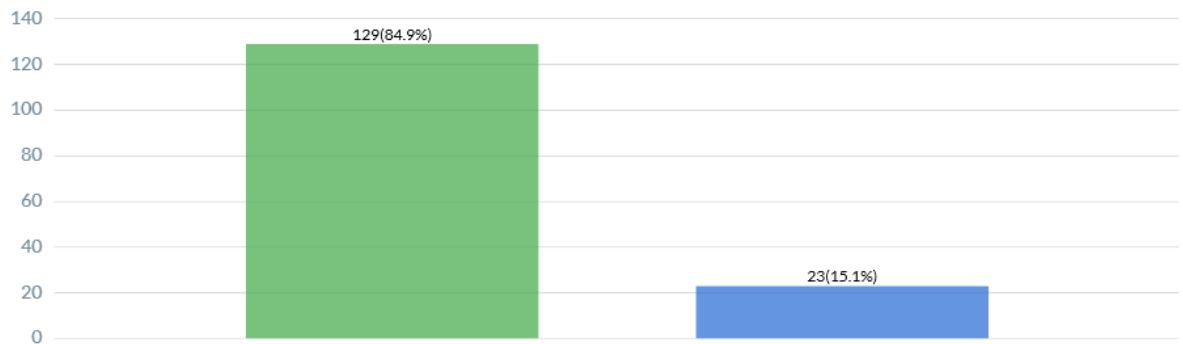
*150 schools



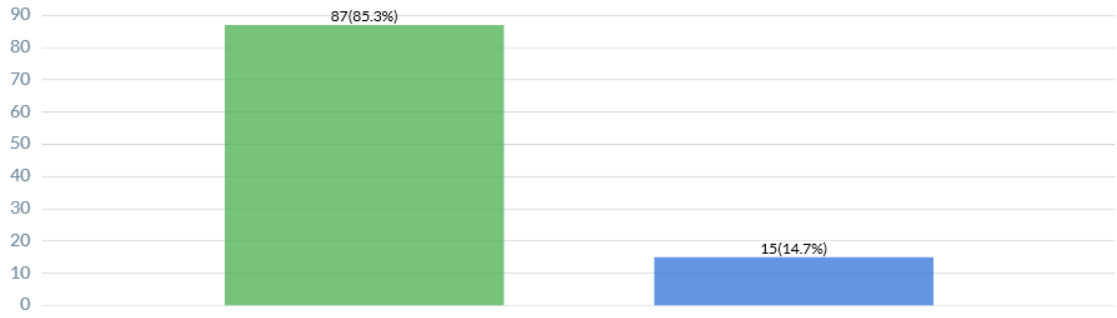


Q13 Do you use external technical support? ■ Yes ■ No

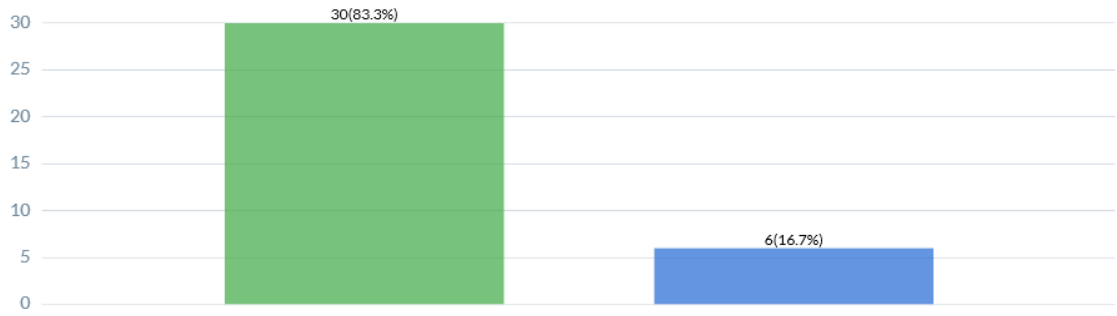
All



Primary



Post Primary



Q14 If yes, approximately what percentage of your schools annual expenditure (or how much) is used for this purpose?

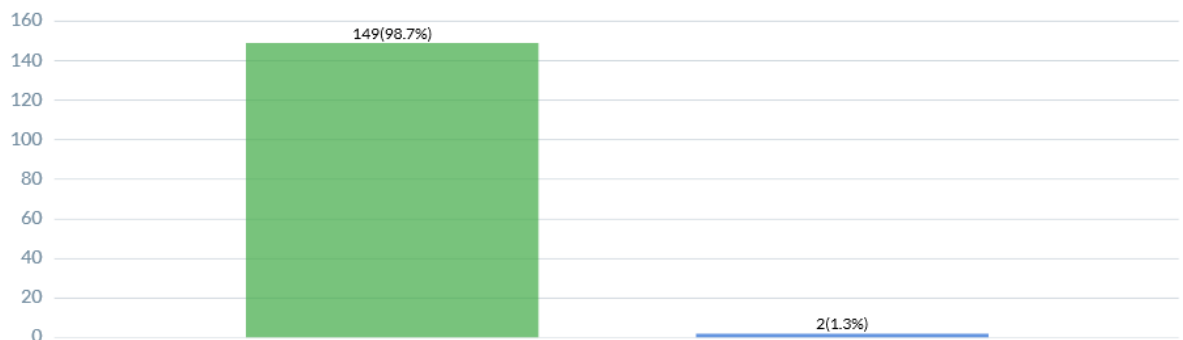
Answers to this varied, with some giving a percentage and others giving amount spent. At primary most estimated between 10 to 20% while it was circa 10% at post primary. However, some answers included other costs such as equipment purchases rather than external technical support so answers given to this question are not fully indicative of the expenditure on external technical support.

Q15 Have you had to use other funding to support the use of digital technology in your school and if so, can you estimate how much additional funding was required in the past 2 years (either as a percentage of your overall school expenditure or the actual amount)?

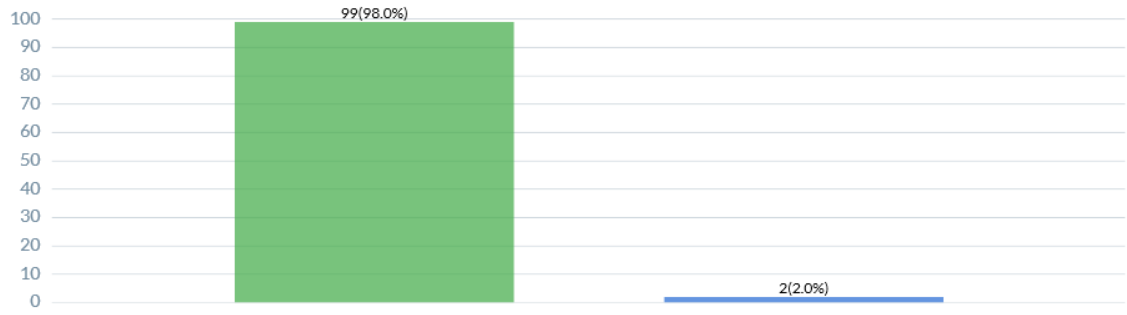
Answers varied on this with many schools (approx. 27%) reported not spending anything, of the schools that did, it varied widely from €3,500 to €150,000 at post primary and €1,500 to €40,000 at primary.

Q16 Are computing devices provided for teacher use in the school? ■ Yes ■ No

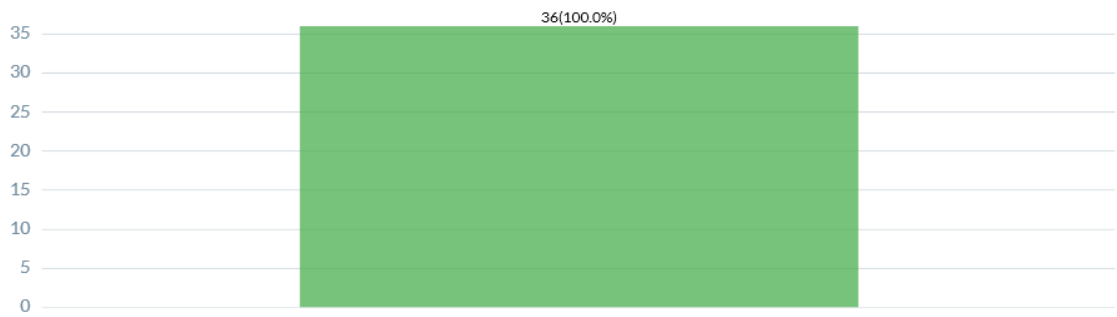
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Primary

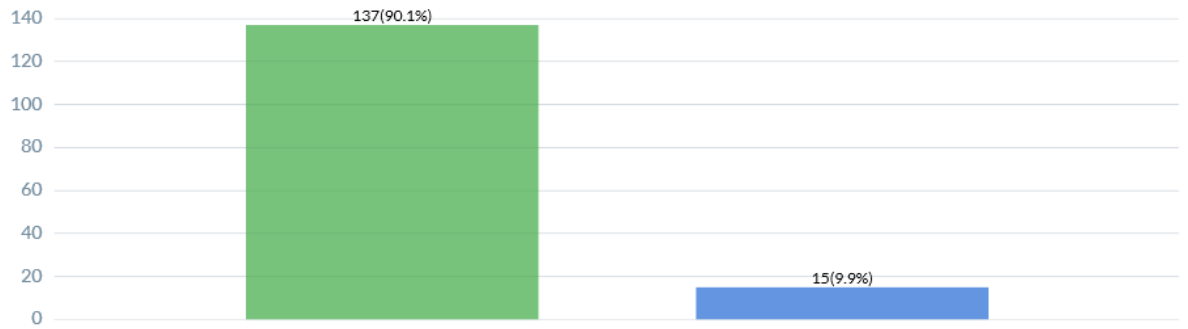


Post Primary

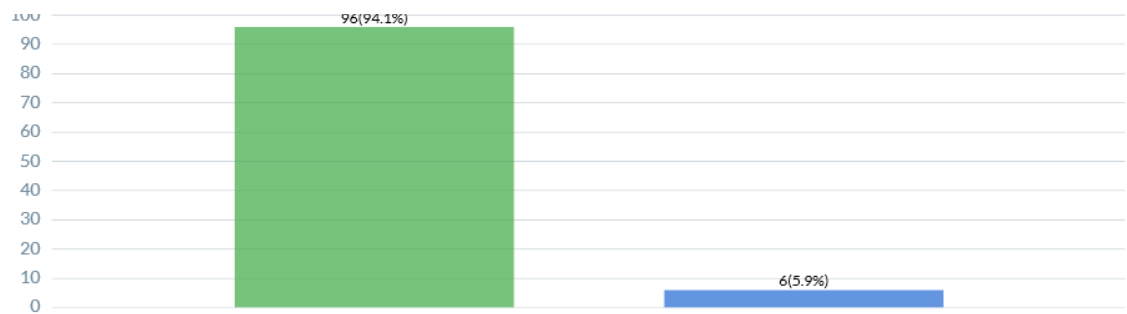


Q17 Are computing devices provided for learner use in the school? ■ Yes ■ No

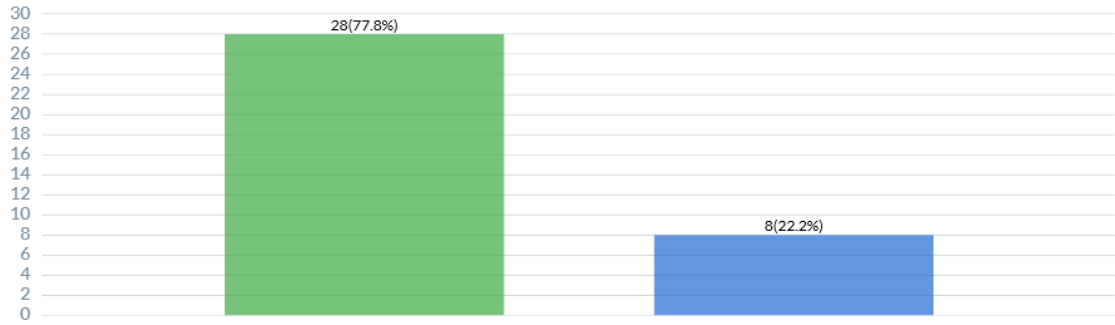
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Primary

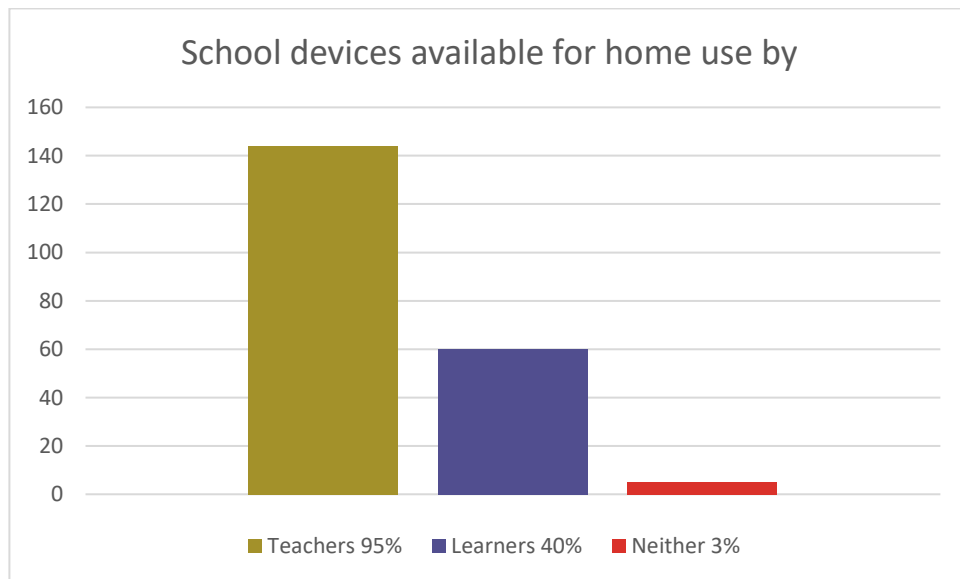


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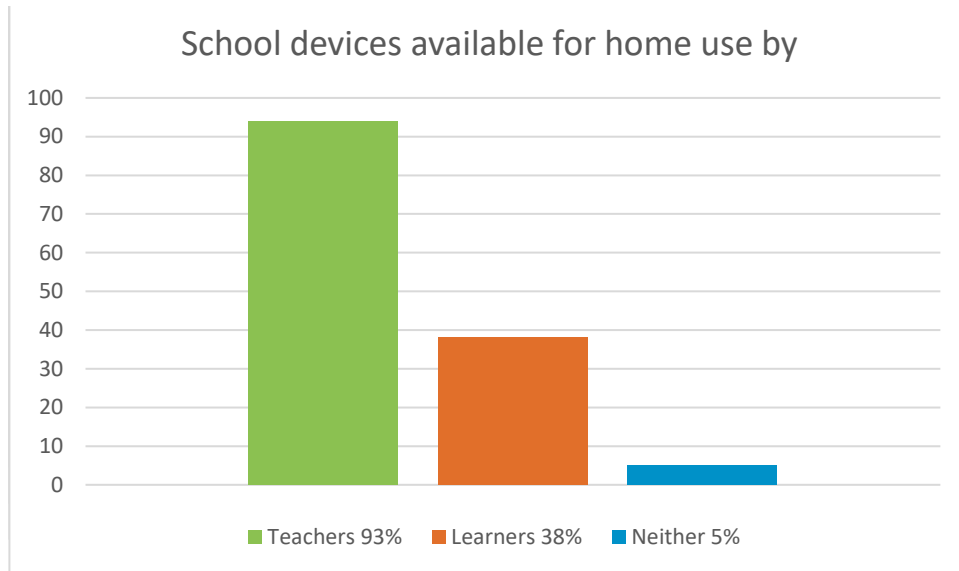


Q18 School devices are available for home use by

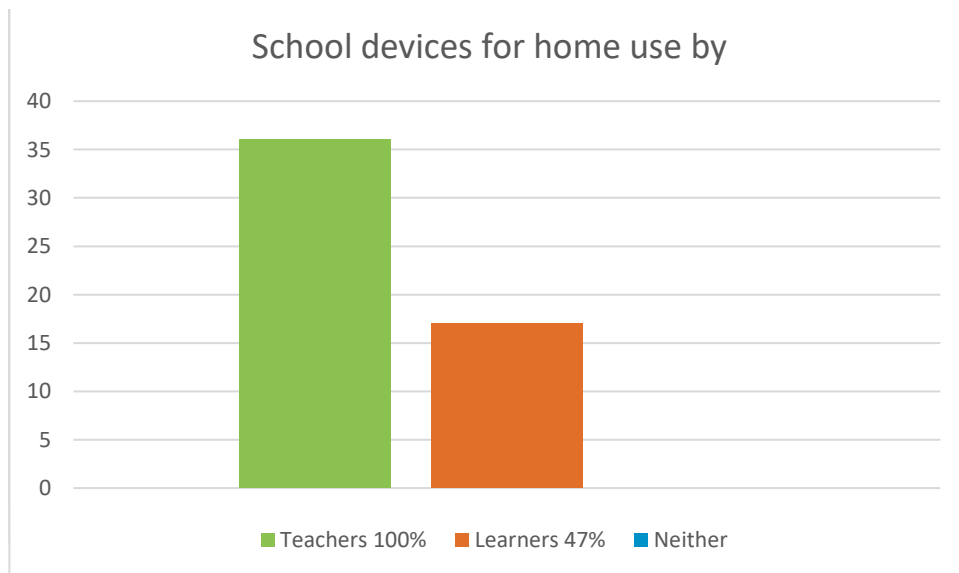
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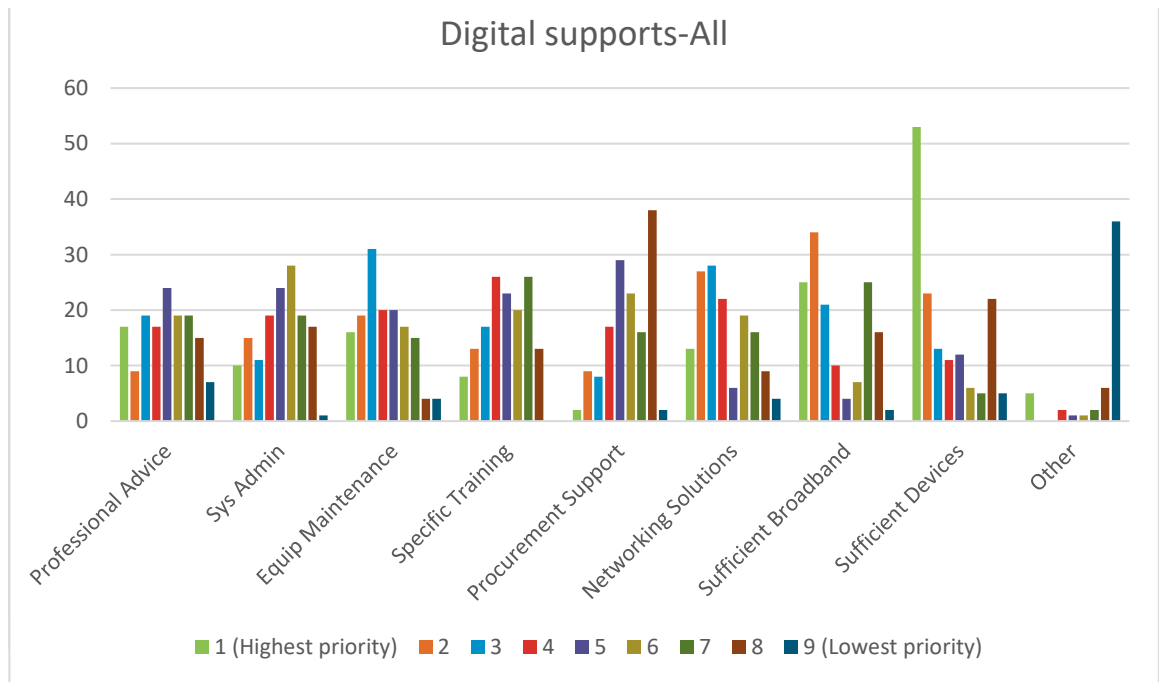
Primary



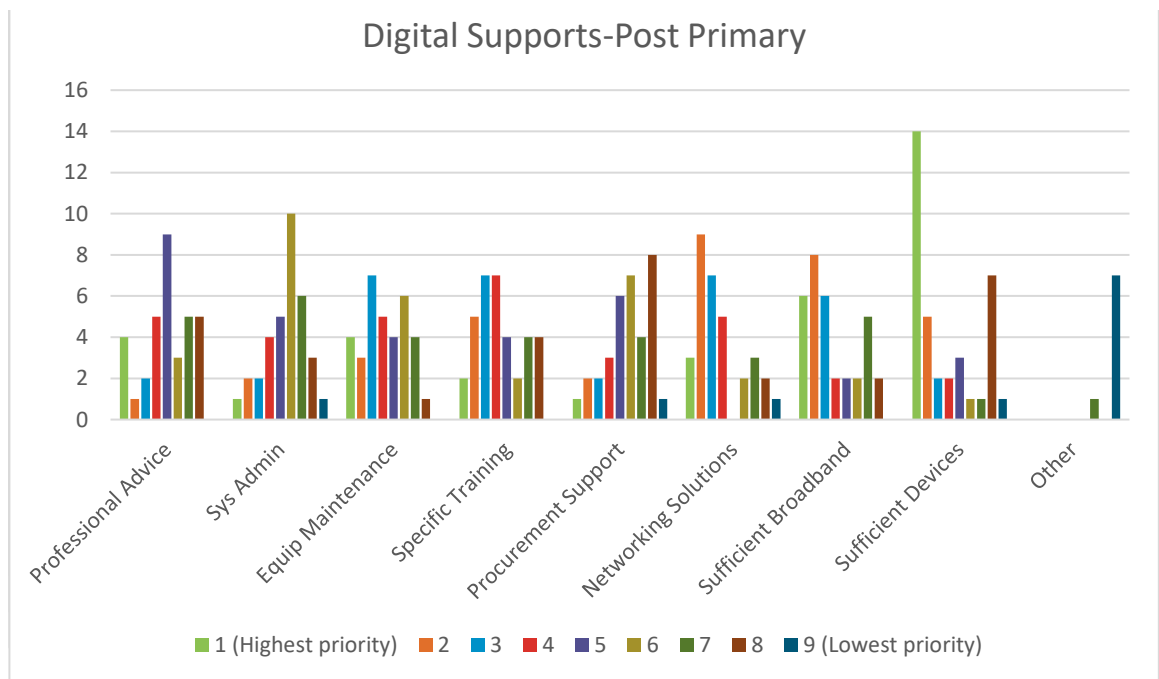
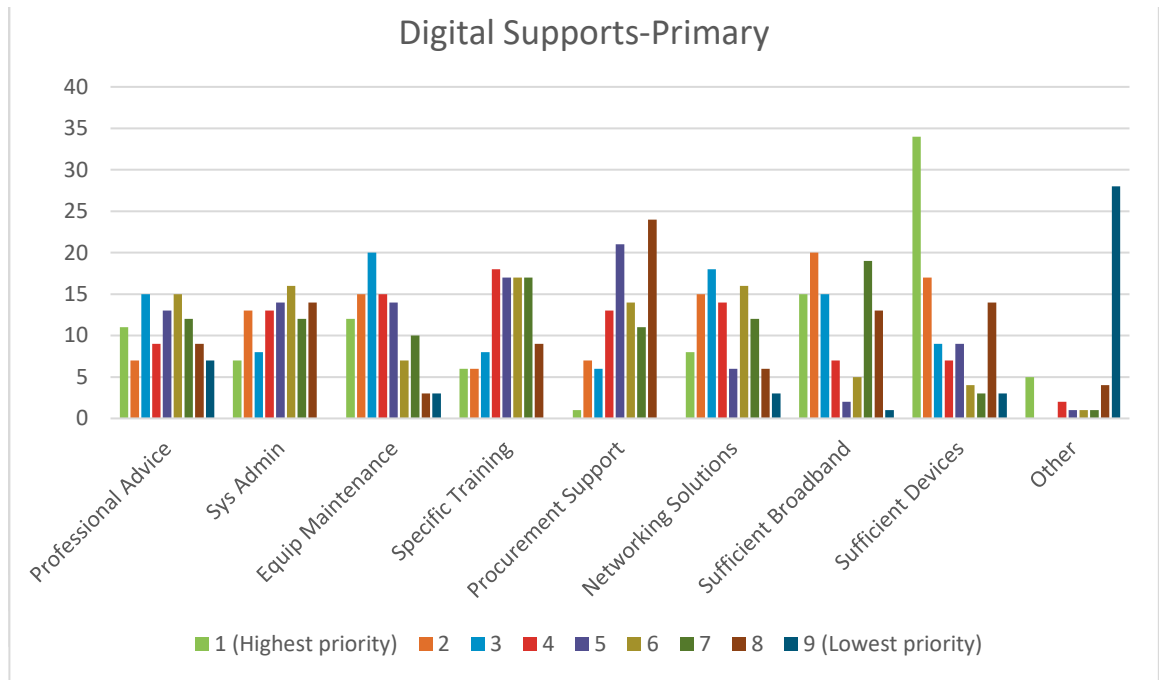
Post Primary



Q19 Please rank the following digital infrastructure and related supports that would best enable the further embedding of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment in your school, in order of priority from 1-9 (with 1 being the highest, 9 being the lowest)



*152 responses



Q20 If you answered "Other", please provide additional information here.

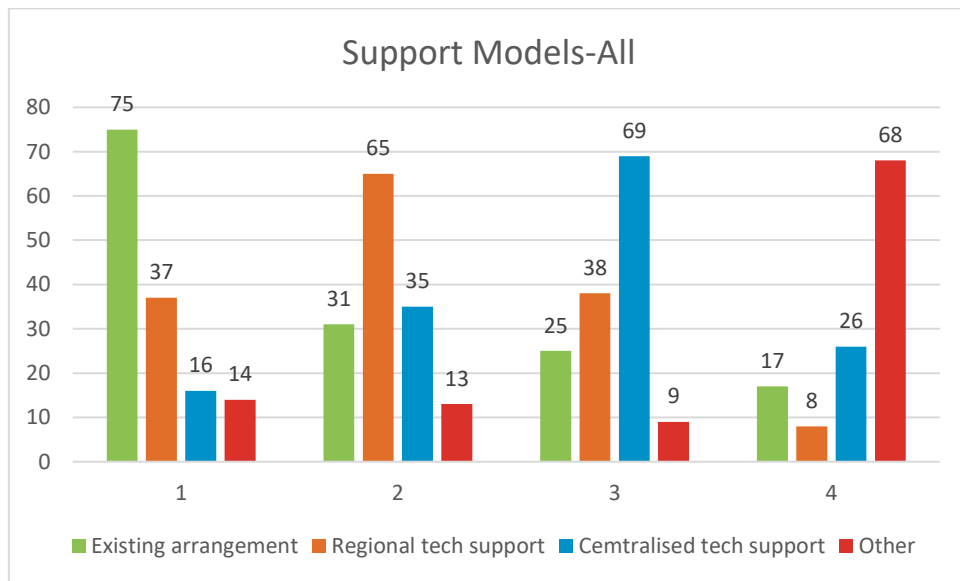
The responses to this covered 3 main topics:

CPD

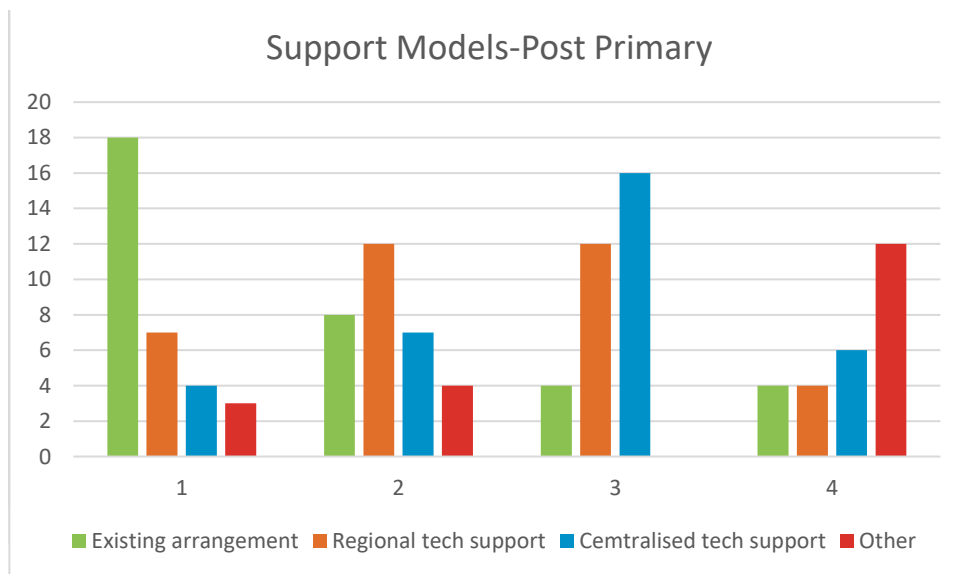
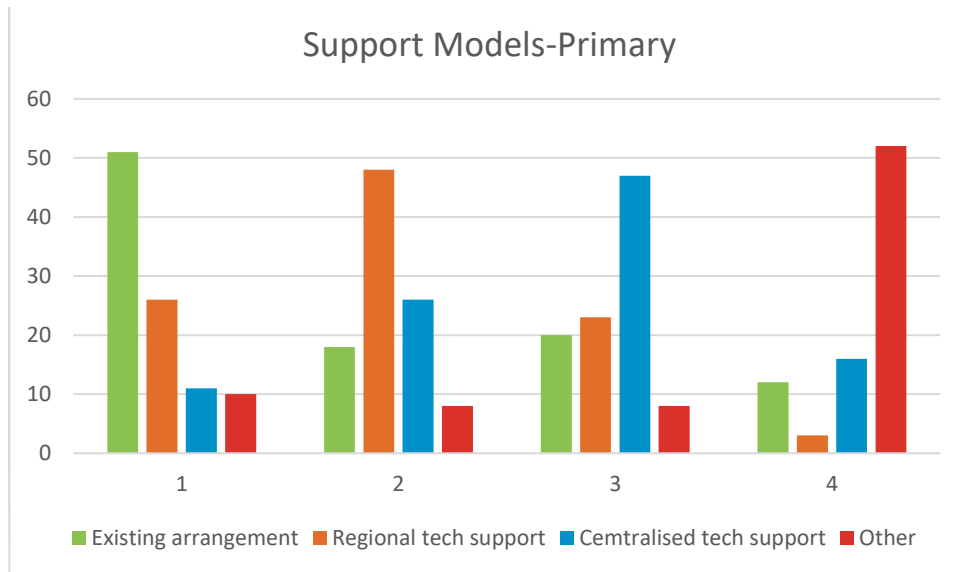
Funding

Time- both for CPD and use/maintenance of equipment

Q21 In considering the digital infrastructure and related supports requirements of schools, there are possible models from other jurisdictions that may be appropriate. Some of these are outlined below, with an option also to provide your own input. Please rank these 1 - 4 (most suitable to least) as to which might best enable the further embedding of the use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment in your school:



150 Responses



Q22 If you answered "Other", please provide additional information here

Almost all responses from this were from principals of primary schools, however the few post primary responses received were similar to the primary ones. Schools were in favour of a combination of the regional and centralised support options with some wanting a mix of all three of the approaches. Standardising equipment was seen as unworkable as it was felt it would require schools to purchase equipment all over again.

Q23 As a Principal, what are your reflections on the experience of remote teaching with digital technologies during the Covid-19 pandemic?

The move to remote teaching posed both challenges and opportunities for schools. From the responses given, schools that had already engaged with the embedding of digital technologies and CPD found it easier to cope with the shift to remote teaching. The necessity of continued CPD in digital technologies was apparent, although there were concerns about the time needed for upskilling. Other important factors raised were the availability of devices, sufficient broadband and the impact of parental engagement on outcomes for remote teaching. Concern was also voiced about the suitability of remote teaching in Special Education Needs (SEN) settings.

It was felt that staff on the whole rose to the challenge and huge strides were made in the provision of remote teaching, however the physical connection was missing. The use of remote teaching, while acknowledged as necessary and useful in circumstances was regarded as secondary to in person engagement.

Q24 How has your schools Digital Plan and embedding of digital technologies changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

The main changes reported are an acceleration of schools Digital Plans with the pandemic effectively forcing a more rapid engagement and embedding of digital technologies in schools. Principals reported increased uptake of CPD along with increased investment in ICT with a general feeling that in their response to Covid, schools had advanced years ahead of where they would have been, However there a small number of responses from schools who feel overwhelmed by the workload and have not changed or updated their Digital Learning Plan, regarding it as not a priority.

Q25 What are the key areas a new Digital Strategy for Schools should focus on to assist you and your school to continue to embed digital technologies throughout teaching, learning and assessment?

The key areas that emerged in the responses were:

- Funding- grants for equipment purchase, ongoing maintenance and tech support.
- Procurement support.
- CPD
- Locally available technical support.
- Improved broadband.
- Availability of subject resources through Irish.
- Assessment technologies.