

Digital skills and literacies

Despite a persistent narrative of the digital native, there are some apparent skills 'gaps' that stymie student use of available technology. This is partly due to digital inequities in the home, varied digital experiences at primary school, or lack of capacity in the curriculum to address digital skills. At the same time, there is uncertainty for schools over who has responsibility for teaching digital literacy, and around the digital literacies that will be necessary for the future.



"...there are some kids who cannot do the basics and they will continue unable to do the basics until people step in and help them." [Librarian, School Yellow]



"I'm not very good at it [Photoshop] and I'm like I constantly have to ask questions and I feel like, oh god, they're gonna think I'm so stupid, but it's just because I like I don't have a computer at home so I never practised at home and like I feel like a lot of people did."
[Student, School Purple]

"I understand why we do [coding], but in my view is, why are they coding if they don't know how to save a document on word?"
[Teacher, School Purple]



"Computing isn't offered enough curriculum time erm [...] but then on top of that in primary school, they don't necessarily have the specialist computing teachers and, [...] some kids just say oh yeah, we just play games or we just go on Scratch." [Teacher, School Purple]



I hear three students asking what '@' sign means (they are trying to copy the login details displayed on the interactive whiteboard). The teacher explains that they [the music teachers] have to spend a lot of time "teaching them things we didn't think we would have to, like what '@' is" and how to drag and drop files from the desktop. This means it takes a lot longer to get to the point where they are doing the work they need to in accordance with the curriculum. [Classroom observation, School Blue]

Digital skills for the future?

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"Are we going to end up with sort of some students from you know, the students from much more sort of economically comfortable backgrounds. Are they going to have a level of knowledge and skill with technology by the end of their education that the majority of the population won't because of access. [...]" [Teacher, School Yellow]

"... so much about teaching them about technology is teaching them step by step problem solving. And actually like having a pedagogy for that is really important."
[Assistant Headteacher, School Yellow]

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"For instance, if they are EAL, they perhaps will struggle to phrase their instructions in a way that gives good results [from GenAI] and so they might-they might think they found an easy option but in reality the information that's churned out is not necessarily relevant to what they're being asked.So students that may have, you know, learning barriers around the reading, the writing, the comprehension I think will struggle to access it in a meaningful way..."
[Teacher, School Green]

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"We need to decide what kind of skills, erm, we want for the future in this country and what kind of roles they're going to be and how then we can educate the children that are in school now to fulfil those roles."
[Teacher, School Purple]

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Questions for discussion

- Who should be responsible for supporting digital skills?
- Which digital skills and literacies should we prioritise?
- How can EdTech systems support digital literacy development?