Ctrl + curriclum

5 min read
Faith Paulett 2025

(Thomas, 2012)

So, what is your child learning in school? And do not panic they are not learning how to hack the government, they are learning all about different ICT skills and improving their digital competence. The Welsh Government are ensuring that students in schools are learning effectively and knowing everything they need to know (no, knowing how to hack the government is not essential) (Skill TX, no date). So how are the government ensuring that? Well, they have come up with frameworks, one is the Digital Competence Framework.

The others are Mathematics and Literacy, but if you want to know about them, you better click off this blog (Hwb, 2022)! So, what exactly is the Digital Competence Framework? Think of it as Wales' plan for confident digital citizens. It is about teaching them to use technology safely, creatively, and responsibly. DCF is a part of The Curriculum of Wales, the framework covers collaboration, producing work, spotting misinformation and handling data. In short, it's preparing them not just for school, but for life in a digital world (Hwb, no date).

Click, Create and Collaborate!

Teamwork is at the heart in almost every aspect of life, and ICT is no exception. From professional emails to a quick and witty text, it is important your child learns in what situations needs to be serious and when to keep it light. Digital communication is essential in everyday life and the framework will help your child know which way around it is (Cwmbran Highschool, no date)! Let's be honest, we have all lost an important document before. So, the collaboration strand helps your child know how to store their documents (and yes, even Christmas lists!) safely, securely and how to share it wisely (Welsh Government, 2018). Circling back to teamwork in digital spaces. It is important your child learns how to work on a document, PowerPoint, creative project or any other collaborative work with others at the same time. Which prepares them for the classroom, workplaces and the wider world!

No dodgy websites allowed!

Click, click, click... do not panic, ICT lessons are not just endless button pressing. Your child is learning safety and boundaries (yes, they do have them). Learning how to have boundaries and respecting the boundaries of other people online is important as they are learning how to create a positive digital footprint (Ceredigion County Council, no date). They are also learning how to spot misinformation and how to stay clear of dodgy websites (no need to peek at their search history). The citizenship strand equips your child with all these skills including privacy laws, which prepares them navigate school, workplace and the wider digital world (Hwb, 2020).

(London Education Management, no date).

Coding: not just for NASA!

Any good with problem solving? No, yes, maybe? Well, your child will be. Data and computational thinking (promise it is not as boring as it sounds) helps your child tackle challenges ranging from numbers and logic (Partneriaeth, no date). Your child will learn how to create and use spreadsheets. They will know how to spot patterns, issues, how to crunch data and make predictions (no, your child is not becoming psychic). As lessons progress, they dip into coding and computational thinking, breaking big problems into smaller steps and finding smart solutions. Whether they dream of working with NASA or simply want to manage a home budget, these skills prepare them for science experiments, everyday problem-solving, and the digital future ahead (GWE, no date).

Pixels, Posters and Presentations

Now the fun part... making it all happen. Where your child's imagination and creativity flourish with the help of technology. Your child may not make the next great work of art (or maybe they will, what do I know!) but they can craft digital wonders! From informational and eye-catching posters and strong and engaging presentations. It is not always about the tools they use but how they communicate and how creative they are across all subjects. Whether it's a spreadsheet in science, an art project or a heartfelt review of Of Mice and Men. The producing strand helps them thrive in school and out of it and become more confident in almost every aspect (Hwb, 2022)!

(Zafar, no date)

Lesson by lesson, click by click

Can you imagine your child only using technology in school once a week? Well, no, that is utterly ridiculous. The DCF framework ensures that there is a cross-curricular integration into all subjects. So instead of your child just doing ICT lessons they will learn the skills in every lesson. Such as combining the producing strand into every lesson so your child isn't just clicking buttons, they are creating, planning and executing important and remarkable work. The progression steps help wrap all skills into each other (even with a little pretty bow on top). The progression steps take your child from creating boring short stories and drawing trees on paint to amazing multi-media projects (National Day Nursery Association, 2022).

Clouds in the digital sky

Of course, it is not all sunshine and rainbows and like everything in life there are negatives. As much as your child's teachers try to keep up with technology and digital advancements, it is impossible to have new training everyday about what is new. Some teachers are still stuck ten years ago and cannot use modern technology through no fault of their own. While yes Welsh schools are producing capable learners that are succeeding could the Welsh Government create a more intricate and advanced framework for your little rocket scientists (Hwb, 2018)?

Hwb®

(Hwb, no date)

From the classroom to NASA

The Digital Competence Framework is Wales way of creating confident, creative and responsible digital citizen. However, as technology evolves greater than we can all believe, practitioner training also cannot keep up with the rocket science that is your child's ICT lessons. The Welsh Government is forever improving their approach to support practitioners and the students. By improving professional development, making resources accessible and teaching them skills that will land them a job in NASA! The Welsh Governments aim is to not just let your children understand the digital world but to take it by storm!

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The Digital Drama, how technology shapes the mind

5 minute Read
Faith Paulett 2025

If you think EastEnders has a lot of drama, wait until you see your child's ICT lesson! Evolving with technology in our lives leaves us all on a consistent cliffhanger about what is coming next. However, the cliffhangers do not just stay in the classroom but everywhere you go (yes, even the toilet, put your phone down!). The digital world follows us no matter where you are (Schmeikal, Haart and Richter 2013). But to be serious (yes that means get off the toilet and read when you are ready) how does the digital world affect our young people.

(Ashington Academy, 2025)

The magic of digitial learning

The digital world can is filled with magic, it can feel like Christmas day, every day! It presents opportunities to be creative; to collaborate and learning that sometimes you need technology almost everywhere! Learning how to use technology effectively can open the door to new learning opportunities, there are so many applications (not just candy crush, yes I know I love it too) like Kahoot, google docs or world wall that give your child's lessons an interactive aspect, which uplifts your child's (unfortunately does not uplift them into a UFO) learning as it promotes engagement and motivates them (Eastman, Iyer and Eastman, 2009).

From fridge doors to digitial floors

I know you have lots of your child's drawings on your fridge, now they are on your laptop! From long boring essays to fun and interactive PowerPoints and drawing on paint your child can evolve their skills through every lesson they have! The Digital Competence frameworks aim to integrate technology into every subject and help your child create meaningful and impactful work (Hwb, 2018).

Digital friendships

Chatty teenagers? Well, they aren't just chatting to you! The power of the thing we all catch ourselves doom scrolling on, snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram and even TikTok helps your help build and maintain friendships and relationships with people from school or someone across the world. The new generation is building stronger connections and learning more then all of our minds are capable of grasping. Social media is a powerful source of friendships and knowledge (Lusha, 2023).

(Farragher, 2023)

Sleep vs screens

Right, we have discussed how technology helps your children but now let's argue, technology is a very powerful tool, over everything. We have all woke up in the morning like a zombie because we stayed up too late on our phones, laptops or binge watching a new tv show, so why would your children be any different. Overusing technology, especially in bed can is linked to unusual sleeping patterns and habits and reduce in their well-being (Gamble, et al, 2014) (so they also act like zombies, and just like zombies they crave hearts, just the digital kind instead).

The on-going threat

So, we all know about wedgies and getting your head swilled in a toilet, but the digital world opens up a whole new can of worms. Cyberbullying. With online bullying it is constant and relentless, there is just no walking away from them or transferring schools, because of the increased use of technology this kind of bullying can follow you anywhere in the world (Wolke, et al, 2017). Cyber bullying has a major impact on mental health.

Spotting the dodgy stuff!

And here's another great battle that everyone (including you, not just your child) has, is the spreading of misinformation. We all know that the internet is a vast, never-ending space, but that doesn't mean that it is all correct (Metzger, et al, 2021). Without guidance children would not know what is safe to click on and what could be a dodgy website!

(Dolmatov, 2022)

Little eyes, Big influences

Let's get to the complicated stuff, Bandura 1986 (not bandana) in all his glory. Bandura was a very well-known theorists that argued that people learn through influences and modelling and children were especially impressionable. In modern day the people who model behaviour is the people who are on social media such as YouTube, TikTok or Instagram. This could become a very positive thing, your child could become the next Mark Zuckerburg or JoJo Siwa, technology can help your child learn more then you know. However, this could also be the complete opposite, by showing children negative acts and behaviours on the internet, they may start to exhibit these in everyday life (McLeod, 2025).

(Charoni and Dialialisti, no date)

Digital Duties

So, what is the nitty gritty about young people using technology. We all know the internet is a big, scary and dangerous place, which is why our governments put policies and acts in place to protect your kids (and us grown-ups sometimes, yikes you do hear some stories). So, to be short and sweet:

- UK Online Safety Act (2023): Introduces stronger protections for children, requiring platforms to remove harmful content (UK parliament, 2023).
- Welsh Government's DCF: Embeds digital competence as a cross-curricular responsibility, ensuring pupils learn how to create boundaries and stay safe (Hwb, 2018).

We all know we have responsibility like doing the dishes, doing homework and marking said homework, but every single person who surrounds themselves with young people have a responsibility to make sure they know how to be safe online!

Let's start with the schools, we all know they teach children all about the great wide web, but it's not only the ICT teacher who has to think about it (yes even the French teacher). Schools have a responsibility to your children to ensure they are learning digital skills all through their subjects and ensuring they know what to trust and what not to trust online (Hwb, 2022).

Digital Parenting 101

And you! You as parents of these young people also have a wide range of responsibilities when it comes to your children and being safe online. As younger and younger generations are starting to use technology at young ages parents need to be informed about what technology is capable of (so get your butt into action!) (Peas, 2019).

Policies with Purpose

The risks are why it is important that theories are put into practice (no not conspiracy theories). Bandura helps explain why children need positive role models on technologies but also promotes the use of scaffolding and guidance (Mcleod, 2025). That is why it is important that policies are put into practice and that provide structure and knowledge and helps uplift children and that is why it's important schools and you! Their careers are following the policies put in place.

(Our Lady Immaculat, no date)

Let Them Explore!

Finally, the digital world is endless, its messy, complicated and unpredictable (like many of our love lives) and can be absolutely baffling to everyone. So, using the resources, advice and policies into place can help everyone. Now let the young ones go out and explore the digital world, whether they become painters, scientists or work a boring 9-5, these skills are useful for all.

(Tan, 2024)

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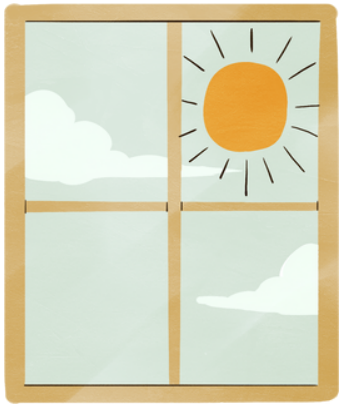
Tech in the real ASD Classroom

5 Minute Read
Faith Paulett 2025

Working as a teaching assistant in an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit is like juggling sensory balls, while stuffing your pockets with things you need to hide while dodging punches and preventing chrome books flying out the window! Oh wait... that is reality. Let us save that Chromebook so we can get back to learning as they are important to every aspect of learning and communicating. Especially to those chatty non-verbal ones!



Tech as a Lifeline

Technology is a big part of the classroom in an ASD unit, it can help aid communication from AAC devices, printing visuals and help with calming strategies. Working with students with major behavioural, communication and medical challenges can be a big struggle (McNaughton, et al, 2008) but the use of technology can help aid it (look at all these big words!).

(Grant, no date).

Finding Their Voice

Giving a student a voice is essential, which is why I strongly support the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices. AAC is used by people who struggle with speech and language, and can include tablets, picture systems or speech generating apps (another excuse not to put the iPad down!) (National Health Service, 2021). Suddenly, the student you've never heard a "hello" from is demanding shaving foam. Vygotsky (1978) would absolutely hand it over. AAC empowers learners to communicate, make choices and develop independence. It supports step by step learning through scaffolding, which aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Newman and Latifi, 2021). Children learn through more knowledgeable people around them, such as parents or teachers. An adult prompting on an AAC device can later lead to independent use (they'll be tapping away in no time).

Not one size fits all

However, AAC devices can be pricey, buying the actual devices to downloading and buying the software. I swear these devices are more expensive than my car! Sometimes from the outside it may look unfair that one child has a new and shiny iPad, but another has a small booklet of pictures (Biology Insights, 2025). Unfortunately, in schools there is not enough money to provide everyone with them! Some children can not use them or understanding them as it is too much cognitive load and they cannot process the information or skills needed to operate them (Rackensperger, et al, 2005) especially in an ASD provision where there is mixed range of behavioural and communication challenges (trust me, I know this is my every day!)

Digital Eyes

Digital technology has also been a life saver in the aspect of monitoring the student (do not worry we aren't spying on them) Applications like Myconcern, are essential when safeguarding students as you can report any concerns you may have and can track any patterns whether it is frequent bruises or often coming to school in unclean clothes (tes, no date). (this doesn't include staff thankfully). Another application that is used within the provision is Evisence. The staff uses this to track and upload targets that the child has reached and any key milestones and achievements, this helps practitioners track where the student may need support or where they can continue doing something independently (Evisense, no date) (make sure you double check it, these children will try get away with everything!)

Screen time struggles

However, technology is not always sunshine and rainbows. It can become challenging for staff and students (including me). Some students become over reliant on technology, using it to confirm everything they already know (let's be honest though, we all do this). I have seen many students becoming upset that they do not have access to their phone, Chromebook or iPad. Not just in school but also at home. To overcome this struggle, it is important that the school and home put a plan into place to ensure that the child is having limited screen time and that the child use of technology to help self-regulate is not too often (Emelin, Tkhostov and Rasskazova, 2014). However, school and home need to be on the same page as often different boundaries and rules are set (Just talk to each other!).

(Wikipedia commons, 2019)

Teaching the teachers

Another barrier to technology is teacher training. Many practitioners are handed a Chromebook and expected to navigate Teams, OneDrive, MyConcern and countless other apps, even though digital skills take time to learn (it took me a week just to log on!). This is why education settings must provide proper training so staff can use technology confidently and competently. Without this, children's learning is affected, and they may not meet expected outcomes set by government and schools (Fernández-Batanero, et al, 2022). Bandura's Social Learning Theory highlights that children learn through modelling, so practitioners need to demonstrate accurate digital skills. If a teacher uses a program incorrectly (we've all been there), the child will copy that mistake and continue to in the future (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2023). (which is a disaster when we need them to fix our phones).

(Google Chromebook, no date)

Guided by the DCF

There are policies to ensure practice of teachers and students using technology is effective, for example the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) which helps provide an outline of what schools should be instructing students and that should be across all subjects (Hwb, 2022). The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act also supports the use of technology in the classroom and is seen as an appropriate and necessary adaptation to the students learning (Welsh Government, 2021). Every school should also have a digital policy that outline the use of technology in and out of the classroom which sets boundaries about how devices are used.

Collaboration for digitial success

Overall, the use of technology in an ASD unit is amazing and can help children and practitioners thrive but it is not always easy (trust me) so having barriers and limitations is a given but as the setting works more with its staff, the government, the parents and the students! (yes, the students help us too) is essential and by following the curriculum and policies put it into place can help the provision thrive as I have seen myself.

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Tech that Talks Back

5 Minute Read
Faith Paulett 2025

Working with non-verbal students is a whirlwind of information form the people around them and the child themselves. Non-verbal students are often the chattiest students! So that was a confusing sentence, chatty but nonverbal? This is where alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices come into play. AAC Devices is like giving the microphone to the quiet kid who can actually sing (Certifiedatp, 2024)!

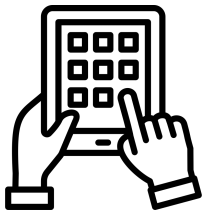
(LessonPix, no date)

When silence is sassy

What actually are AAC devices? AAC devices are anything that can help someone communicate, often described at pictures, signing, symbols and devices like tablets and iPad with applications that generate symbol to speech. AAC devices are used as a way to communicate for people who struggle with speech and language skills (National Health Service, 2021) The best thing about AAC devices? They give the student a voice, no matter what they say, whether they are calling you the best teacher ever or telling you to shut it! Any communication is a success with students who need AAC devices. AAC devices can be completely customised to the child using them, giving them the complete language they need to communication their likes, dislikes, needs and wants! AAC devices are coming into play with a lot of students with ASD and they are learning how to use them more independently which links in with Digital competence framework (DCF) in Wales. It puts emphasis on children using technology confidently (Hwb, no date) (even if it used to tell you to shove off).

Portable Voices

AAC devices aren't just for school! That the great thing about them, they are portable! (preferably not out windows though). So, if that child wants some biscuits, they will demand them from you! Especially teenagers with AAC devices, just because they are non-verbal does not mean they can't argue back! And God, they will argue back to you about anything possible! This gives them the advantage to communicate wherever they go (Zhao, 2023).



Hwb

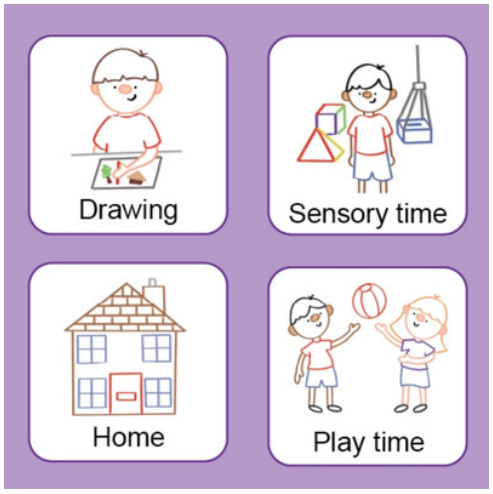
(Hwb, 2024)

Talking costs

However the price of such devices is rising day by day from buying the actual devices to installing the applications, I swear I could have a mortgage with the amount spent on them (Biology Insights, 2025)! It's not only the technological side of it, even looking at physical AAC resources such as Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) are expensive when you think about time spent and resources needed to make them, setting up AAC devices is timely which costs money (Roberts, 2020)! Staff training can also be a nightmare! 67-year-old Linda who should have retired by now, looks at the iPad like she's about to fly a UFO! The time, effort and money to train staff to be properly informed about using and navigating AAC devices is a large area of professional development that is missing (Fernández-Batanero, et al, 2022). If staff are not understanding or able to navigate through AAC devices, how are they meant to teach the children they are with.

Visuals! Better than the Bible

The good thing about AAC devices? It is all visuals! my god do these kids love a good visual! God forbid you lose a symbol! Some students look at visuals as if it's the law, visual timetables provide stability just be careful you haven't forgotten a last-minute activity! Imagine you have said you are doing an arts and craft activity and then BAM! You forgot about assembly, next thing you know there are 10 kids crying, a teaching assistant scrambling to grab motivators and the head teacher is walking past while hearing all the commotion (Kidder and McDonnell, 2017)! Where visual aids are very helpful to prepare students about what is happening it also means that you cannot forget what is happening through the day!



(Caldwell Children, no date)

We love AACs. Budgets Do Not.

The digital competence framework ties in very nicely with AAC devices (even though the government doesn't give much funding to AAC devices!) as students are become confident and capable students and their skills around technology are growing, they learn how to collaborate, communicate, share information and become citizens of their communities (Hwb, no date). The Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act in Wales also emphasis the need of support for students with and which should include digital needs to learn, as the need to communicate is appropriate use of support (Welsh Government, 2021).

Too many breakfast options!

Vygotsky emphasis the need of socialisation and communication that children are reliant on to learn. Vygotsky sociocultural theory supports scaffolding and as practitioners and parents it is our duty to first learn how to use these devices them eventually move onto teaching the children, by modelling and eventually using less prompts and teaching children how to do it independently. For example, if it is breakfast time the parent can model with the tablet and say "I want cereal" then encourage your child to say what they want for breakfast, same goes for school settings. The teacher can model and use the tablet to say "I need a pen" or anything school related (Newman and Latifi, 2021). Banduras social learning theory supports the use of imitation and modelling and encourages parents and teachers to work with the children so eventually they will become more independent with the device. Bandura's theory reinforces the need for children to observe to be able to develop (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2023).

(Marlett, no date)

Helping Children be Heard

Overall, I have seen AAC devices work effectively especially with students with ASD and giving them a way to express themselves and communicate. There are a lot of benefits and limitations to using AAC devices for practitioners, parents and children but it can bring a voice to someone who never had one before and the support of schools, policies and governments (and epic teaching assistants) is never ending, working devices like these into their own acts and the curriculum has helped the use of AAC more accessible.

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