



# ECIE6002

Blog

2204676

BA Inclusive Education

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# *What in the DCF???*



(Chilukuri, 2020)

My lecturer asked today if everyone in the class felt “digitally competent”??

***Cue puzzled looks and a few blank stares!***

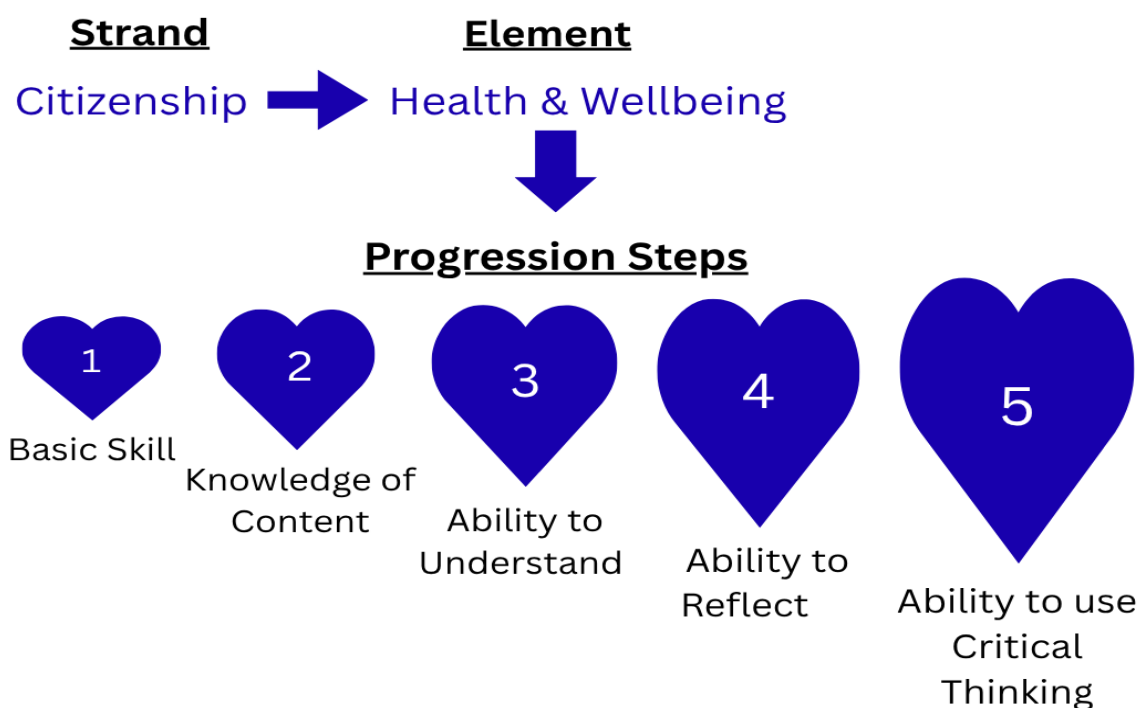
For a class of adult learners whose childhoods predated the internet, there was a very mixed response to even understanding what ‘digital competence’ actually is, let alone whether they are au fait with it!

According to Ilomaki et al (2016), “digital competence is an evolving concept related to the development of digital technology”. It is no wonder then that there is some confusion about what digital competency entails.

In terms of education, the Welsh Government (2018) defines digital competency as “the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable the confident, creative and critical use of technologies and systems”. With this in mind, the Digital Competency Framework (DCF) was created and began its implementation in schools in Wales in 2016; it was further embedded into the new Curriculum for Wales in 2022 (Welsh Government, 2018b).

The DCF recognises that children learn at different rates and is designed as a progression framework that can be built on each year (Welsh Government, 2018b). It is one of the mandatory cross-curricular skills, alongside numeracy and literacy, in the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022b).

Within the four strands of the DCF, there are several elements, and each has five progression steps. Look at the following example:



The purpose of the [citizenship](#) strand is for children to become "conscientious digital" citizens who make "positive" contributions to the "digital world", with the ability to use critical evaluation to navigate the good and bad experiences of using digital technologies and develop skills that help them thrive independently as both a "producer and consumer" (Welsh Government, 2020).

The [health and well-being](#) element of this strand targets both emotional and physical safety. The progression steps build on each other, as follows:

- **1** - Children learn the basic skills of using familiar digital devices.
- **2** – Children gain knowledge of content, age restrictions and the advantages/disadvantages of “digital media and devices”. For example, the effects of too much screen time on their health and well-being.
- **3** – Children learn to understand how they can balance using digital technology with the real world. As well as the “wider” consequences of digital technology on society and the environment. For example, the effects of online marketing.
- **4** – Children learn to be reflective of personal digital behaviour and show healthy online use, knowing when to report “unacceptable” online behaviour and make “informed” choices. For example, weighing up the impact of adverts, online bullying and influencers.
- **5** – Children learn to use critical thinking skills to understand digital editing and prevent/reduce physical and mental health problems associated with digital technology, as well as think of the environmental impact and legal responsibilities surrounding digital technology.

(Welsh Government, 2020)

These progression steps have clear links to the [Curriculum for Wales](#) and its four core purposes of helping children become:

1. Ambitious, capable learners,
  2. Enterprising, creative contributors,
  3. Ethical, informed citizens,
  4. Healthy, confident individuals
- (Impact Wales, 2018; Welsh Government, 2024a).



(Impact Wales, 2018)

The Curriculum for Wales focuses on empathy, creativity, healthy habits, lifelong learning and citizenship of not only Wales but of the world (Welsh Government, 2024a). This holistic approach to education aims to set children up for future employment and to thrive independently as adults in an ever-evolving world, which derives “*competence from forming connections*” (Welsh Government, 2024a; Siemens, 2005).

In terms of future employment, it has been recognised that the job market is changing; *within the next ten years*, it is estimated that *90% of jobs will involve digital skills* (Van Eerd and Guo, 2020). This is expected to affect low-skilled and vulnerable learners as the world quickly moves to higher levels of automated processes (Van Eerd and Guo, 2020).

To challenge this inequitable future employment landscape, more vulnerable children have been supported by current educational policy, which has “high aspirations” for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and removes the unnecessary bureaucracy that can hinder real-time adaptations and support (Welsh Government, 2018a). School inclusion policies are underpinned by the Additional Learning Needs Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) and the ALN Code, which has been implemented since 2021; together, they ensure that the child’s best interests are at the heart of all decisions regarding their education and are a framework to allow all children to achieve their potential (Welsh Government, 2018a; Welsh Government, 2021).

*So, how is this implemented in everyday schooling? I hear you ask!*

It is implemented through person-centred planning (PCP), which aims to provide universal and targeted support for any child who is struggling to progress with learning skills, communication skills and behaviour, emotional or social skills (Welsh Government, 2015). Schools or local authorities use a statutory Individual Development Plan (IDP), which is tailored to the child or young person’s specific

needs and is adapted as they develop; for example, a child with Dyslexia might use digital technology to assist them in school, this may start with a pen reader that reads texts to them and then as they get older they may require a laptop with specific software that enables them to engage in lessons fully (Welsh Government, 2015)

Teaching everyone essential digital skills (EDS), including how to access and use digital technology safely, as well as ensuring everyone has access to digital devices and the digital network, is key to safeguarding learners' future employability (Department for Education, 2025)

Reflection time, how's your digital competency looking? Are you future-proof?

To check your capabilities in the DCF, scan this QR code:



*(Welsh Government, 2020; QR Generator AI, 2026)*

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## Blog 2

## Shaping Young Minds in a Digital World...



(Hot102.7FM, 2025)

### The 6/7 effect!

Enter any classroom now, and you will be greeted with a chorus of "siiiiixx, sevvvven!"; a phenomenon that has swept through the country, if not most of the world (Hot102.7FM, 2025). Leaving most parents, teachers and other adults baffled and highly irritated by its constant repetition...

"What does it mean?"

"Why are they always saying it?"

"It's driving me crazy!"

What started as a simple video of a child excitedly confirming a basketball score has gone viral online due to the way he expressed those two little words, "six, seven", with innocent hand gestures; showing that the speed at which digital information can spread or be found can be both a blessing and a curse. You can see the link to the video here: [67 kid full video \(original\)](#) (Budgetz, 2025).

The amount of time children spend online for learning and recreation has increased rapidly over the last decade (Stiglic and Viner, 2019). Research suggests strong links between high amounts of time children spend watching screens and the increased levels of obesity and depression (Pappas, 2020). Other negative effects on children and young people (CYP) include fewer social skills, as CYP are unable to read body language or nonverbal cues in face-to-face interactions, and a lack of physical activity, especially outdoors (Alibigloo, 2025). It is now widely accepted that DT use should be limited among pre-school and early years primary school children, due to evidence that higher DT use negatively affects their well-being at the ages when they are achieving significant developmental milestones (Harverson *et al.*, 2025).

Ironically, given the wealth of negative information available online, it's not hard to see the correlation between a decline in CYP's physical and mental health and the increase in digital technology in everyday life, as well as how online trends can easily influence CYP (OECD, 2025). Whilst some online trends, as mentioned above, are relatively harmless, others can cause significant harm. Popular platforms such as TikTok can leave CYP exposed to abuse and damage, as the algorithms can quickly lead the user down a "rabbit hole" of prolonged engagement with potentially harmful content, such as suicidal ideation or dangerous 'challenges' that have claimed children's lives (Amnesty International, 2025b; Coyne, 2025). Substance misuse is also romanticised on social media and online platforms, leading to 57% of 15-year-olds trying alcohol and 32% of them using e-cigarettes (World Health Organization, 2024). CYPs are also vulnerable to online grooming and bullying, as well as poor sleep health from excessive screen time and gaming, which can become addictive (Coyne, 2025).

However, despite the risks associated with digital technology (DT), the [Theory of Connectivism](#) shows that DT also has a valuable place in our fast-paced modern world (Siemens, 2005).



This diagram by Singh (2025) shows there are many advantages of using DT in terms of education and skills development; it also illustrates the Theory of Connectivism (Siemens, 2005).

(Singh, 2025)

As mentioned in my [first blog](#), it has been recognised that for children to thrive in their future careers, they will need to be digitally competent (Van Eerd and Guo, 2020; Siemens, 2005). Therefore, the way we learn must utilise the positive aspects of DT to ensure all children are given equitable opportunities in developing the necessary skills to prepare for adapting to technological changes later in their lives, as lifelong learning is now seen as the key to success (Siemens, 2005).

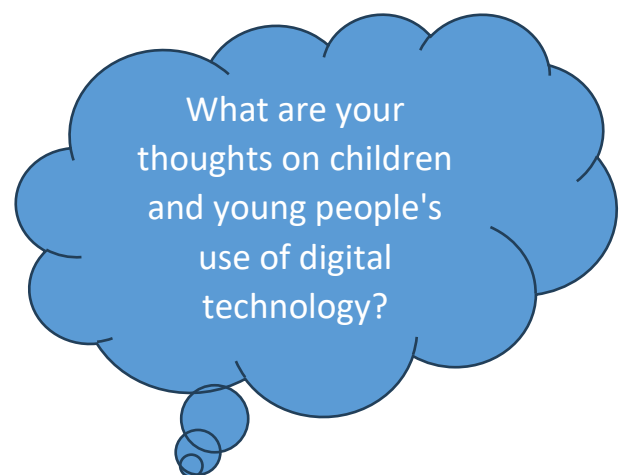
The [Curriculum for Wales](#) and [Digital Competency Framework \(DCF\)](#) are addressing the need to embed digital skills in everyday teaching practice, safely and holistically, to develop well-rounded, adaptable citizens with a love of life-long learning (Welsh Government, 2024a; Impact Wales, 2018; Welsh Government, 2020). To keep learners safe online, the [Online Safety Act](#) (2025) and the school's [Safeguarding Policy](#) (2025) outline the law and procedures for protecting children from harmful content. These safety measures must be in place, as whilst it is recognised in theory that learning can take place through connecting with others online, it has long been recognised that social media and other online platforms also come with inherent risks that are harmful to a CYP's health and well-being (Siemens, 2005; McBride, 2011; Coyne, 2025).

Some countries are looking at even stricter safety measures, with Australia recently banning children under 16 years old from accessing social media

altogether in an effort to protect them from harm via inappropriate content, cyberbullying and online grooming (OECD, 2025; Kim, 2025). However, this move has been highly controversial and seen by some as an “ineffective quick fix that’s out of step with the realities of a generation”, highlighting the need for “better regulation” and “robust safeguards” to empower CYP instead of restricting their right to access information and express themselves online (OECD, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025a). Interestingly, children who use social media have higher levels of digital skills, especially in online safety; they are better equipped to adjust their privacy settings, remove people from their contacts, and use appropriate keywords for searches (Unicef, 2025).

So, on reflection, maybe the biggest issue with the digital world isn’t whether children are allowed to access it or even how much they can access; perhaps the problem lies solely with the perpetrators of inappropriate content and those who prey on the vulnerable...

In which case, online safety needs to be targeted for improvement, and online platforms need to be scrutinised and monitored more closely to protect CYP from harm, as we all have a duty to safeguard CYP in the real world and in the digital one (School A, 2025; Social Care Wales, 2025; OECD, 2025; Unicef, 2025; Amnesty International, 2025a).



Whilst there are significant risks to the health and well-being of CYP in the digital world, if we completely prevent children from accessing certain aspects of DT, such as interaction with others through social media, then we are risking reducing the development of their digital skills, which is a necessity for their overall well-being in the future (Siemens, 2005; Amnesty International, 2025a; OECD, 2025). Children and young people need us to remember that:

**“Our ability to learn what we need for tomorrow is more important than what we know today” (Siemens, 2005)**

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# Digital Wizardry



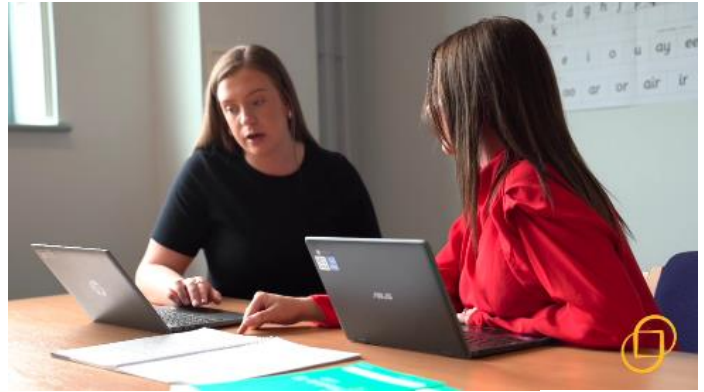
(21K School Team, 2025)

## The pros and cons of digital learning...

As both a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) in a large, busy primary school and a mature student in the final year of a degree in Inclusive Education, I have the distinct advantage of seeing the pros and cons of digital learning from both a teaching and a learner perspective.

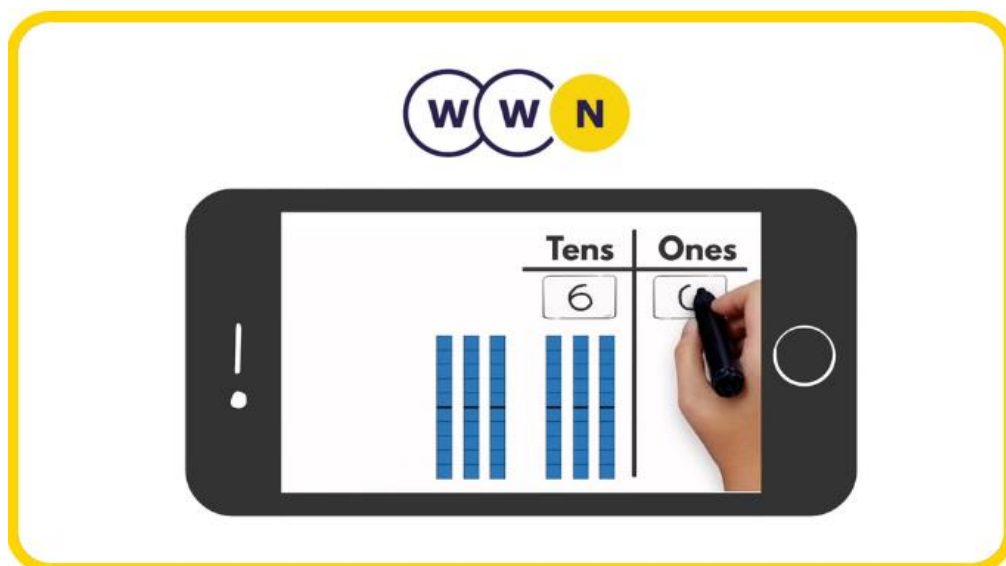
In my role as an LSA, I integrate digital technology into lessons and use it heavily for intervention work. Many platforms I use support teaching and learning, such as [Winning with Numbers](#), [Ruth Miskin's Fresh Start](#), [Duolingo](#), [Kahoot](#), [Google Classroom](#) and [Hwb](#), to name a few (Winning With Numbers, 2025; Miskin, 2025; Duolingo, 2025; Kahoot!, 2025; Google Classroom, 2025; Hwb, 2025).

Digital technology (DT) can make learning more interactive and engaging, helping improve students' overall understanding and retention of the material; it also allows children and young people (CYP) to take an independent approach to their learning by



(Miskin, 2025)

allowing them to research their ideas and take ownership of their knowledge (Bajaj, 2024). These digital platforms can provide tailored learning experiences for individual students, allowing the learning support assistant to cater to each student's specific needs and abilities; some examples include the Fresh Start phonics, reading, and writing intervention and the Winning with Numbers mathematics intervention (Miskin, 2025; Winning With Numbers, 2025; Bajaj, 2024). In both of these small-group interventions, there may be one individual who is struggling to keep up with the group or who has missed a session and needs to catch up; because these interventions can be accessed online, I can put them on a device such as a laptop/ iPad, set them up so they're learning at their own pace as required (Miskin, 2025; Winning With Numbers, 2025).



(Winning With Numbers, 2025)

DT supports CYP with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in overcoming learning barriers, enabling them to engage fully with lessons. For instance, students with dyslexia can utilise online platforms like [Seesaw](#) to capture their work in various formats, such as voice recordings, photographs, and visual representations, instead of simply writing their ideas in a traditional book (Seesaw, 2025; Iliska and Gudoniene, 2025). Personalised technology-enhanced learning (TEL) can eliminate student frustration by reducing their cognitive load, which increases their motivation and engagement in learning (Iliska and Gudoniene, 2025). This type of interactive, differentiated learning is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, in which others or tools provide the appropriate amount of scaffolding to help the learner achieve their goals. Similarly, Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences shows that individuals have different strengths and preferences in how they learn; therefore, DT offers different formats/modalities to accommodate various intelligences, such as auditory, visual, kinaesthetic and interpersonal, enhancing engagement and understanding for all learners.

The use of DT is a fundamental aspect of the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2024a). The progression steps outlined in the Digital Competency Framework (DCF) aim to ensure that all children become digitally literate and acquire real-world skills (Welsh Government, 2020). This will equip them to effectively navigate technology and prepare them for future employment opportunities (Education Wales, 2018).



(Welsh Government, 2024)



(Education Wales, 2018; QR Generator AI, 2026)

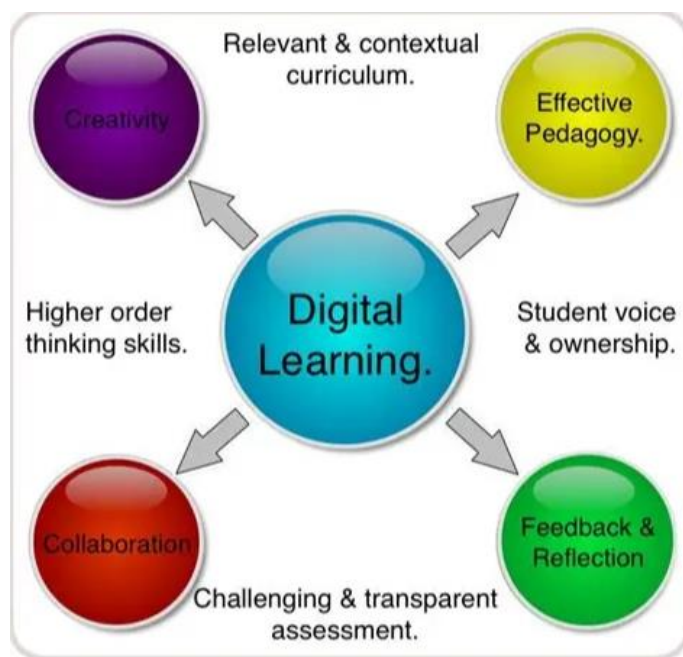
DT use in education significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (Walker *et al.*, 2022). Like many other LSAs during this time, I used digital devices and platforms to support teachers' online lessons during the school week. This was a challenge for teaching staff and children with less digital skills, as they had to adapt quickly to a new way of teaching and learning (Walker *et al.*, 2022). Whilst it's acknowledged that too much screen time can cause issues with sleep, anxiety and depression, being able to use DT also allowed children to connect with their teachers, support staff and classmates during a time of isolation and uncertainty, which had positive impacts on their mental health and well-being (Mesce *et al.*, 2022). However, it is essential to note that some children, especially those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, were unable to access online education during this time due to either a lack of internet connection or a suitable device; this created a wider gap in educational attainment and negatively impacted their social development, both of which limit their future aspirations (Coote, Garner and Moller, 2024).

In terms of my own learning as a mature student post-pandemic, doing a degree in [Inclusive Education](#) that is based on a flexible blended learning approach with a mix of online lectures, recorded lectures and online tutorials, as well as the more traditional face-to-face lectures, has been imperative for me to succeed in completing the work I need to do (UWTSD, 2025). As a single parent who also works full-time, it has allowed me to fit university around my work and family commitments. I can find out information, connect with my tutors and others on my course, as well as complete assignments from home; this type of learning works well and is supported by the theory of connectivism (Siemens, 2005).

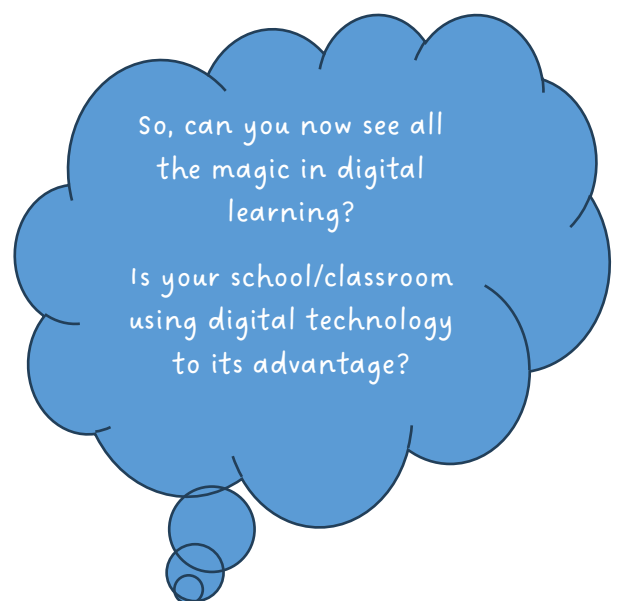
Using DT to connect and collaborate with others also helps in the workplace, as apps such as [Timetree](#) and [Parentmail](#) enhance communication not only amongst staff but also with students and parents (Timetree, 2025; Iris Software Group, 2026). The latter is essential as parental engagement is known to increase CYP attainment and attendance, which Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems theory supports (Education Endowment Foundation, 2026; Kelty and Wakabayashi, 2020). However, it is crucial to note once again that devices and connections are required to access these apps, which may again leave those

families who need the most support at a disadvantage (Coote, Garner and Moller, 2024). Therefore, in addition to using digital platforms, family engagement needs also to be fostered through other means, for example, leaflets or letters home about activities or programmes happening in school (Kelty and Wakabayashi, 2020).

Overall, integrating digital teaching and learning in the classroom can enhance the experience for both students and teaching staff, promoting a more dynamic and effective educational environment. Digital teaching and learning offer numerous benefits for inclusive education; the use of digital resources allows for greater accessibility and customisation of learning materials to meet diverse student needs, especially for those with ALN (Iliska and Gudoniene, 2025). Digital platforms also facilitate communication and collaboration between students, teachers and parents, enhancing engagement and fostering a sense of community (Kelty and Wakabayashi, 2020; Education Endowment Foundation, 2026). Additionally, digital teaching enables flexibility in learning styles and pacing, accommodating individual learning preferences and abilities (Bajaj, 2024; Iliska and Gudoniene, 2025). However, barriers to digital teaching and learning include limited access to digital devices and internet connectivity, and a lack of digital skills amongst both educators and students (Coote, Garner and Moller, 2024). Addressing these barriers is crucial to ensuring equitable access to quality education for all learners.



(Desai, 2020)



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## Blog 4

# The Hwb of the School



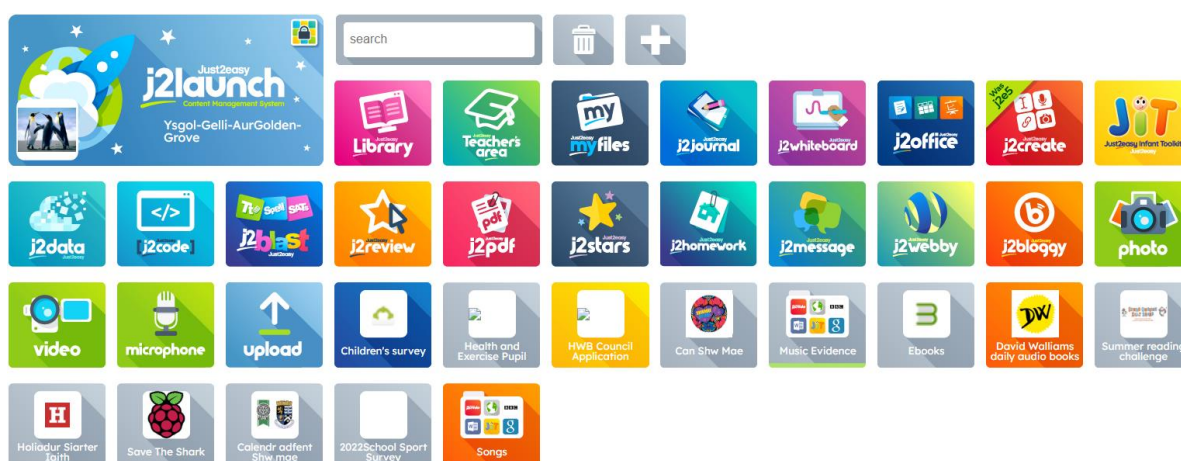
(Davies, 2017)

**Hwb** is a bilingual web platform run by the Welsh Government that provides access to educational content, digital tools, a multitude of resources, and educational services for all maintained schools in Wales. As a “national digital service”, it provides support to “over 450,000 learners and 55,000 practitioners”, averaging around “3.5 million logins” per month (Stotles, 2025).

The [Hwb](#) platform plays a crucial role in meeting the needs of children and young people (CYP) in all of Wales in relation to the Curriculum for Wales and the Digital Competence Framework (DCF); Hwb is designed to enhance digital skills, capabilities and resilience in education (Welsh Government,

2024a; Welsh Government, 2020; Welsh Government, 2022a; Welsh Government, 2024b; Davies, 2017).

It supports the skills required for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by providing access to learning resources in its central hub, where students and teachers can find a wide range of educational resources aligned with the Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022a). It allows for differentiated learning experiences and supports the development of key knowledge and skills (Education Wales, 2024). [Hwb](#) incorporates various digital technologies that enable students to develop digital literacy skills through using the digital tools for tasks such as creating graphs on Just2Easy, researching topics, creating PowerPoint presentations in Microsoft Office, and collaborating with others via email or Google Classroom; therefore, it helps them succeed academically, and they become more digitally proficient in line with the DCF (Welsh Government, 2024b; Davies, 2017; Welsh Government, 2020; Welsh Government, 2022a). Collaborative learning between learners and teachers helps develop teamwork through communication and problem-solving skills; these attributes are essential in the modern workforce. In a society where vast amounts of information are at their fingertips, students need to be able to gather, analyse, and present data, fostering critical thinking skills that will also improve their chances of employment in the future (Welsh Government, 2024b).



(Just2Easy, 2026)

Hwb allows for innovative teaching methods, it supports teaching staff to deliver engaging and interactive lessons through various multi-media tools, which helps to foster creativity and critical thinking skills among learners (Welsh Government, 2024b). The platform supports professional development of practitioners and hosts a “National Digital Learning Event” every year to share best practices across Wales (Davies, 2017).

As an online digital platform, Hwb emphasises the importance of online safety and responsible digital citizenship, preparing learners to navigate the digital world securely (Welsh Government, 2024b; Welsh Government, 2022a). Hwb has a specific area devoted to “[keeping safe online](#)”, which offers advice, learning and teaching resources, as well as a help and support section (Welsh Government, 2026a).



(Welsh Government, 2025)

Minecraft for Education and Scratch are also available through the Hwb platform; these are fun games that teach children coding techniques, which are again valuable digital skills (Welsh Government, 2025; Welsh Government, 2026b).



Learn to code Scratch: rock band

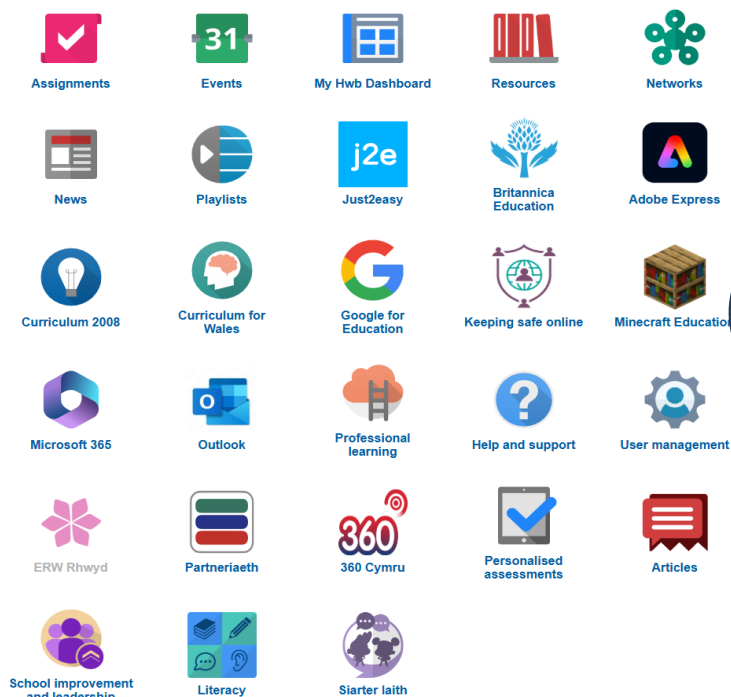
(Welsh Government, 2026)

Several learning theories in Constructivism underpin this digital technology platform; Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory argues that children learn by doing and that children learn better if they engage with the learning environment, as they learn through interaction. Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory demonstrates the benefit of learning from more knowledgeable others (MKOs) and the importance of collaboration. In contrast, Piaget's (1962) theory of cognitive development proposes that children learn in developmental stages through imitating life in the world around them and gaining experience through the activities they engage in, building their mental development. This reflects the DCF, where each digital skill learned is the foundation for the next; knowledge is

achieved in progressive steps, creating the cognitive development for critical thinking and reasoning processes (Welsh Government, 2020; Piaget, 1962)

In addition to these, Siemens's (2005) more modern theory of connectivism also emphasises the role of digital technology and collaboration and networking with others to enhance learning. The Hwb platform facilitates connections among learners, educators, and resources, creating a digital learning "ecosystem" in which digital skills and subject knowledge can develop (Welsh Government, 2024b).

Whilst there seems to be many positive benefits to using the Hwb resource to support the Curriculum for Wales, on the other hand, over-reliance on digital technology has been reported to cause harm to the mental health and physical well-being of CYP, so there is a need to balance their lives between the online and offline world (OECD, 2025; Unicef, 2025). Likewise, negative experiences with Artificial Intelligence (AI) can affect children's mental well-being; however, it is essential to note that children are more capable and aware than we sometimes assume; they also know when it is inappropriate to use AI (Aitken *et al.*, 2025).



What do you think of the resources available on Hwb?

(Welsh Government, 2026)

Overall, the Hwb platform serves as a comprehensive digital learning resource that supports the Curriculum for Wales and the DCF, equipping CYP with the essential skills for their future lives (Welsh Government, 2024b; Davies, 2017). As mentioned in [Blog 1](#), 90% of jobs will require digital competency skills within the next 10 years, ensuring that CYP are ready for modern digital life beyond school is therefore of utmost importance (Van Eerd and Guo, 2020). This digital technology platform, which is used in Wales for educational purposes, can be supported by various educational theories that highlight how effective use of DT can meet learners' needs and enhance their attainment. Constructivist theories highlight the importance of learners actively constructing their own understanding of subjects through interacting with their environment (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1962). The modern theory of connectivism also supports these earlier theories and extends them to include the way in which knowledge is now acquired through connections via technology (Siemens, 2005). The Hwb platform provides interactive and digital tools that allow CYP to engage with subject content in a safe, hands-on way, promoting learning through trial and error, exploration, collaboration, and discovery (Welsh Government, 2024b; Welsh Government, 2022a; Davies, 2017). It effectively supports the [Curriculum for Wales](#) and its [four purposes](#), as well as the [DCF](#), through its vast resource base (Welsh Government, 2024a; Impact Wales, 2018; Welsh Government, 2020).

However, whilst the Hwb platform may be a fantastic tool, remember:

**“Knowledge that resides in a database needs to be connected with the right people in the right context in order to be classified as learning”** (Siemens, 2005).

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