THE CUCKOO IN THE CLASSROOM

EdTech is displacing learning in pursuit of profit

Concerns about excessive screen time and digital device use among children are at an all time high amid a growing body of evidence identifying serious negative impacts on child development, physical and mental health, attention, wellbeing and academic attainment.

EdTech is a business model that puts tech into education to serve the best interests of technology investors. Parents, carers and teachers, the custodians of children's best interests, are individually powerless to resist the unproven technology which is flooding into classrooms at an accelerating rate.

If law-makers, unions and educationalists are willing to act promptly and decisively we can empower parents and teachers to challenge the false assumptions currently sustaining EdTech, and we can reverse the technology takeover of our classrooms for the benefit of generations of children.

WE MUST ACT NOW

According to Ofcom, school-aged children spend, on average, 3 hours every day on smartphones and tablet devices[1] and one fifth of children spend more than 7 hours a day on screens.[2]

A growing body of evidence is identifying significant negative impacts of device and screen use on child development, physical and mental health, attention, wellbeing and academic attainment. Meanwhile, evidence that educational technology platforms and applications ('EdTech') are beneficial to pupil's learning is, at best, mixed, and contaminated by tech industry research funding and sponsorships.

The EdTech label is a misnomer: technology in education does not equate to educational technology, and there is much evidence to the contrary. Globally, a growing number of independent organisations, experts and authorities question the efficacy, child safety and evidence base for the digitisation of education, pointing to an array of harms.

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> **DIGITAL TOOLS IMPAIR RATHER THAN ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING.**
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> **The Karolinska Institute, 2023, the organisation responsible for awarding the Nobel Prize for Medicine**

We are asked to believe that the digitisation of education is necessary to prepare children for a technology-filled world, but contemporary data and centuries of historical experience suggest that interaction with teachers and textbooks remains pedagogically superior to the deluge of good and bad information that digitisation facilitates, encourages and incentivises. Digital skills such as word processing, spreadsheets, coding or robotics can all be taught in ring-fenced technology or DT/engineering classes.

EdTech is also causing an unhelpful blurring between educational and recreational uses of technology. Gamified 'teaching' platforms commonly emphasise engagement and rewards at the expense of substantive learning outcomes.[3]

1 https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/media-habits-children/top-trends-from-our-latest-look-at-uk-childrens-online-lives#:~:text=UK%20child%20internet%20users%20aged,%2Dyear%2Dolds%20per%20day.

2 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2gljvdgp3o#:~:text=One%20in%20five%20children%20spend,will%20be%20enforced%20from%20Friday.

3 https://www.ymcagta.org/blog/gamification-in-education

> **THE APPS ARE DESIGNED TO EXTRACT DATA WITH EVERY CLICK AND DEPLOY NUDGES TO MAXIMISE SCREEN TIME... THE SAME PSYCHOLOGICAL LEVER THAT KEEPS CHILDREN SCROLLING SOCIAL MEDIA LATE AT NIGHT.**
>
> Dr Velislava HIIlman, Visiting Fellow at The London School of Economics and Political Science

The adoption of technology in education appears too often to be based on a belief that it will improve outcomes, rather than on robust evidence that it will do so or that it will otherwise serve an identified educational need.

Children should never be subjected to an intervention unless the net benefit for the child is shown to outweigh the known harms and risk of unknown harms: the precautionary principle. In the case of most EdTech, that threshold has not been met.

Too many EdTech initiatives – hardware and software – have never had to justify or explain their effectiveness as educational tools. It is profoundly unethical to expose a generation of school children to an educational experiment the only certainty of which is that it will enrich private business interests.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

We are calling on law-makers, public education authorities, educationalists and teaching unions to reverse the profit-driven technology takeover of our children's classrooms: to remove EdTech entirely from early years settings and primary schools and, applying the precautionary principle, to suspend the widespread use of EdTech in secondary schools until safety, privacy and efficacy has been robustly assured.

In particular, it must become an inviolable pre-condition for EdTech to gain access to our school children that reputable and independent assessments have first identified **net educational benefit** for the child.

Until this robust new regulatory framework for EdTech can be put in place, parents and carers of school children need to be given the opportunity – protected by legislation – to make an informed choice about their children's participation in the EdTech industry's educational experiment: a **statutory right to opt out** from device-based teaching in class and device or app-based homework, in favour of paper-based alternatives.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THIS CAUSE

Legislators, policy-makers, decision-makers and educators: please contact us at hello@safescreens.org if you have questions, or if we can support your efforts to act on EdTech.

Parents, carers, teachers: find our resources at safescreens.org, please follow and support our work via @safescreenscampaign on Instagram.

For press enquiries: contact us at hello@safescreens.org and please include the word PRESS in the subject heading.

EXPECTATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN REALISED

The rate of EdTech adoption — accelerated by the pandemic era's reliance on remote learning — has outpaced the evidence base for its impact on learning and attainment.

Reputable *independent* evidence that the digitisation of our children's education has had a net educational benefit is scarce. A growing collection of national and international organisations, authorities and unaffiliated experts meanwhile are challenging false assumptions and untested rationales, and are now flagging early signals of serious and significant negative consequences.

Much of the limited body of research and commentary which purports to identify positive educational outcomes from EdTech adoption is compromised by commercial interests, including research funding from and sponsorship relationships with EdTech providers. Schools and public authorities understandably can lack the knowledge, expertise or resources to critically distinguish paid advertorial literature from reputable independent research.

A 2023 UNESCO publication, '*An Ed Tech Tragedy?*', written in response to the global transition to remote learning during the pandemic, found that the global evidence for technology-based learning during the pandemic had revealed "*a sombre picture*".[4] UNESCO noted that "*unprecedented educational dependence on technology often resulted in unchecked exclusion, staggering inequality, inadvertent harm and the elevation of learning models that put machines and profit before people*".[5]

A separate 2023 UNESCO report, '*Technology, a tool on whose terms?*' found that schools across the world had found "*a gap between the expected benefits of technology on education management and their realisation*". It pointed out that "*there is little robust evidence on digital technology's added value in education*" and a lot of the evidence that does exist "*comes from those trying to sell it*".[6]

In the UK Parliament, a 2024 Education Select Committee Report on the impacts of screen time on education and wellbeing, found that the proliferation of EdTech platforms made overall benefit hard to quantify, noting "*[it] is difficult to assess whether digitalisation has had a positive impact on schools as edtech evolves faster than it is possible to evaluate it*".

That report observed that only 7% of EdTech providers had conducted randomised controlled trials and while there were over half a million apps claiming to be educational there are, as yet, no quality standards for assessing educational content. The Select Committee judged the evidence base for assessing which, if any, apps are most effective as "poor", and its recommendation was unambiguous: "*The next Government should produce a risk assessment on the use of edtech and AI in schools as soon as possible*".[7]

4 https://www.unesco.org/en/digital-education/ed-tech-tragedy

5 https://www.unesco.org/en/digital-education/ed-tech-tragedy

6 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723.

7 https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45128/documents/223543/default/

LIMITED INDEPENDENT EVIDENCE OF BENEFITS

A limited body of independent evidence – free from potential conflicts and risks of bias – suggests that, when used in a controlled and supervised teacher-led setting, EdTech can offer **some** benefits to **some** children. But even on those terms, the data is mixed.

A highly caveated 2019 evidence review carried out by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)[8] found that, ***when used effectively***, digital technology **can** accelerate learning by 2 to 3 months. However, the paper also noted that there was "*huge variability in the evidence*", concluding that the implementation process is critical and that simply providing devices or digital content without structured pedagogy tends to have little or no impact. A more recent 2025 EEF study has reinforced the notion that whilst EdTech can bring benefits, poor design or implementation can exacerbate educational inequalities: "*Research evidence suggests that EdTech is a double-edged sword, with the power to both narrow and widen the attainment gap*".[9]

The 2024 Education Select Committee Report on screen time, for example, recorded that "*[we] have received evidence to suggest that educational resources online can be beneficial to the learning of children and young people*", *albeit while conceding that "edtech evolves faster than it is possible to evaluate it*".

Other studies have found an 'inverted U' shape relationship between EdTech use and student attainment: when use of technology increases from zero or very low levels, attainment initially rises, but beyond that initial point further increases in technology use are associated with a fall in attainment.[10] Survey data is similarly mixed, with some surveys reporting that a majority of teachers believe technology contributes to improved pupil attainment, but others suggesting a majority do not believe that EdTech improves outcomes.

While teacher-led device and technology use in a time-limited, targeted and planned manner may have a place in children's education, the reality is that the current model of EdTech adoption across most subjects and at all levels of the education system, including unsupervised device use as a tool for pacification or distraction in early years and primary schools, far exceeds these parameters.

8 https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/digital-technology-2019

9 https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/effectiveness-of-edtech-reflections-from-new-review

10 https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/12/technology-use-at-school-and-students-learning-outcomes_4c4f92e6/422db044-en.pdf?

A PATCHWORK OF PROCUREMENT

Procurement of EdTech in the UK is decentralised, with responsibility sitting across hundreds of bodies including individual schools, multi-school trusts, local and regional authorities, devolved and central government departments — with no single coordinated accountability for sector-wide standards, performance or cost/risk/benefit assessment.

As a result, purchasing power, contract terms, governance oversight and accountability vary widely. With purchasing responsibilities so dispersed, schools often lack authority, capacity or access to robust commercial or technical advice when procuring EdTech. Many will struggle to follow structured procurement cycles and so instead align procurement decisions with broader strategic plans and ambitions.[11] The resulting effect is variable value for money, inconsistent contracting, misunderstanding of responsibilities and legal risks, and duplication of efforts and errors across schools and public authorities.

The absence of national-level oversight means that there is limited visibility of how much education funding is being spent on EdTech, whether legal risks and responsibilities are appropriately apportioned, what procurement routes are being used, and how consistently standards (for data privacy and security, and vendor performance) are upheld. The absence of that data and central oversight is a gift to EdTech providers, because underperformance, overcharging and systemic issues are harder to spot.

The huge imbalance of knowledge, resources and negotiating power between EdTech providers and the patchwork of EdTech procurers inevitably means that those on the frontline of education delivery — schools and headteachers — cannot adequately test the pedagogical basis of the EdTech tools they are using with their pupils. EdTech providers are not obliged to submit their products to randomised controlled trials or independent academic assessment, and few choose to do so.[12]

A widely reported research paper published by Pearson and the Centre for Economics and Business Research in January 2025 (paid for by Pearson) suggested that an annual public investment of £130 million in schools' digital technology could realise an £8.7 billion benefit for the UK economy over a ten year period.[13] A key beneficiary of the £1.3 billion investment called for would, of course, be Pearson.

A June 2023 survey of 454 primary schools and 252 secondary schools in England suggests that only a third of schools believe they have sufficient information to assess the educational efficacy of EdTech systems.[14] With such a weak evidence base, and negotiating power imbalances, procurement decisions are prone to be influenced more by vendor marketing or short-term operational pressures than clear data on what works, for whom, in what context. The consequence is that schools risk investing in tools that will never deliver measurable benefits and in some cases will be detrimental to pupil learning and development.

11 https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/edtech/70261
12 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723
13 https://plc.pearson.com/en-GB/news-and-insights/news/pearson-and-cebr-research-ps87-billion-benefit-uk-economy-investment
14 https://www.besa.org.uk/news/impact-edtech-currently-measured-classroom-besa-report/

Tes Magazine, formerly the Times Educational Supplement, frequently publishes articles in support of EdTech and has critiqued claims that digitisation impedes education. For example, in July 2021 it published an article titled *'Five ways edtech is revolutionising how schools work'* which reported that *"[a] new Department for Education survey has found that technology use in schools is booming and bringing improvements in attainment, workload and beyond"*. In April of this year, it ran a piece highly critical of Jonathan Haidt's comments that *'Anything you do digital in schools is worse'*.[15] None of these articles references that Tes Magazine is part of the TES Global group of companies which sell software and technology solutions for schools.

THE NEED FOR A COHERENT, INDEPENDENT BENCHMARK

There is currently no universally agreed framework or standard that would facilitate an evidenced-based assessment of what constitutes a high quality, safe, legally-compliant and effective EdTech product. As a 2023 UK Department for Education Review noted, "*[in] the absence of an evidence-based method to differentiate EdTech product quality, there is no clear guidance, grounded in pedagogical evidence, regarding desirable criteria or quality characteristics to look for when selecting EdTech products and tools*".[16]

As that DfE Framework Review mapped out, the current evaluation landscape is exceptionally fragmented with a total of 74 different frameworks identified. The DfE attempted to organise that multitude of frameworks into six themes (Strategic Implementation, Digital Pedagogy, Digital Competence, Evaluation Frameworks, EdTech Design and Quality of Evidence), but ultimately conceded that "*[low] levels of transparency and detail about research underpinning the creation and validation of frameworks make it difficult to ascertain the extent to which existing frameworks and standards are evidence-based*".

A number of separate efforts to develop a coherent benchmark or framework are ongoing, including a project by the DfE's Edtech Evidence Board, UNICEF's EdTech for Good project and the Council of Europe's Common European Evaluation Framework. However, each of these projects relies heavily on expert input from EdTech stakeholders and industry consultants and as such, none are free from conflicts or risks of bias.

The Department for Education has commissioned the Chartered College of Teaching to appoint an EdTech Advisory Board to assess the effectiveness and impact of EdTech products. Of the 17 individuals initially appointed to that Board, 16 appear to have careers in the EdTech ecosystem.

15 https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/jonathan-haidt-digital-worse-technology-in-schools-children-and-phones-risk

16 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6579d0ac0467eb001355f761/EdTech_quality_frameworks_and_standards_review.pdf

EXTENSIVE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

A growing body of evidence has already identified a proliferation of **serious, negative consequences** flowing from the widespread adoption of digital devices and EdTech across early years, primary and secondary schools.

Impacts on attention, concentration and memory: Digital devices and tools carry distractions: in many cases it has become inherent to their design and to their success as commercial products. Multiple studies have shown that device use interferes with concentration, attention and working memory, which in turn impairs learning. The consistent use of devices that encourage multitasking leads to more errors, more superficial thinking and poorer learning.[17] Studies also show that pupils are more likely to work off-task when using devices in the classroom. AI poses a further threat with a number of recent studies suggesting that long-term exposure of developing children to AI tools is likely to interfere with learning and memory processes.[18]

One study revealed that students spend approximately 38 minutes of every hour off-task while using a laptop for educational purposes;[19] another that it can take up to 20 minutes for pupils to refocus on a task following a distraction.[20]

Impacts on literacy: Reading and writing are the bedrocks of education and learning and play a critical role in the acquisition and retention of knowledge and in refining memory and comprehension. However, a plethora of studies confirms that device use is negatively related to comprehension, reading and writing. Conversely, studies show that physical books tend to promote deeper, more focused engagement and that handwriting promotes deeper comprehension, learning and skills, including fine motor skills.[21] Whilst students may often say that they prefer digital tools, objective tests tend to demonstrate that students perform worse when reading and taking notes via a device.[22]

It is estimated that if a student spends 10 hours reading in print in their free time, their ability to comprehend will likely be six to eight times higher than if they read on digital devices for the same amount of time.

17 See Karolinksa Institutet, "Decision on opinion on proposal for national digitalization strategy for the school system", page 6, for a summary of the issues and selected study references.

18 See Tom Richmond, Social Market Foundation, (2025), 'Could Generative Artificial Intelligence pose a risk to educational standards?'

19 Ragan, E. D., Jennings, S. R., Massey, J. D., & Doolittle, P. E., (2014), Unregulated Use of Laptops Over Time in Large Lecture Classes, Computers & Education, Vol. 78, pp. 78-86.

20 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmeduc/118/summary.

21 See Karolinksa Institutet, "Decision on opinion on proposal for national digitalization strategy for the school system", page 6, for a summary of the issues and selected study references.

22 See Karolinksa Institutet, "Decision on opinion on proposal for national digitalization strategy for the school system", page 7, for selected study references.

Studies have shown that students who take handwritten notes often remember and understand content better than those who type, as the slower pace of writing fosters more deliberate thinking and organisation of thoughts, helping people to be more deliberate with their words and to think more critically about the material.[23]

Handwriting activates a broader network of brain regions involved in motor, sensory, and cognitive processing, supporting retention of knowledge since the kinaesthetic sensation of making letters and words helps cement the information. Typing engages fewer neural circuits, resulting in more passive cognitive engagement.[24]

Impacts on attainment: Whilst the deployment of technology in education appears to have responded to an unfounded belief that it would contribute to modernising, and thus improving, education and attainment, attainment across OECD countries has seen a steady decline corresponding to the proliferation of device use.

The most recent international PISA tests in 2022 showed England's scores falling by about 10% of a standard deviation in maths and reading from 2018, while Wales and Northern Ireland experienced their worst-ever results. The UK's performance in science has been in a longer-term decline, with all four UK nations recording their worst scores.

Impacts on family life: Parents are increasingly concerned about the harms of screen time[25] and are working hard to minimise their children's exposure to devices at home, only to see their efforts routinely undermined by schools setting homework, and often requiring its completion or handing in, in a digital format. For many families this introduces stimulation, myriad distractions, home and familial tensions at precisely the time that many parents would wish to maintain a calm home environment.

23 https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.30-Issue2/Ser-7/I3002075058.pdf

24 https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11943480/#:~:text=This%20is%20because%20the%20motor,way%20that%20typing%20does%20not.

25 https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/press-release/parents-fear-tech-devices-are-eating-up-family-time-and-screen-time-strain-is-damaging-childrens-physical-health-sleep-and-concentration/

Impacts on health: There is a wealth of evidence of the array of harmful impacts for children from their already excessive exposure to devices and screen time.[26] The impact of device use on sleep and consequential impacts for concentration and long term attainment is well documented and is a particular issue for device based homework because exposure to blue light in the hours leading up to bedtime disrupts sleep.[27] In turn, disrupted sleep has been shown to lead to elevated depressive symptoms, especially in girls. There is mounting evidence that children's use of digital devices is linked to eyestrain and potentially to longer-term changes in vision, including myopia.

A recent large meta analysis found that each additional hour of screen time daily increases myopia risk by 21%.[28] In children already diagnosed with myopia, an extra hour raises the risk of progression by 54%.[29]

Impacts on parental engagement and pupil responsibility: Devices are eroding expectations around pupil responsibility and self-sufficiency, for example as a result of homework tasks being set via a platform, in lieu of pupils having to write it down and then physically hand it in. Parents are frequently reporting that when homework tasks are set online, the more device-connected parents may have visibility of the homework tasks being set (if they are minded to check the relevant apps), but it is much harder for parents, and particularly for other family members or carers who supervise children in the evening, to engage substantively with the homework activity and the process of completing it. Parents report that it can also limit opportunities for children to complete homework outside of school and the home, particularly if internet connectivity is needed to access homework applications.

Impacts on early years: There is a growing normalisation of passive screen use in early years settings, starkly conflicting with the principles of play-based learning set out in the UK Government's Early Years Foundation Stage framework which emphasises active, hands-on and social learning. Passive screen time, which teachers report as being frequently used in lieu of movement breaks, during snack preparation or for wet playtimes, limits opportunities for children to explore, communicate, and engage in meaningful play, all of which is key to developing language, social, and emotional skills. Parents are also concerned about the use of permanently-on interactive whiteboards in classrooms.

The DfE's decision to introduce a touchscreen-based element to the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) from Autumn 2025 conflicts with long-established understandings of how young children learn best through play, adult modelling, peer observation, and guided interaction. Previously a fully activity-based assessment, the RBA now partly relies on touchscreen devices, despite limited piloting and no published risk–benefit analysis. Teachers, parents and parliamentarians have raised concerns about its appropriateness for four and five-year-olds and the normalisation of device exposure in early years settings.[30]

26 See https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/research-and-learning/ for a summary of current evidence and issues.
27 https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/THE-EVIDENCE-1.pdf
28 https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39982728/
29 https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2830598
30 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2025/06/14/labour-bridget-phillipson-four-year-olds-devices-testing/

OTHER CONCERNS

The proliferation of EdTech in our schools has spawned numerous other concerns, including in relation to data privacy, the exacerbation of existing inequalities and the needs of SEND pupils.

Implications for privacy

EdTech raises significant privacy concerns, especially regarding the use of children's data. EdTech has been characterised as a form of surveillance capitalism[31] and it is certainly the case that some EdTech tools collect vast amounts of personal information, some of which is sensitive data, including names, ages, contact details, behavioral data, medical needs, and even biometric identifiers such as voice recordings or facial features. This data can be gathered via multiple means including through online classrooms, learning apps, and assessment systems. The combinations of data collected, sometimes across multiple platforms and portals, can lead to the creation of detailed digital profiles of school-aged children of which parents, and even schools, may be unaware.

Children are particularly vulnerable to data exploitation because they may not fully understand that they are sharing data, which data they are sharing or how it will be used. Children's data is self-evidently at risk of commercial exploitation by EdTech, or by tech masquerading as educational, and may already be collected and used for targeted advertising or product development without consent or knowledge. Legal actions are currently being pursued in the United States in relation to precisely these kinds of scenarios.

Studies of EdTech provider terms and school practices are, perhaps unsurprisingly, revealing inconsistent compliance with data protection laws and basic child safety standards. According to the 2023 UNESCO Report '*Technology in Education*', 89% of the educational platforms recommended for use by schools during the pandemic involved some form of surveillance and exploitation of children's data.[32]

Contracts and privacy notices often lack clear limits on how pupil data are used, retained or monetised; and schools typically lack the capacity to audit supplier data practices. The growth of AI/algorithmic features in learning products creates additional governance gaps that current procurement practices cannot consistently address.[33]

Implications for inequality

One argument deployed in support of EdTech is that digitisation increases equality by giving all children equal access to information and tools for learning. However, the evidence is mixed with credible research in fact pointing in the opposite direction — in other words, rather than reducing inequalities, the widespread deployment of EdTech may actually be growing the disadvantage gap.[34]

31 See, for instance, https://www.lse.ac.uk/social-policy/Assets/Documents/PDF/working-paper-series/02-22-Hillman.pdf

32 https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/publication/technology

33 https://www.lse.ac.uk/social-policy/Assets/Documents/PDF/working-paper-series/WPS-02-25-EdTech.pdf

34 https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9104322/

The Karolinksa Institute noted in 2023 that "*[one] of the arguments of the Swedish National Agency for Education for increased digitalization of schools is that it is thought that this will create greater equality. However, research suggests that the effects will be the opposite. In the text above, we have described research that has shown that digital tools can have serious negative effects on children's learning. These effects will of course have an even greater negative impact on students who do not have supportive parents at home who can compensate for the child spending lessons watching YouTube or playing games instead of listening to the teacher*".

Likewise, recent UK studies emphasise that without careful implementation and teacher oversight EdTech can exacerbate rather than reduce disadvantage.[35] [36]

Implications for SEND Children

Another of the justifications for the digitisation of education has been that it will somehow have a particularly positive impact for SEND children, often citing children with ADHD or other developmental issues. However, again the evidence is extremely mixed, with reports indicating that while certain special needs, such as dyspraxia, can be mitigated through the targeted use of technology tools, negative effects of device use can be particularly pronounced for children with ADHD and other special needs.[37]

Whilst an exception to a blanket prohibition on EdTech devices in schools can, and should, be made for SEND children for whom specific techonology-based adaptations will deliver demonstrable benefits, the special needs of SEND children should not be used generically to justify the mass deployment of technology for all SEND children, or indeed for all children.

Financial Costs

The investment required to digitise education is substantial, imposing financial burdens on local authorities, schools, and families. EdTech procurement costs are often viewed as a necessary cost of innovation, but in reality are diverting resources from other critical areas of education, including recruitment and retention, teacher development, essential support services, extra-curricular activities, expenditure on learning resources, school trips, swimming lessons, libraries and physical infrastructure. In addition, the planned and inevitable obsolescence of digital devices necessitates their regular replacement, amplifying the economic strain and the environmental impact.

The UK's EdTech sector is the largest in Europe. It has been estimated that schools here have spent in the region of £900m a year on EdTech.[38] However, hardware rollouts often are not paired with teacher development, curriculum alignment and technology support, and have already led in some cases to significant wasted or recurring replacement costs when devices rapidly become obsolete or unusable.

35 Education Endowment Foundation, (2025), 'Understanding Quality Characteristics of EdTech Interventions and Implementation for Disadvantaged Pupils'.

36 https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/effectiveness-of-edtech-reflections-from-new-review

37 Karolinksa Institutet, "Decision on opinion on proposal for national digitalization strategy for the school system".

38 https://www.business.gov.uk/invest-in-uk/investment/sectors/edtech/

During the pandemic the UK Government became the largest purchaser worldwide of devices, purchasing over a million laptops/tablets.[39] However, later analysis surfaced concerns about suitability, management, and the fact that devices with limited lifespans or limited management/filters place additional burdens on schools. Recent commentary suggests many UK schools still report poor integration of their pandemic era EdTech investments — e.g., "*nearly half of UK schools are failing to fully integrate their EdTech*" (2025) with 41% of teachers lacking confidence in using full features.[40]

For more resources and to support our campaign to oust the EdTech cuckoo from our classrooms visit **www.safescreens.org** and **@safescreenscampaign**

39 https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/laptops-and-tablets-data/2021-week-7

40 https://www.infinieast.com/blog/nearly-half-of-uk-schools-are-failing-to-fully-integrate-their-edtech

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