

BEYOND THE DEVICE

Prompts to guide a digital strategy that puts learning first.

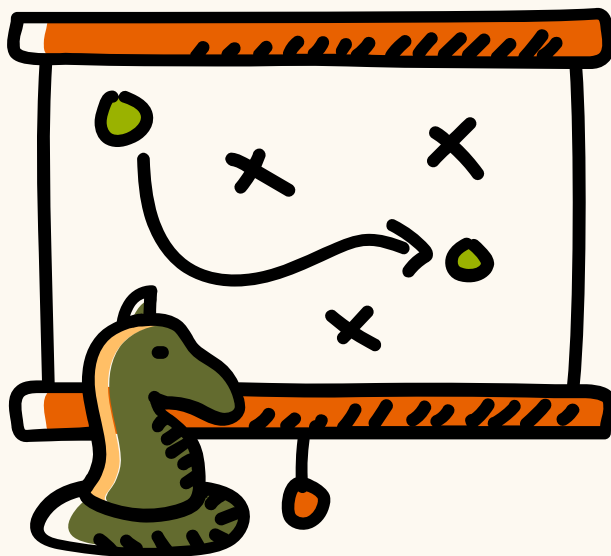
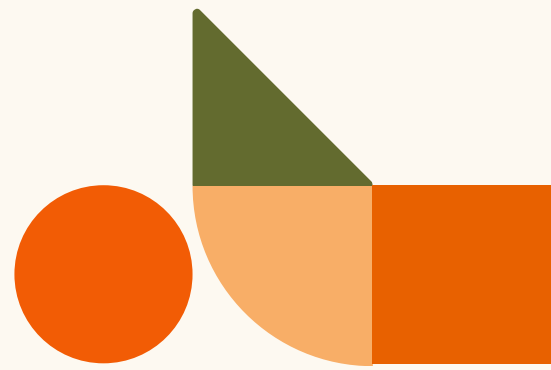


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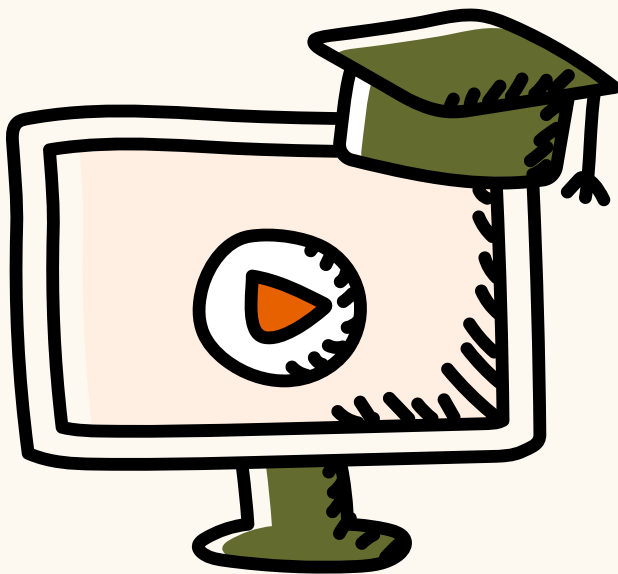
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introduction

a strategy rooted in teaching, not technology

When schools set out to develop a digital strategy, it is easy to begin with devices, platforms or apps. Technology considerations clearly have their place, but they should not be the starting point. The real work of digital strategy begins with a much simpler question: **what kind of learning do we want to see in our classrooms?**



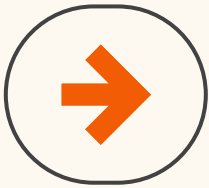
evolution, not revolution

This guide is an invitation to see digital strategy as an extension of your teaching and learning priorities.

The most effective approaches are rarely those that focus on technology itself. Instead, they **begin by asking what great teaching looks like, and how digital tools might support it.**

The aim is not transformation for its own sake, but purposeful improvement. This guide offers a structure to help schools reflect on what matters, decide what to focus on, and take confident steps forward.

begin with purpose

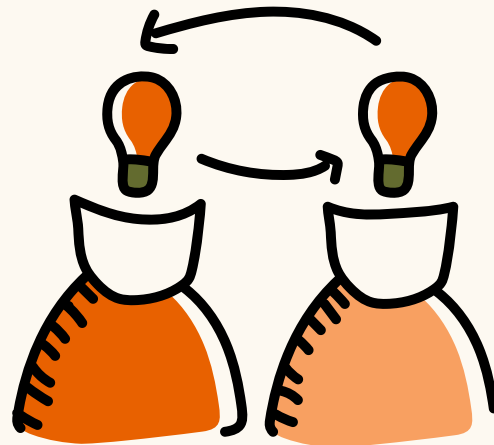


Before introducing new tools or digital systems, it helps to be clear on the difference you hope to make. This may sound obvious, but it is surprisingly easy to skip. **A clear purpose builds coherence and helps everyone understand why a particular approach has been chosen.**

Start by identifying the core challenges or opportunities in your school. Perhaps you want to make feedback more manageable, support more inclusive teaching, or promote deeper engagement. **The purpose should be grounded in learning, not in logistics.** Once that purpose is clear, the role of technology becomes easier to define.



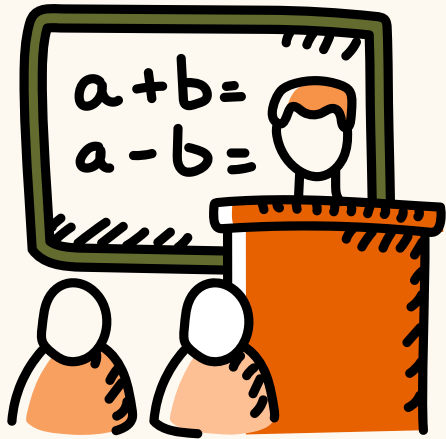
Rather than drafting a long strategy document, try to express your digital vision in **a short, meaningful statement that staff, students and parents can all understand.** This becomes the foundation from which decisions can be made and progress reviewed.



reflection prompt

How clearly is your digital strategy linked to your wider educational goals? If a parent or new teacher asked what your strategy is for, what would you say?

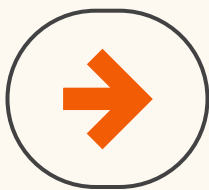
teaching first, tools second



Good teaching does not begin with tools. It begins with careful planning, purposeful explanations and meaningful interactions between teachers and learners. **A digital strategy works best when it supports and strengthens what teachers already know how to do well.**

Rather than asking what a tool can do, ask how students learn best.

Then consider how digital tools might make that learning easier, deeper or more efficient. For example, can technology help pupils recall prior knowledge more regularly? Can it offer clearer models of success, or give students a safe way to practise and reflect? Can it create more space for dialogue and feedback?



Start by focusing on a few well-established teaching principles, such as retrieval practice, explicit modelling, and feedback that prompts improvement. Use these principles to guide your digital choices, rather than looking for one-size-fits-all solutions.

reflection prompt



Think of a teaching practice your school values highly. Are your digital tools making that practice more powerful, or adding complexity?

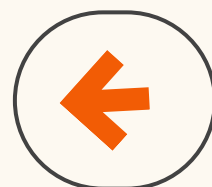


coherence, not quantity

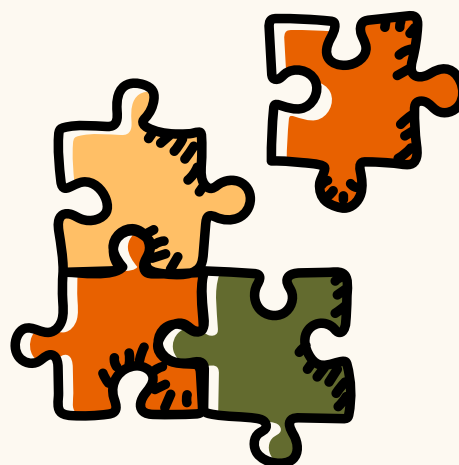


It is common for schools to build up a wide array of digital tools over time. While each one may serve a purpose, the overall picture can become cluttered. **Too many platforms can lead to confusion** for teachers, inconsistency for students and unnecessary workload for all.

A good digital strategy values coherence above novelty. This means having **a manageable number of tools that are well understood, consistently used and clearly aligned with teaching aims**. It also means choosing tools that work well together, rather than building separate systems that pull in different directions.



Auditing your current provision can be helpful. Ask departments what tools they use, how confident they feel, and whether students experience a joined-up approach. **Look for opportunities to simplify, streamline and build common understanding.**



reflection prompt

Are the tools used across your school supporting consistency, or creating fragmentation? Where might a more joined-up approach reduce effort and increase clarity?



confidence, not compliance



No strategy works without people. **Teachers need time, space and support to understand how digital tools fit into their practice.** If they feel confident and involved, they are far more likely to use technology in ways that enhance learning. If they feel pressured or confused, even the best tools will struggle to make an impact.

Professional development in this area should be practical and ongoing. Staff benefit from being able to explore ideas in context, try things out, and learn from each other. Peer observation, **low-stakes experimentation and short, focused training sessions tend to work better than large, one-off events.**



Encourage a culture of inquiry, where teachers can ask questions, share frustrations and build shared solutions. Offer coaching or mentoring for those who want to go further, and **avoid framing digital change as something that is imposed.**

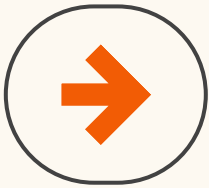
reflection prompt



How are staff currently supported to build confidence in using digital tools? Are there opportunities to make this support more relevant or collaborative?



review, refine, adjust

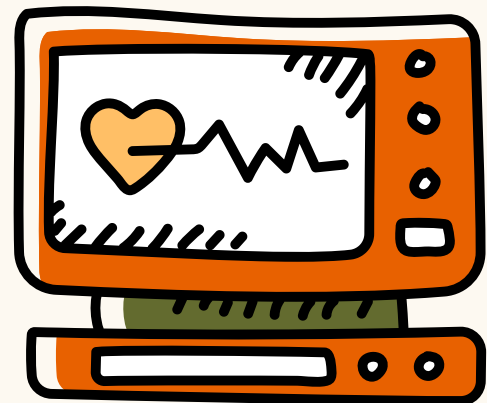


A digital strategy should be open to change. It is not something to be written once and left untouched. As schools grow, students change, and tools evolve, **it makes sense to revisit your approach regularly**. The aim is to learn what is working, where there are gaps, and what might need adjusting.

Feedback from staff and students is essential. **Ask what tools are helping, what is getting in the way, and what would make things better**. Use this feedback to inform decisions and build a culture of shared ownership.



Reviewing impact does not mean collecting endless data. It can be as simple as looking at examples of student work, listening to teacher reflections, or observing how technology is being used in different classrooms. **Small adjustments, made regularly, tend to be more effective than large changes made occasionally.**



reflection prompt

What are you currently doing to review the impact of your digital approach?
What could you learn from students and teachers this term?



stay anchored in learning



Technology is changing rapidly. New tools and applications (such as AI) will continue to appear, and new ideas will continue to shape the conversation. Amid all this change, **the most important thing a school can do is remain anchored in what matters.**

At its best, **a digital strategy does not feel like something separate from teaching. It feels like part of it.** It helps make learning clearer, feedback more focused, and progress more visible. It frees up time, supports reflection, and invites students to think more deeply.



This guide offers one way to start, or to reflect on where you are. There is no perfect route and no need for grand gestures. **What matters is the commitment to think carefully, act purposefully and keep learning along the way.**

reflection prompt



In what ways does your current digital approach strengthen the quality of teaching and learning? What one action could you take this term to realign your digital strategy with your school's core educational values?



about José Picardo

José Picardo is an experienced educator, school leader, and consultant, known for his thoughtful approach to school improvement, leadership development, and the purposeful use of technology. With a background in senior academic leadership and a track record of supporting schools through change, José works with individuals and organisations to help align strategy, culture, and practice.

His work focuses on what matters most in education: great teaching, reflective leadership, and a clear sense of purpose. José is the author of *Using Technology in the Classroom* and a frequent contributor to professional dialogue on curriculum, pedagogy, and innovation in schools.

To enquire about training, consultancy, or speaking engagements, visit www.azimuth.org.uk or get in touch via jose@azimuth.org.uk