

Securing Equipment



What does 'Securing Equipment' Mean?

ICT equipment is expensive and it is important to establish procedures to protect hardware, software and peripherals from theft or damage. This advice sheet focuses on the issues to consider when securing equipment within the school. It also lists a number of good practices in relation to protecting educational software.

Good Housekeeping Tips

- Store all application software discs in a secure location along with their associated manuals.
- All software licences should be stored in a central, secure location.
- Keep a detailed inventory of all your ICT equipment and record all relevant serial numbers and short item description in a book entitled, 'ICT Inventory'. This document should be stored in a safe location.
- Engrave the name of the school in a prominent location on all equipment, such as digital projectors, computers, scanners and printers.
- When recharging portable devices (e.g., laptops, PDAs, digital cameras or MP3 players) ensure they are located in a secure location.

Securing Hardware

ICT hardware (i.e., desktop PCs, laptops, printers, scanners and other peripheral devices) is usually stored in either the classroom or the computer room. Given the high commercial value of these items, here are some issues to consider in securing both locations.

Computer Room

- Schools with a computer room should ensure that the room is secure. Depending on location, this can range from fitting steel shutters and door locks to installing an alarm.
- If computers are also located on trolleys around the school they should be stored overnight in a secure room.
- Digital projectors, unless permanently mounted to the ceiling, should be stored in a secure room.
- If the computer room is networked, the server should be stored in a locked cabinet.
- Software should always be stored in locked cabinets, particularly if the school has multiple copies of one title. This is particularly relevant if the room is also used by outside groups.

Classroom

- Many schools place computers on trolleys and move them between classrooms. At the end of the school day these computers should be moved to a secure location.
- If it is practical computers that are permanently positioned in a classroom, should be locked in a cupboard. This is particularly important if classrooms are located on the ground floor.

Securing Software

All schools require educational software and these important resources should be stored very carefully. Many software publishers allow schools to load entire programs (i.e., the entire

contents of the CD) on to a computer and, if this is the case, the CD should be stored safely elsewhere. It may be required again in the event of a system or network crash.

Other Considerations

Engraving

Engraving equipment is a useful and cost-effective deterrent to theft. It involves marking the monitor, system unit and keyboard with the name of the school and the telephone number. Many peripherals, such as printers and scanners, should be engraved similarly. An engraving tool suitable for schools can be purchased from any good DIY or Tool shop for less than €100.

The Network

If the school has a network, it is a good idea to place the server, routers and hubs in either a separate room or in a locked cabinet within the computer room. This will prevent any interference by unauthorised personnel. In addition, access to the network should be password protected, thus preventing unauthorised access to application software and confidential documents.

Laptop Computers

All school laptops should be gathered together and locked in a 'strong room' at the end of each school day, as often devices such as cable lock kits can be easily removed by the use of bolt cutters. Alternatively the use of a secure laptop trolley should be considered.

Insurance

The school insurers should be provided with an inventory of all computer equipment in the school. This does not normally affect the insurance premium. It may be necessary to check if coverage extends to staff or students using school equipment at home and to the transportation of equipment in private cars.

Students with Special Educational Needs

Special needs peripherals and specialised software can be quite expensive, therefore extra care should be taken when securing this equipment. Keyboards and other input devices (e.g., a mouse or switch) may need to be fixed in place when used by students, especially if a student has a major tremor or is easily agitated. As with other peripherals, all special needs peripherals should be engraved where appropriate.

Relevant Web Sites

ICT Hub Knowledgebase

www.ictubknowledgebase.org.uk/securitybasics

Overview of the main security threats to your ICT, and resources to help you avoid them

Security of ICT Equipment in School

<http://wsgfl.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/school-office/ict-for-children---schools/ict-in-schools/hardware--software/security-of-ict-equipment-in-school.en;jsessionid=a6qar0ehChVc>

Schools wishing to improve the security of their ICT equipment firstly need to consider the security of their building. Improvements made with site security will go a long way to protect the ICT equipment. Schools should always take a number of steps to protect all their equipment.

Note: While the advice sheets aim to act as a guide, the inclusion of any products and company names does not imply approval by the NCTE, nor does the exclusion imply the reverse. The NCTE does not accept responsibility for any opinions, advice or recommendations on external web sites linked to the NCTE site.

This Advice Sheet and other relevant information are available at:

www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport/AdviceSheets