Advancing School Digital Maturity and Resilience: Expert Guidance Post-Connect the Classroom

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The Connect the Classroom (CtC2) programme has marked a turning point for UK schools. The February 2026 evaluation by CooperGibson Research reveals clear successes: average internet download speeds increased significantly (primary from 152Mbps to 202Mbps; secondary from 382Mbps to 578Mbps), satisfaction with speed and reliability soared to 91%, and internet blackspots dropped sharply across classrooms, halls, and outdoor areas. These upgrades enabled more confident use of digital tools, with 40% of schools expanding cloud-based storage and systems, and many reporting enhanced pupil engagement through interactive lessons and outdoor learning.

However, the report also highlights areas for continued focus: digital strategy adoption remained at 49% (particularly lower in smaller, rural, or local authority-maintained primaries), energy and cost efficiencies showed limited direct impact, and barriers such as outdated devices, budgets, and staff workload persist. With the DfE's six core digital and technology standards (broadband, wireless networks, network switching, cyber security, filtering and monitoring, and digital leadership/governance) targeted for full adoption by 2030 — and recent updates to the guidance (12 February 2026) emphasising progress monitoring and compliance — schools have a clear roadmap ahead.

The **Procurement Act 2023** (effective February 2025) provides unprecedented flexibility, allowing leadership teams to design competitive processes, engage a broad range of specialists directly, and secure tailored solutions that precisely address their school's unique context and priorities.

This flagship editorial draws on the latest CtC2 evidence, DfE standards, and real-world insights to support school leaders in assessing current position, prioritising next steps, and sourcing effectively. It positions experienced partners like **Think Cirrus** as valuable allies in turning these foundations into sustainable, low-disruption digital environments.

1. **Sustaining Connectivity: Turning CtC2 Gains into Everyday Reliability**

CtC2's wireless upgrades delivered full-site coverage for 74% of primaries and 84% of secondaries, transforming lesson delivery and enabling seamless use in outdoor spaces. Yet residual issues — such as Wi-Fi drops during lessons, slow logins, or device disconnections — still disrupt teaching in some settings, often due to ageing infrastructure or physical building constraints.

Insight-led Reflection Many schools now enjoy reliable access but face growing demands from video tools, hybrid models, and IoT devices. Proactive optimisation prevents regression and supports DfE wireless/switching standards (latest Wi-Fi for coverage, management, roaming, and security).

Practical Steps for Leadership Teams

- Run a site-wide audit: Map coverage gaps and test login speeds during peak times.
- Prioritise resilience: Ensure primary + backup broadband and proactive monitoring to catch issues before they impact lessons.
- Source tailored expertise: Use Procurement Act flexibility to invite specialists focused on education environments, particularly those experienced in primary/MAT settings with challenging buildings.

Quick win: A short staff survey on connectivity frustrations can highlight immediate priorities.

2. **Layered Cyber Security: Safeguarding Staff, Pupils, and Data**

Security satisfaction rose from 88% to 94%, reflecting better Wi-Fi protections. However, increased cloud reliance amplifies risks: phishing emails, weak passwords, shared accounts, and ransomware concerns remain common pain points, especially where staff training or incident response plans are underdeveloped.

DfE Core Requirements Secure systems, controlled access, threat prevention, staff awareness, and alignment with filtering/monitoring for safe environments.

Supportive Priorities

- Build layered defences: Advanced email filtering, attachment/link sandboxing, phishing simulations, and secure password management.
- Focus on behaviour: Train staff regularly in bite-sized sessions to recognise threats — addressing the human element where technical controls alone fall short.
- Ensure compliance confidence: Develop clear incident response and meet DfE cyber requirements without reactive firefighting.

Under the Procurement Act, schools can engage providers specialising in education-specific cybersecurity — those who design protections around staff behaviour and safeguarding, bridging gaps for resource-limited teams.

3. **Secure Cloud & Microsoft Adoption: Streamlining Workflows and Collaboration**

Post-CtC2, 40% of schools increased cloud use, with 48% of on-premises-only schools (62% in large primaries) planning switches. Benefits include faster workflows, reduced paper use, and better MAT collaboration — yet confusion persists around file storage, Teams structure (pupil vs staff), accidental sharing risks, and backup strategies.

DfE-Aligned Opportunities Secure Microsoft 365/Teams environments for unified communication, voice, meetings, and productivity — with robust safeguarding and compliance built in.

Your Planning Framework

1. Assess current use: Identify chaos (e.g., files "everywhere") and quick wins (e.g., structured Teams channels).

2. Plan secure migration: Emphasise data protection, backups, and minimal disruption.
3. Source managed expertise: Invite proposals for education-tailored integrations that make cloud "invisible" to teachers — instant logins, automatic safeguarding, and predictable support.

Insight: Schools that invested post-CtC2 in structured cloud guidance saw the biggest workflow and confidence gains.

4. **Digital Leadership & Governance: From Static Strategy to Confident Oversight**

Strategy adoption held at 49%, but awareness (fully aware rose 20% to 31%) and monitoring (57% to 69%) improved. The DfE leadership standard calls for clear roles, processes, pedagogical alignment, and regular reviews.

Advancing Practically

- Assign ownership: SLT oversight with IT lead accountability.
- Refresh your strategy: Incorporate CtC2 lessons, staff feedback, and DfE progress tools.
- Access external guidance: Virtual CIO-style support for roadmaps and budget planning.

Flexible sourcing enables partnerships that extend leadership capacity without adding internal burden.

Enhanced Self-Assessment Tool for Your Next Leadership Meeting

Rate each area (Red/Amber/Green), add school-specific notes, and identify one priority action.

Area	DfE/CtC-Aligned Key Question	Your Rating (R/A/G)	School Evidence /Notes	Priority Action / Sourcing Focus
Connectivity	Resilient, latest-standard networks with proactive monitoring?			

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Cyber Security & Safeguarding	Layered protections, behaviour-focused training, secure accounts?			
Cloud & Microsoft Tools	Structured, secure platforms maximising efficiency & collaboration?			
Leadership & Governance	Dynamic strategy with defined roles, reviews, and compliance confidence?			

Reflection: Which barrier, if resolved, would deliver the greatest impact on teaching time, staff wellbeing, or pupil outcomes?

Partnering for Predictable, Safe, Invisible IT

Experienced providers like **Think Cirrus** specialise in exactly these post-CtC2 challenges. With a focus on primary schools and MATs, they deliver education-specific managed IT support that makes technology predictable, safe, and invisible — teachers notice IT only when it's failing.

Their strengths include:

- Network modernisation (Wi-Fi, switching, filtering) aligned to DfE standards
- Secure Microsoft 365 & Teams environments with built-in safeguarding
- Cybersecurity centred on staff behaviour and proactive prevention
- Proactive monitoring and preventative maintenance to eliminate classroom disruption

Schools partnering with such specialists often achieve reduced lesson interruptions, faster workflows, automatic safeguarding, inspection confidence, and shift from emergency fixes to long-term budget predictability.

CtC2 provided the robust foundation. Now, with evidence-based planning and flexible sourcing under the Procurement Act, schools can build resilient, future-

ready digital environments that support teaching and protect pupils.

Contact Think Cirrus for Guidance

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