Google for Education
Reference School

Google Reference Schools are recognized by Google for their outstanding use of technology to drive positive learning outcomes. Each has agreed to host visitors on-site, share advice, tips, and best practices, host events (one per year), and more. They will be listed in the public EDU Directory and have the right to display the official Google for Education Reference School Badge (as shown above and at the bottom) on their school website.

Being a Google Reference School means we are part of a select group of schools and colleges in the UK, Ireland and beyond. We are the third Post-Primary school in Northern Ireland and our use of Google Workspace for Education throughout the school can be referenced, and displayed to offer support to other schools. We are able to provide training opportunities for colleagues and work closely with Google in supporting the use, development and deployment of future technologies for use in schools.

Other Google Reference schools have been invited by Google to participate in a wide range of events such as roadshows, BETT and webinars, to showcase the best practice at their school.

Overview of Reference School Requirements
- Host one event per year.
- Try to be available for at least one speaking slot per year at a Google for Education event.
- Articulate measurable benefits that have resulted from the use of Google tools.
- Keep your EDU Directory profile and Story of Impact up to date as your school continues to grow.

Badge Dos & Don'ts

Do display your badge on your school's website to denote your organisation's involvement in the program.

Don't visually alter or change the badge in any way or share the badge with other schools who are not part of the program

St Malachy's College - Story of Impact

Located in Belfast, Northern Ireland, [St Malachy's College](#) has a student population of 1150 with 110 staff.

We have been using Google for Education tools for 7 years, making use of Google Workspace for Education Plus across all digital devices including 75 Chromebooks.

Give an overview of how you are using Google for Education tools in your organisation.

At St Malachy's we've been on a continuous journey to ensure Google for Education tools are embedded across teaching and learning at every phase of study and at all levels of teaching. Google Classroom underpins much of what we do as a school and is the foundation of our digital learning structures - with the majority of teachers assigning, collecting and providing feedback across all classes within Classroom. Our departmental planning and resource organisation is reliant on Google drive, which has enabled us to vastly improve access to resources for both staff and pupils in a much more structured and consistent way. Beyond this, Drive has meant we can extend beyond the walls of our school and connect with local schools to pool and share resources and planning documents. Google sites is used on a departmental basis to provide topic based resources areas and stretch activities for pupils. We use Google Docs and Slides as our key tools across teaching, learning, planning and admin and last academic year we transitioned progress, tracking and reporting into Google Sheets. We extend our use of Google tools with selected extensions to better support assessment, feedback and accessibility. In the 7 years we have deployed Google tools, we've used it across all device types and are now in a sustained programme of deploying Chromebook with 75 now in place as our device of choice. These devices are being used at the heart of our digital learning strategy to not only support traditional Google tools, but to extend digital skills across coding and creativity within the school's newly constructed Creative Digital Hub facility.

Recognising the importance of digital skills, and how embedded Google is within our school, this academic year sees us invest in specialist enrichment classes specifically aimed at delivering and completing Workspace skills across a number of year groups within the school. For us, Google tools help us every day across not only teaching and learning, but productivity, efficiency and sharing. More than this they are helping us to deliver the digital skills our pupils need for work and life.

What benefits and impact has your organisation seen from using Google for Education tools?

The entire school community benefits from our use of Google Tools and we see this impact every day. Google Classroom has delivered on impact with increased communication between staff and pupils - clearly providing a voice to those that traditionally did not express themselves openly. It's opened up conversations that never before occurred in simple ways like using class streams effectively and helped us build a culture of collaboration - not just between pupils but between pupils and subject teachers. It has increased the quality of classroom and homework with simple tools like reminders and due dates and the range of feedback tools we now use within the Google ecosystem. For parents and guardians, we find them much more engaged due to the high level of visibility classroom offers.

Our staff find impact in their organisation of resources and this has increased efficiency across departments and enabled build out of much high quality learning resources and experiences. More importantly, Google tools have provided consistency in learning for our pupils.

For pupils we see a direct impact on quality of work by using the rich tools Google has offered us - more than that though we've been excited by the independence in learning demonstrated by our pupils when using Google tools and how we've experienced some incredibly creative ways they've developed to stretch and challenge themselves in learning.

We're excited about the future ahead with Chromebook too - to date even simple things like battery life, screen recording, accessibility and instant on are already having a huge impact on how integrated and embedded we can make digital learning in every lesson.

How do you engage with other schools to share your experience of using our tools?

We're committed to sharing good practice and learning from others to improve the learning of pupils and supporting teacher development. In 2017 we were key in establishing a localised 'Area Learning Community' across a number of secondary schools in Belfast. This has enabled us to share our Google journey and good practice regularly and has built a strong network of like minded schools who look to each other for support and professional development. We maintain this with inter-school events across the academic year - this year focusing on Google Classroom, Retrieval Practice, Accessibility and Effective feedback as core focus areas. Beyond this you'll see our staff presenting at local conferences and workshop events or even in 121 help coaching roles that showcase and support Google tools.

To further our aims to share and learn, this year the school has invested heavily in a new, purpose built 'Creative Learning Hub'. With Google tools and Chromebook at its core, we're seeking not only to build support for digital learning for our pupils, but provide this as an open hub for all schools in the area to use as a central resource for coding, robotics, AR, VR and much more. In its first stage, we've committed to facilitating fully funded rolling year 8 and year 13 Google Workspace skills classes for a number of schools in the area. We've designed a range of teacher CPD workshops from our own staff expertise and from external trainers to showcase and promote good practice with Google Tools. We believe that digital skills with Google tools at their core are key to how we can all develop teaching and learning moving forward and how we equip our pupils with digital skills for now and life ahead. It's a core part of our mission and

our new facility to ensure that every school we can reach has the opportunity to learn, share and grow with us and Google.

The hub is supported by the appointment of a dedicated Digital Learning Lead - a first in NI, to ensure we deliver on our commitment to share this valuable space and its impact with others.