

Key points for schools www.wifiinschools.org.uk

Schools need good information and communication technologies (ICT) and are under pressure to incorporate ICT more fully into the curriculum. The following points need to be considered when deciding whether wireless technologies should be part of the ICT provision in schools.

- Scientific studies suggest that some pupils and staff may be adversely affected in the short-term by exposure to Wi-Fi and other wireless devices. Examples include children with epileptic disorders, pregnant staff or pupils, male staff with fertility problems, those with electromagnetic hypersensitivity and potentially increased side effects for those on medication.
- In the short-term pupils or staff may have reduced cognitive abilities and altered brain activity. Some pupils could potentially have altered timing of the onset of puberty due to hormone changes.
- In the long-term repeated exposure to wireless environments may lead to cell death in the brain possibly leading to cognitive impairment or dementia, immune dysfunction, damage to DNA, cancers, alteration of normal brain development/activity, changes in concentrations of the hormone melatonin and behavioural problems (See [Health Issues for Schools](#) and [Scientific Research](#)).

Schools using wireless technologies need to have policies in place for dealing with potential health issues. Since there are reasons for concern:

- Schools choosing to use Wi-Fi (and other wireless technologies) will need to also provide safe screened rooms with wired computers. There will be consequences for staff numbers and provision of space, as well as ensuring that all pupils are fully involved and supported in the educational curriculum.
- Schools need to be aware of the increasing number of demands to adopt a precautionary approach to this technology made by international organisations. These include the European Environment Agency, the International Commission for Electromagnetic Safety, the Bio-Initiative report, teachers' unions and medical associations (See [International Concerns](#) and [A Precautionary Approach](#)).
- When weighing up the pros and cons of Wi-Fi versus wired, the advantages of speed, security, reliability and health and safety provided by wired computers should also be considered.
- Local Children's Services Authorities or Governing bodies have the legal responsibility to ensure that all of their employees work in a safe environment.
- The use of wireless technologies in the home and other public places does not mean that schools do not have a responsibility to ensure that the school environment is safe. Children have no choice about their exposure in school.

Schools should also be aware of low-frequency electromagnetic fields on their premises from power lines, electrical and electronic equipment and aim to keep them below 100nTesla (1mGauss), so as to protect children from the risk of leukaemia (at 1.4mG and above) and other disorders (See [Bio-Initiative Report](#)).

For further information, links from this page and references see www.wifiinschools.org.uk