

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

NORWICH | 9 MAY 2025

Attaining the highest  
educational standards  
through the use of ICT

Diversity in  
Computing

*An article by  
Prof. Miles Berry*

P.14

Don't miss  
our talks:

*"The importance of digital  
literacy" from Tig Williams*

*"Creating a buzz around  
computing: Boosting primary  
and secondary engagement"  
from Adam Gibson*

*"1:1 learning and  
digital technology / the  
transformative power of  
EdTech for SEND pupils"  
from Jordan Smithson*

*Plus many more...*

Don't miss *Product  
Review Live!*

Expert speakers | Industry leading exhibitors | Network with peers



## OUR NEW AND IMPROVED SIGN IN AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT SCREENS



NEW SLEEK LOOK AND FEEL



INTEGRATED SCANNERS



ULTRA THIN 10MM DISPLAY

INCREASED CAPACITY

We're passionate about the technology we create and how this impacts our customers, which is why we've given our screens a makeover! Take a look at our new features below.



### WINDOWS 11

Our new screens run on Windows 11 and have an increased hard drive capacity.



### INTEGRATED SCANNERS

Our new integrated scanners give the system a sleeker, more streamlined look and feel.



### ENHANCED LIGHTING

Our custom-designed screens now feature enhanced lighting to improve imagery of visitors and contractors.



### DUAL CAMERA

This addition ensures that all users can easily access the system's features, significantly improving user experience.

FREE UPGRADE TO THE CLOUD WITH EVERY GEN 6 SCREEN PURCHASE



## Learn, Share, Enjoy



### Welcome to ICT for Education Norwich.

Thank you for taking the time to join us at Carrow Road today. We will do our best to make sure that your time is well spent. ICT for Education conferences are all about supporting Computing teachers, school leaders, IT professionals, and innovators in schools with the decisions

they make about technology for teaching and learning and making schools safe spaces for students. Our events aim to give you the motivation, support, and ammunition in fighting your corner for the budget and resources to make Computer Science recognised as crucial to your school's curriculum and to your pupils' futures.

Today's ICT for Education conference promises to highlight plenty of interesting ideas and practical innovations for you to take back to your schools. Our expert keynote speakers will cover a wide range of issues pertinent to your work.

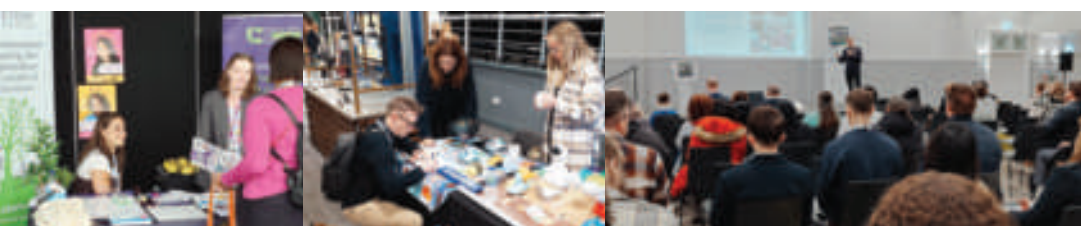
In addition to the keynote speaking sessions there is ICT Product Reviews Live! An independent product review session that will put suppliers to the test and give you real insight into their product capabilities. Don't miss the exhibition hall where you can explore products and services suitable for your school. There will be ample opportunity to network with peers and colleagues and to share views and experiences of using ICT in education.

To those of you here today, looking to keep up with best practice and the latest technologies, looking to make a difference to your schools and to your students and looking to raise the level of computer literacy and technological understanding, we salute you!

If you wish to speak at an ICT for Education Conference or Seminar or contribute an article to our newsletter, please contact Ian at [il@ictforeducation.co.uk](mailto:il@ictforeducation.co.uk) or speak to any of our team at the conference.



Owner of ICT for Education



### ICT FOR EDUCATION EVENT TEAM

Ian Loosemore  
Louise Johnson  
Dale Howarth

### OUR THANKS TO



[www.waggleevents.org](http://www.waggleevents.org)



[www.screenfocus.co.uk](http://www.screenfocus.co.uk)



[www.pcconsultants.co.uk](http://www.pcconsultants.co.uk)

**NOSY**

[www.nosy.agency](http://www.nosy.agency)





## EVENT

# Schedule



**07:30 – 08:30** | Registration and Exhibition Opens, Networking over coffee and pastries.

**08:30 – 08:35** | Introduction to the Conference:

Dale Howarth - ICT for Education.

**08:35 – 08:40**: Welcome from the Conference Chairman - Prof. Miles Berry.

**08:40 – 09:00** | **Keynote 1**: “The importance of digital literacy” from Tig Williams – University Lecturer, CAS Master Teacher, IT curriculum specialist.

**09:00 – 09:40** | **ICT Reviews Live!**

An independent product review session that will put products to the test and give you real insight into their capabilities. Watch the reviews, comment on product content, consider underlying technologies, discuss ease of use and share your opinions on how you would like suppliers to develop products and services to meet the needs of teachers and schools.

**09:40 – 10:25** | Coffee and visit the Exhibition.

**10:25 – 10:45** | **Keynote 2**: “Cyber Security for the education sector”, from John Greenwood – Cyber Protect Co-ordinator for the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU)

**10:45 – 11:00** | “Spotting Cybersecurity Patterns: Lessons from our Audits” from Tom Jarman - Cyber Security Assessor, Secure Schools.

**11:00 – 11:30** | Coffee and visit the Exhibition.

**11:30 – 11:50** | **Keynote 3**: “An update on AI in education” from Prof. Miles Berry – Professor of Computing at the University of Roehampton.

**11:50 – 12:10** | **Keynote 4**: “1:1 learning and digital technology / the transformative power of EdTech for SEND pupils” from Jordan Smithson – Trust IT Services Manager for the Peterborough Keys Academy Trust.

**12:10 – 12:30** | **Keynote 5**: “Creating a buzz around computing: Boosting primary and secondary engagement” from Adam Gibson – Head of Computer Science at Neatherd High School in Dereham.

**12:30 – 12:40** | Closing Comments.

*Please note that session timings, speakers, and speaker order subject to alteration. Exhibitors are welcome to attend any conference sessions.*



# Conference Chairman



## PROF. MILES BERRY

Professor of Computing Education, University of Roehampton

Miles is professor of computing education at the University of Roehampton, where he leads the university's computing PGCE course. He is a former teacher and head teacher. He chairs the NCCE academic board and the BCS's England computing education committee and serves on the board of Computing At School. **Contact Prof Miles Berry:** [milesberry.net](mailto:milesberry.net)

## Speakers



## TIG WILLIAMS

University Lecturer.

Tig is tutor for secondary Computer Science Trainee teachers at the university of Winchester. As an ex HoD with over 20 years teaching experience he also supports a number of schools to deliver Comp Sci for non specialist teachers both, training staff and modelling teaching. **Contact Tig:** [tig.williams@icloud.com](mailto:tig.williams@icloud.com)



## TOM JARMAN

CREST Practitioner Security Analyst, CompTIA Security+ certified professional, certified Cyber Essentials Plus Assessor, Secure Schools.

With 5 years of experience as an IT Technician in a Multi-Academy Trust coupled with a strong background in cybersecurity, Tom specialises in conducting cybersecurity audits, Cyber Essentials assessments and delivering consultancy.



## JORDAN SMITHSON

Trust IT Services Manager for the Peterborough Keys Academy Trust.

As trust IT Services Manager for the Peterborough Keys Academy Trust. Jordan leads the central IT Services team to implementing the trust strategy designed to secure, refresh and innovate the use of technology. He currently supports 11 schools throughout Peterborough with MAT and traded IT Services, and a core aim to 'Unlock everyone's potential to achieve more with technology'.

Jordan is also a Microsoft MIE Master Trainer for 2022-2023 and has worked with over 180 schools nationwide and delivered training to over 1.16k school educators.



## ADAM GIBSON

Head of Computer Science at Neatherd High School in Dereham.

Adam Gibson is an experienced senior leader and teacher of computer science having delivered the subject at A level for almost 25 years, and at GCSE since its inception. He was the hub lead for the NCCE Norfolk Computing Hub, which, as one of the first Computing Hubs has trained hundreds of teachers in Norfolk and across England at primary and secondary level. Adam became a CAS Master Teacher in an early cohort and has sat on the CAS advisory board. As well as hub lead, Adam is an NCCE lead facilitator, ISAAC facilitator, head of department, and CAS Dereham community leader.



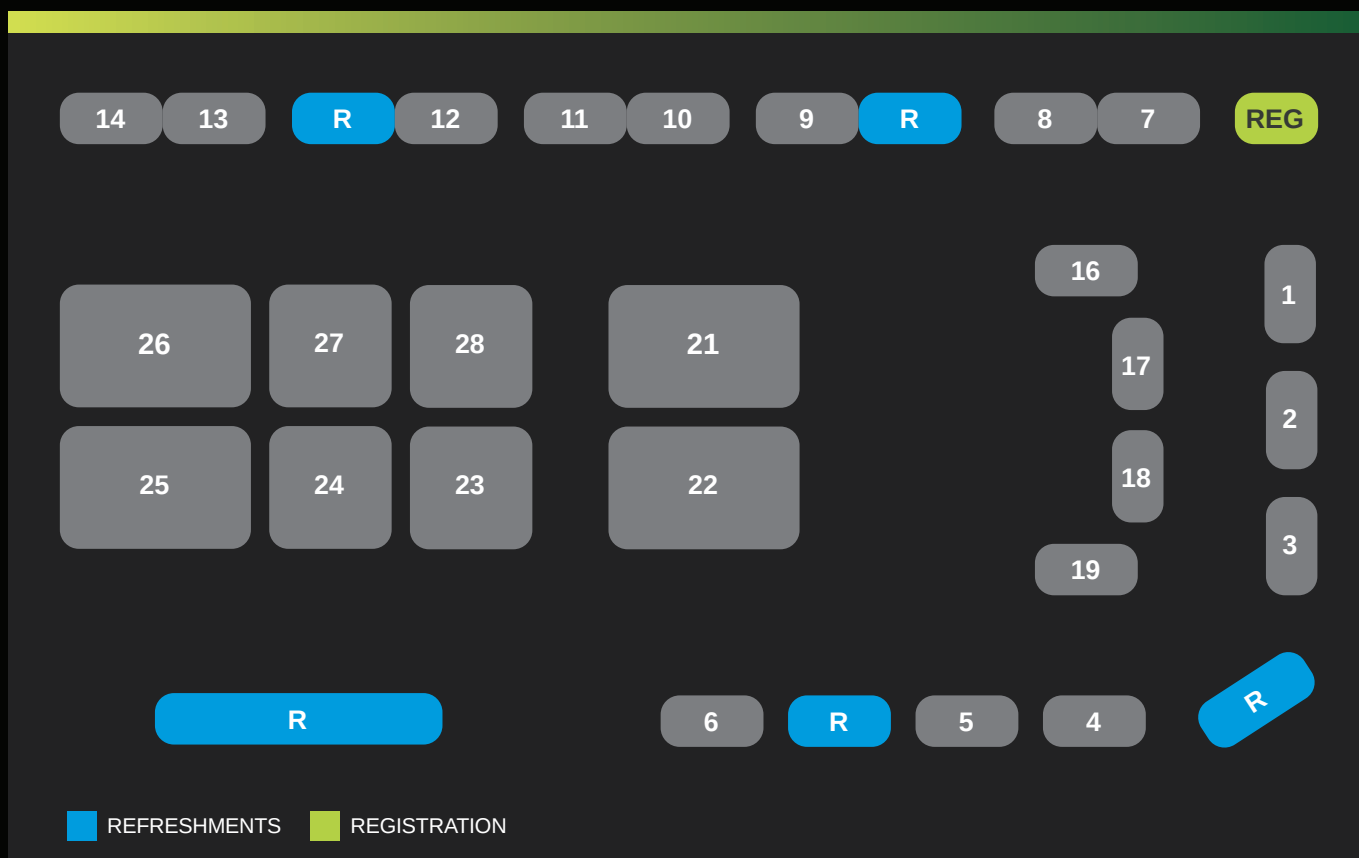
## JOHN GREENWOOD

Cyber Protect Co-ordinator for the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU).

John has worked in cybercrime policing for more than five years, starting at a local force level before joining ERSOU, a policing unit which works across eastern England to tackle a wide variety of criminal activity – including cybercrime.



# Floor Plan



## Stand Directory

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1   InVentry                            | 14   Secure Schools   |
| 2   ICT Direct                          | 16   KRCS             |
| 3   BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT | 17   2Simple          |
| 4   NAACE                               | 18   Securus Software |
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| 8   Omada by TP-Link                    | 23   ERSOU            |
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| 10   Edtech.Direct                      | 25   CTOUCH UK LTD    |
| 11   TTS Group Ltd                      | 26   Magma Maths      |
| 12   Acer                               | 27   Ergotron         |
| 13   RUCKUS Networks                    | 28   NUITEQ           |



edtech.direct is dedicated to enhancing teaching and learning through cutting-edge educational technology. We offer a wide range of products, including classroom tools, assistive technologies, and creative software designed to meet the diverse needs of modern classrooms. By partnering with us, teachers can access top-tier educational resources that make learning more engaging and efficient. Whether you need interactive whiteboards, educational software, or assistive technology, edtech.direct provides tailored solutions to help you effectively integrate technology into your teaching.



T: 01252 619829  
[www.edtech.direct](http://www.edtech.direct)



# Exhibitors



## InVentry

### STAND 1

InVentry is the market leader for staff, visitor, and pupil management; trusted by over 10,000 schools. Their system transforms the efficiency of entry into your school and provides secure digital data on every entry or exit.

Designed to improve the safeguarding of pupils, through InVentry, you can keep an accurate log of who is on your site at any one time, giving you maximum traceability for staff, contractors and visitors.

From late pupil arrivals to DBS information, InVentry seamlessly integrates with leading MIS providers, to ensure that your sign in information is always up to date.

Other features include:

- Contractor Management.
- Printed passes for late pupils.
- Fire and Trip Management.
- Access Invitations for visitors.
- Multi-site tracking.

As well as offering this, InVentry also provides an asset management software; Audit & Compliance. This solution delivers fast and cost-effective solutions for tracking assets in your school - providing a clear audit trail of usage to enable you to make informed decisions on your software and hardware investments.

#### Get in touch to find out more:

✉ info@inventry.co.uk

🌐 www.inventry.co.uk

☎ 0113 322 9253



## ICT Direct

### STAND 2

ICT Direct have been the nation's favourite supplier of quality refurbished computers since 1997.

By far the greenest option for schools, our zero-landfill recycling operation provides schools and colleges across the country with high quality refurbished PCs, laptops, servers and more, reducing the huge environmental costs associated with new computers.

We refurbish only the best quality brands such as HP, Dell and Lenovo ensuring that our offering is as reliable as possible.

As an ICT Direct customer, you'll have access to powerful, low-cost Windows 11 certified computers backed by superb next-day warranties for your peace of mind. You'll be able to make your purchase knowing that our team of dedicated account managers have curated these products to suit your exact requirements whilst providing a tangible environmental benefit.

We specialise in sourcing large quantities of identical machines. This means we can guarantee the very best price on bulk orders where ALL the devices will have identical make, model and specification.

Get in touch with us for special pricing if you have a bulk requirement. Our friendly sales team are always ready to help, so just get in touch to see what we can do for you today.

#### Get in touch to find out more:

✉ sales@ict-direct.co.uk

🌐 www.ict-direct.co.uk

☎ 01254 820980



## BCS - The Chartered Institute for IT

### STAND 3

BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, is an awarding organisation that specialises in digital education.

We're on a mission to build a safe and bright digital future for everyone in society, working with key partners to improve IT education and raise professional industry standards. It's something we've been committed to since 1957.

While many young people can use mobile phones or find their way around an iPad, the true meaning of digital literacy goes far deeper.

Help your students become safe, productive and creative users of IT - in the classroom, at home and in preparation for the workplace through teaching one our digital literacy or computing qualifications in your school.

Aimed at individuals at all levels our qualifications cover all areas of IT, including IT fundamentals, staying safe online, using Microsoft applications effectively to boost productivity, robotics, and coding.

Digital is everywhere and constantly evolving. Being in the teaching profession, it's important that you stay up to date. Ensure you've got the digital skills you need in your role with on-line, bitesize e-learning modules from BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT.

With a wide range of topics from AI and Green IT to Developing an Agile Mindset and Digital Leadership, we've got it covered. Come take a look.

#### Get in touch to find out more:

🌐 bcs.org/CPD





## NAACE

### STAND 4

The National Association for Education Technology NAACE is a community of teachers, school leaders, advisors, consultants, and commercial partners working across all areas of UK education who share a vision for the developing role of technology in education.

As a professional association, we support schools to embed the use of technology by collating the latest research in our Advancing Education Journal, gathering evidence of good practice from schools that have been awarded NaaceMark, and providing access to our EdTech Review Framework to support schools in their EdTech journey.

We undertake independent research on behalf of our members into the state of education technology across the sector. These help us identify where we are now with EdTech in the UK, the challenges for schools, and the approaches that can be taken to address those challenges.

#### Who is NAACE?

NAACE members and sponsoring partners work in both public and private sectors. They represent a range of professions in the education sphere including teachers, school leaders, consultants, software developers, technicians, university lecturers, student teachers, company executives, national partners and colleagues from commerce and industry.

Our members and partners share a passion for embedding the effective use of technology into teaching, learning and school management.

If you share this passion and are looking to collaborate with like-minded professionals, join NAACE to become a part of our community.

**Get in touch to find out more:**

 [membership@naace.org.uk](mailto:membership@naace.org.uk)



## ICT Solutions

### STAND 5

Norfolk County Council ICT Solutions team, based in Norwich, providing ICT support for all education establishments across East Anglia. Our vision is to continue to provide excellent customer service in an ever-evolving technological environment. We will research, develop and promote the latest innovation to enable our schools' learners to grow in a very diverse environment. We aim to be friendly, professional, open and transparent. We do not just support ICT, we also develop systems and solutions to support educational establishments to achieve your ICT vision.

We provide services to Schools, Academies, Free Schools, Independent Schools, Adult Learning Centres, Early Years Providers, Virtual Schools and more. Below is a summary of what we do, but please talk to us about any other technology issues or requirements as we offer a broad range of services.

- Bespoke ICT Maintenance and Support Visits
- ICT Equipment/Software Procurement and Installation
- EdTech Enhancement Program
- Cyber Security Resilience Audits and programme
- A choice of different School Information Management Systems
- Email for Departments or Staff and Students
- Google Workspace for Education Partner and Trainer
- Microsoft Education Partner and Cloud Solution Provider
- Microsoft Global Education Training Partner
- Secure Data Transfer Application
- Anti-virus software solutions
- Online Back-up solutions
- Broadband services

**Get in touch to find out more:**

 [ict@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:ict@norfolk.gov.uk)

 [lct.norfolk.gov.uk](http://lct.norfolk.gov.uk)

 01603 475603



## ClassVR

### STAND 6

ClassVR from Avantis Education is an award-winning all-in-one VR and AR system for schools.

First introduced in 2017, ClassVR has provided exceptional learning environments for more than 2 million students in 200,000+ classrooms in 90 countries across the globe. ClassVR is unique in that it was designed specifically for education.

It includes all the hardware, software, tools, training, support, and implementation services needed to successfully deploy VR/AR technology in the classroom. ClassVR headsets are classroom-ready, designed to be easy for students to use, and come in a rugged storage and charging case to ensure devices are always ready to go.

ClassVR includes thousands of curriculum-aligned VR and AR lessons and resources to enhance lessons and engage students more deeply in content.

Students can virtually examine once-hidden worlds, hold a beating heart in their hand, travel to far-off locations, and more. The ClassVR teacher portal lets teachers control the content and guide students through the content, maximising learning.

ClassVR helps teachers:

- Create immersive, engaging lessons in a safe, controlled VR environment.
- Improve students' knowledge, retention and understanding of academic concepts.
- Spark students' imagination.

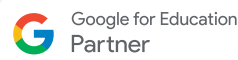
ClassVR helps teachers push the boundaries of teaching and helps students meet learning goals through exciting, engaging, unforgettable VR experiences.

**Get in touch to find out more:**

 [Sales@ClassVR.com](mailto:Sales@ClassVR.com)

 01452 260718





## Getech

### STAND 7

As Google's leading Premier Partner in the UK and Lenovo's largest Education Partner in Europe, Getech has been a trusted technology partner for schools, colleges and universities across the UK and Ireland for over 30 years.


A deep understanding of our product portfolio coupled with a consultative approach to problem-solving for our customers enables us to deliver technology that works as intended, on-budget and beyond expectations.

For schools and colleges that don't have teams of in-house IT experts on call, we offer a catalogue of partner services from pre-shipment configuration and asset tagging of devices to CPD training for educators and administrators, change management, security audits, cloud migrations and more. Beyond IT procurement and deployment support, we also help schools to address the STEM skills shortage by providing fun and engaging, hands-on learning activities aligned to the national curriculum with LEGO Education.


By dispelling the misconceptions that Science is boring and Maths is hard while giving the tools for teachers to implement coding into their classroom projects as early as Key Stage 2, we aim to give all young minds access to the platforms that will prepare them for any career in the 21st Century workforce.

Visit our stand for a quick chat about your next technology challenge and come away with a better understanding of how we can make IT easy for you.

#### Get in touch to find out more:

 [schools@getech.co.uk](mailto:schools@getech.co.uk)

 [www.getech.co.uk/schools](http://www.getech.co.uk/schools)

 01473 240470

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## Omada by TP-Link

### STAND 8

Omada by TP-Link delivers a comprehensive networking solution designed specifically to enhance educational technology ecosystems.

Our complete offering enables your Ed-tech devices to perform optimally, helping you deliver better learning outcomes for students and teachers. Regardless of your institution's networking needs, Omada provides tailored solutions that meet all scenarios.

Whether you manage a small campus network or a large multi-site infrastructure, require simple deployment or complex management capabilities, Omada's versatile platform rises to the challenge.

Our education-focused solutions not only meet but exceed the current Department for Education guidance, ensuring your institution stays ahead of technical requirements while maximising your technology investment.

Contact us below to learn more about the solution.

#### Get in touch to find out more:

 [gary.roche@tp-link.com](mailto:gary.roche@tp-link.com)



## VEX Robotics

### STAND 9

VEX Robotics is educational robotics for everyone.

The VEX product continuum spans all levels of education with solutions tailored to EYFS and KS1 right through to university level.

Our products can be used both in the classroom and as part of extracurricular robotics competitions and our free virtual robotics coding tools mean that you can stretch your budget further when teaching with VEX.

The free STEM Labs curriculum and activities give teachers everything they need to deliver a rich STEM curriculum including presentations, hand-outs, lesson guides and more.

No previous STEM experience is required, and the resources are linked to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Computing, Science, Design Technology and Maths.

Free online teacher certification, training webinars and face-to-face training ensure your staff have the knowledge they need to deliver a high-quality STEM curriculum.

#### Get in touch to find out more:

 [chris\\_calver@vexrobotics.com](mailto:chris_calver@vexrobotics.com)

 [www.vexrobotics.com](http://www.vexrobotics.com)





## The classroom of the future starts with RUCKUS

RUCKUS ensures “anywhere, anytime, on any device” access, empowering students and educators with uninterrupted learning experiences. With cutting-edge technology like Wi-Fi® 7, our solutions support modern tools such as esports, virtual reality, and interactive learning.

### RUCKUS solutions empower schools by providing:

1

#### **Advanced networking infrastructure:**

Best-in-class wireless access points and switching to provide a converged network for all the connected devices’ needs.

2

#### **AI-driven management and operations:**

Automates tasks, freeing IT teams to focus on broader initiatives that enhance student success.

3

#### **Advanced security:**

Enforce network security policies and integrate health and safety systems like CCTV surveillance, emergency communications, and environmental sensors.



### Empower your school with next-gen Wi-Fi

To learn more about how RUCKUS can transform your school’s connectivity and educational experience, contact us today and explore the possibilities of creating a truly connected school environment.







## EdTech.Direct

### STAND 10

Edtech.Direct is the new educational reseller in town, we supply technology to enhance teaching & learning.

With over 30 years combined experience of delivering solutions to schools, the Edtech.Direct team look forward to not only supplying but sourcing the appropriate Edtech solutions for your pupils.

We will be delivering you access to a wide range of ed tech products, teaching aids and accessories all designed to enhance lesson delivery, pupil engagement and ultimately, learning outcomes across the primary and secondary age ranges.

Edtech.Direct is also able to source products from across the globe due to our relationships with major distributors and product agents.

So, if you hear or see a product line you are interested in just call and let us do the rest. We really are a one stop shop of Educational resources.

#### **Get in touch to find out more:**

 [www.edtech.direct](http://www.edtech.direct)

LinkedIn: Edtech.Direct

Twitter: @edtech\_direct

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## TTS Group Ltd

### STAND 11

Our award-winning, ever-expanding family of educational floor robots are designed to inspire creative learning and early programming.

From our Early Years Glow and Go Bot to our KS2 Oti-Bot, we have the programming journey covered.

In addition to our much-loved Bee-Bot and our newest addition Loti-Bot, we have many other accessories to help introduce pupils to technology, algorithms, logical reasoning and more!

At TTS we collaborate with teachers, practitioners and educational experts from all over the world to develop innovative, award-winning resources that inspire children to learn.

From Early Years resources for the youngest learners, to everything you need to deliver an engaging curriculum our extensive range has it all.

All our resources are tried and tested, and our dedicated teams are always developing exciting new additions.

#### **Get in touch to find out more:**

Claire Tyler - ICT Category Manager.

 [www.tts-group.co.uk](http://www.tts-group.co.uk)

 [ctyler@rm.com](mailto:ctyler@rm.com)



## Acer

### STAND 12

#### **WHY ACER FOR EDUCATION**

Our mission is to bring next-generation technologies to schools and universities, enabling educators to create learning environments where students and teachers can connect, collaborate, and engage from anywhere.

#### **Get in touch to find out more:**

 [sales.uk@acer.com](mailto:sales.uk@acer.com)





## RUCKUS Networks

### STAND 13

RUCKUS Networks, a CommScope company, delivers purpose-driven network infrastructure that meets the evolving demands of today's digital world. Backed by CommScope's expertise in broadband, enterprise, and wireless technologies, RUCKUS provides high-performance, secure, and scalable solutions where "good enough" connectivity simply won't do.


In the education sector, seamless connectivity is the foundation for future-ready schools. RUCKUS ensures "anywhere, anytime, on any device" access, empowering students and educators with uninterrupted learning experiences. With cutting-edge technology like Wi-Fi 7, our solutions support modern tools such as esports, virtual reality, and interactive learning.

RUCKUS solutions empower schools by providing:

- **Advanced Networking Infrastructure:** Best-in class wireless access points and switching to provide a converged networks for all the connected devices needs.
- **AI-Driven Management and Operations:** Automates tasks, freeing IT teams to focus on broader initiatives that enhance student success.
- **Advanced Security:** Enforce network security policies and integrate health and safety systems like CCTV surveillance, emergency communications, and environmental sensors.

By enabling digital transformation, fostering collaboration, and enhancing learning environments, RUCKUS helps schools prepare students for success in an ever-evolving technological landscape.

#### **Get in touch to find out more:**

 [steve.johnson@commscope.com](mailto:steve.johnson@commscope.com)

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## Secure Schools

### STAND 14

Secure Schools is the UK's leading cybersecurity expert for education. We help schools protect against cyber-attacks by providing expert guidance and powerful tools. Our team, made up of cybersecurity specialists and educationalists, is passionate about keeping students safe and empowering schools with technology.

We provide schools with clear insights into their cybersecurity posture, helping them understand their current position, what the industry guidelines and requirements are, and how to take realistic and practical steps to strengthen their security.

We're also launching a brand-new free tool to support schools on their cybersecurity journey.

#### **Get in touch to find out more:**

 [tom.jarman@secureschools.com](mailto:tom.jarman@secureschools.com)

 01638 438 186

 [www.secureschools.com](http://www.secureschools.com)

kracs



## KRCS

### STAND 16

KRCS are proud to be an **Apple Authorised Education Specialist**, an **Apple Authorised Service Provider** and an **Apple Premium Reseller**, as well as being a **Jamf Gold Reseller**.

We have a wealth of experience, supporting education institutions for over 40 years. Whether you are a large multi academy trust or a small village school, our team of experts are here to help you no matter how big or small your project is.


Unlocking the genius in every learner is fundamental to using Apple in education and KRCS are here to support your journey.

Education is in our DNA and we have a team that includes former school teachers and technicians, active school governors & parents. We believe that Mac and iPad can improve outcomes by transforming teaching and learning in UK classrooms and provide equitable access.

KRCS currently manage over 12,000 Apple devices in schools and colleges across the UK.

#### **Get in touch to find out more:**

 [edsales@kracs.co.uk](mailto:edsales@kracs.co.uk)

 0115 985 1797



# Diversity in Computing

*By Miles Berry, Professor of Computing Education at the University of Roehampton*

It is now over 10 years since computing became part of the national curriculum, which meant coding and computer science would be taught to all pupils irrespective of their gender, ethnicity or home background. This inclusive vision for the subject has served us well, with close on 100% of pupils learning computing at least until the end of Key Stage 3.

However, when pupils are given the option to choose the subjects they study for GCSEs and A-Levels, computing does not do well. The situation is improving: this year, entries are up 6.2% and 11.8% respectively, but there's an ongoing issue around under-representation of some groups of pupils. Put simply, when given the choice, girls, poorer pupils and some ethnic groups are much less likely to choose to study computer science, and some pupils in these groups are not even given the chance to do so.

Last summer, just 22% of GCSE entries were from girls and 17% of A-level entries. For schools in the 20% of most affluent areas, 93% entered pupils for a GCSE in computing last summer. In the 20% of least affluent areas, this dropped to just 67%. One consequence of this is that 16% of pupils in these most affluent postcodes did the GCSE, but only 11% of those in the poorest areas did. Computing is a very meritocratic field and offers lots of opportunity to address social mobility – it seems wrong that pupils who would most benefit from the opportunity to study this at GCSE are denied the opportunity to do so.

I am aware that I come to this from a position of some privilege, as a white, middle-class, middle-aged man, but the unrepresentative nature of GCSE and A-Level computer science matters profoundly to me, as it should to us all. Partly, this is because I think everyone should continue to study some aspects of computing until they leave school, given the impact of computing on other academic disciplines, all jobs, culture and society. It is also because computer science opens up lots of career opportunities for those who do study it. More than this, those who work in tech ought to be more representative of the society they're building tech for. If not, there's a real danger that the products we get are based too much on the needs and opinions of unrepresentative groups – as we're seeing with the misuse of AI.

There are many possible reasons for why diversity in computer science isn't all that it could be, but it is certainly not because it's a 'boys subject' – the first programmers were women, women make up more than 50% of those studying computer science in Arab world universities, and girls get better grades than boys in both GCSE and



A Level computer science.

In part, the disparity is because some pupils aren't even given the opportunity to take the subject. This could be because there just aren't enough computing teachers to go round, and it might be that it's even harder to recruit computing teachers in economically disadvantaged areas than in more affluent ones. I think there are also potential issues with the nature of the subject itself – ICT, for all its faults, had a much more diverse cohort than computer science has.

I would love to see GCSE and A-Level computer science replaced by far broader qualifications in computing that recognise the full breadth of the national curriculum subject and take in the most useful bits of coding and computer science, alongside useful skills in IT and digital media, and critical digital literacy to help pupils think hard about the impacts of digital technologies. A broader qualification would be likely to broaden the uptake.

My 14-year-old daughter put it very well: "The boys are interested in what computers can do, the girls are interested in what we can do with computers." This seems to reflect many of the opinions in the DfE's Omnibus survey in 2023 and the recently published Science Education Tracker. The latter reveals a disturbing decline in pupils' interest in computing from Year 7 to Year 11, particularly among girls, and the numbers in the 2023 report are even worse than they were back in 2019. Digging into this data, the girls who choose to study





computing often say they find it creative, those who don't often say it's because it's not interesting, not enjoyable or just too difficult – there are lessons to learn here for how the computing qualifications should be reformed.

Other than broadening the scope of the qualifications, what else might be done? The Raspberry Pi foundation conducted research into a number of strategies: developing non-formal learning of computing; promoting a sense of belonging for girls; focussing on the relevance of computing; working on teaching approaches such as peer instruction; pair programming and storytelling, and work on option choices and how the subject is promoted at this point. These are all really good ideas and well worth considering in school.

Alas, the research was conducted during the pandemic and didn't indicate that any one of these strategies made a statistically significant impact, but perhaps a combination of strategies might.

The National Centre for Computing Education has developed an 'I Belong' project, addressing how computing can be better promoted to girls in Key Stage 3, which seems crucial to see impact on subsequent GCSE choices.

Before 2010, Becta developed a home access scheme, providing free computers and internet access to pupils entitled to free school meals. This was a great success, but it was stopped when the incoming government

closed Becta. However, there's nothing to stop schools using some of the Pupil Premium funding now available to provide laptops and internet access to pupils who don't have these, as items 'necessary to overcome specific barriers to pupil attainment'. If we're serious about addressing the socioeconomic divide in computing education, and education more generally, it's hard to think of something that would have a better return on a relatively modest investment.

Culturally responsive teaching might do much to help pupils from under-represented ethnicities see computing as something for them. Again, the Raspberry Pi foundation has done much here, building on work conducted in the US. The approach includes using learners' own cultural knowledge and experiences to inform what we teach and providing opportunities for learners to pursue personally meaningful projects to express their own identities.

For all of these issues, it is worth exploring the role models and examples. Many pupils in these groups might not be able to see themselves in tech or tech-related roles. Brilliant as Grace Hopper, Ada Lovelace, Mary Jackson and Tommy Flowers were, pupils might not easily be able to see them following in their footsteps. Former pupils and diverse individuals working locally in creative or tech related industries might be much better at inspiring pupils and demonstrating the relevance of computing for all.

*First published in Sapientia Summer Term 2024*





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Created in 2010, ERSOU operates across the seven police forces that make up the Eastern Region - Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, and Suffolk.

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**Get in touch to find out more:**

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The logo for Ergotron, featuring the word "ergotron" in a lowercase, blue, sans-serif font.

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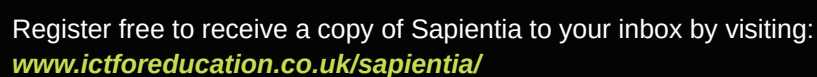
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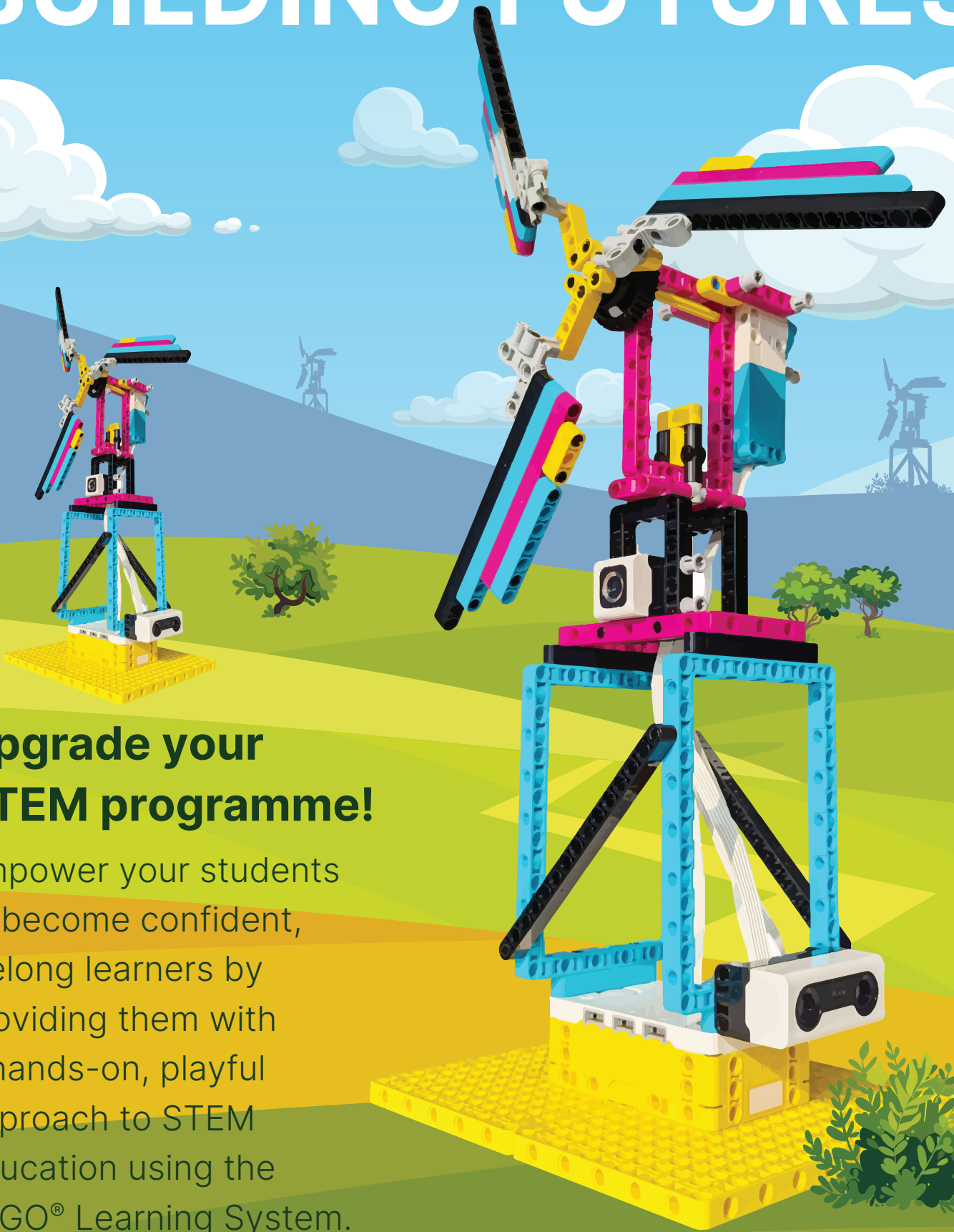
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