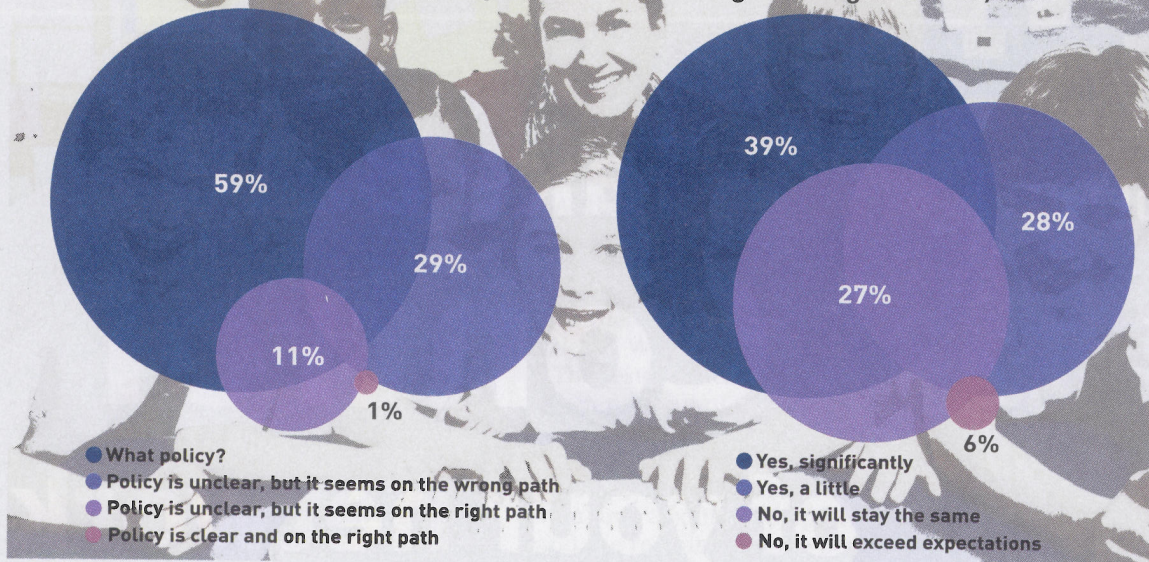


What do secondary school ICT chiefs think of the government's schools ICT policy?

Are secondary school ICT chiefs expecting to downgrade budgets in 2011/12?



The maths

The BESA report turned up some worrying statistics...

48% of primary schools will not have enough laptops in 2013

63% of primary schools are unlikely certain to be unable to make all planned ICT investments in 2011/12

24% of secondary schools claim spending on PCs for pupils will be hardest hit if budget cuts are made

70% of primary school teachers require training on learning platforms

48% of secondary school students spend more than half their teaching time exposed to ICT

Source: BESA – ICT in UK Schools



CRN says

Although they are all teaching the same basic curriculum, different schools will have subtly different needs when it comes to IT and a degree of autonomy in technology procurement is certainly essential. But while flexibility will be key, a clear ICT strategy coming from the very top of the government would surely be beneficial. Being able to get the most from technology is already a useful and lucrative skill and this trend will only become more pronounced. Schools, suppliers and the government must work together to ensure the 'digital divide' doesn't widen.

Schools urged to collaborate to survive

Education specialist VAR European Electronique is urging schools to collaborate in the wake of the demise of BECTA and the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Chief executive Yolanta Gill predicted more schools will buddy up as the academy model is rolled out and government funding cuts bite.

Gill said: "Collaboration between schools has not yet become a common way of working. But this is a model European Electronique is looking to promote in the near future; we believe this is the best way of helping our schools maximise their budgets, and it will also create long-lasting partnerships that are good for the local community."

Gill said schools will consider collaborating not only on central services delivered from the cloud, but also managed services.

"The standalone school may become a glaring anomaly in this progressive and changing landscape," she said. "Collaboration is an attractive tool and a different way to do the school's core job."

Gill criticised BSF's one-size-fits-all model but said the initiative did provide a vehicle for reform and transformation. She added



that the demise of BECTA will force schools to seek guidance on ICT strategy elsewhere.

Gill admitted the expansion of academies had met with a mixed response. But many schools could recover on average 10 per cent of their budget if they free themselves from Local Authority control.

"Schools now have more autonomy and a greater control of the decisions that affect the learners, staff, including the wider community and are now looking at different ways of working," she said. "One option which is proving the most beneficial is working together. Local competitiveness is now being replaced by collaboration between the educational establishments."

Gerry O'Keefe, managing director of distributor Micro Peripherals, said collaboration is now becoming more common as education budgets are squeezed.

"In the past, there has been a lot of ill-spent money where everyone has gone off and done unique work designing buildings," he said. "Over the last year, we have seen a lot of local authorities start to consolidate their spending and adopt a more consistent approach."

Future holds more PC time for UK pupils

BESA's annual study throws into stark relief just how frequently UK pupils are exposed to technology.

Nearly half of the 1,324 UK schools questioned anticipated that more than 50 per cent of pupil time will be dedicated to learning with ICT by 2013/2014. The figure includes interactive whiteboard-based lessons and one-to-one pupil time on PCs.

For primary schools, 49 per cent of respondents said that more than half of pupil time is spent using ICT in 2011. That figure is up from 46 per cent in 2010 and is expected to climb to 51 per cent by 2013. Four

per cent indicated they expect to be using ICT more than 90 per cent of the time by 2013.

The figures are slightly lower for secondary schools, with 48 per cent expecting that more than half of pupil time will be spent using to ICT by 2013.

Meanwhile, training requirements in the use of learning platforms remains "very high" in primary schools, said BESA. About 70 per cent indicated that more than half of teachers require training. However, the report added that demand for training in secondary schools is declining in comparison.