

Schools Gigabit Broadband

Frequently Asked Questions (February 2023)

We will continuously update this document as the programme develops. The queries below cover conversations from August 2022 to January 2022.

How can we contact you?

We prefer email. Please contact us at Schools.FIBRE@education.gov.uk

How can we verify you really are from the Department for Education?

The link below will take you to the government press release about the programme.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-rural-primary-schools-to-get-huge-broadband-upgrade>

the member of staff that calls you will be from either the Coventry or Sheffield DfE office. If you would like to call them back through the switchboard the details are:

Department for Education, Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

T: 0370 000 2288

Department for Education, 2 St Pauls Place, 125 Norfolk Street, Sheffield City Centre, Sheffield, S1 2JF

T: 0370 000 2288

What is the purpose of the programme?

By the end of 2025 we aim for every school in England to be able to access high-speed broadband connectivity. Many schools can already do so, or will have access as a result of the planned rollouts of telecommunications suppliers. DfE, working with BDUK are looking to ensure the schools that will not have access are able to do so as a result of our support.

What benefit will my school gain from faster broadband

Here are two videos from schools about the difference gigabit broadband has made for them.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_dIW5qYOMw

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCTmm1fzZds>

In my area there is a Gigahub project from the local authority, will we get connected twice?

No. DfE will work with the various Gigahub (and "Gigabit") projects across the country to ensure that the necessary schools are connected by the project that can deliver the connection to them as early as possible at the lowest cost.

Why aren't we eligible?

If it is possible to either access high speed connectivity in your area already, or we know that by the end of 2025 it will be commercially available, you will not be eligible. DfE are providing support for those schools that will not get access by another route.

When will the work happen?

The supplier that is awarded the contract to connect schools in your area will contact your school directly to arrange installation dates. DfE will maintain contact with suppliers to keep track of progress and expected dates and will be able to share that information with schools as required.

Will this involve engineers coming onto our premises, possibly disrupting lessons?

The work involves the civil works needed to bring the fibre optic cable to your site. This ends in a small box on the outside of your building, probably next to existing connection boxes for your current telephone and broadband lines. Any need to enter the building should be minimal. Suppliers will be expected to work with you to arrange works, but disruption should be absolutely minimal. In return, we ask you that if they do for any reason require access, you work to make that possible in a timely manner.

We have a very old network in school. Surely the fast broadband connection on its own is only part of the solution?

That is true. The DfE Connect the Classroom programme assists schools in Education Investment Areas that qualify in improving their network. Guidance is available on the types of system DfE advise school to put in place here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/broadband-internet-standards-for-schools-and-colleges>

If it is too expensive to get fibre to our school, will we miss out?

The programme will use what is called FTTP (fibre to the premises) in most cases to provide the connection. Where it is not possible to do this economically, DfE will procure an alternative using other technologies such as satellite or 5G.

We want to replace our telephone system. Will the circuit be good enough to operate both our phones and internet access?

Yes.

Will the connection be compliant with Safeguarding requirements?

The programme is providing the physical broadband connection and not the service that runs over it. The school will still need to procure an appropriate service package with a service provider. The school should select a service that meets their requirements for Safeguarding.

We really like our current Internet Service Provider. Do we have to change?

No. School remains free to choose the supplier of their choice, who can then operate the service over the new high-speed connection.

We currently have a long-term contract for a line, will we end up paying twice?

The requirement of the programme is for schools to make use of the new line within one-year of it being made operational. We will keep you informed of installation dates so that you can bear this in mind before taking out any agreement. If you find yourself in a situation where you need to delay making use of the new connection beyond one year in order to comply with your existing contract, we will make the necessary arrangements.

We need a grant to pay for an upgrade to our broadband, can we apply for funding?

No. Schools Gigabit Broadband is not a grant awarding programme. DfE will procure the high-speed circuits for schools centrally.

We can get broadband ourselves, can we reclaim the costs from you?

No. Schools Gigabit Broadband is not a grant awarding programme. DfE will procure the high speed circuits for schools centrally.

Once the line is available, who pays for the service?

DfE cover the capital cost to provide the gigabit capable connection into the school. The day-to-day revenue cost of using the circuit is the responsibility of the school.

The high-speed service will be too expensive for us. Will we have to pay a higher bill?

DfE believe that in most cases a similar-cost service will be available using the new connection, and opportunities for further cost savings will be unlocked by the access to high-speed connectivity.

Will we be paying an energy cost for this line even if we aren't using it?

No. Only once the new line is in use will there be equipment such as a router plugged into it, just as you do now.

Can any company quote for the work to supply these lines?

DfE will be procuring the lines through procurement frameworks.

Will there be any help on how we can make use of this faster connection?

DfE are publishing a number of advisory documents related to this area which will be helpful. In addition, we plan to run workshops for schools on the programme in the run up to their connections going live, where opportunities to save costs and/or improve service to the school will be discussed.

My ICT Support Company arrange our internet service. Can you engage them to get the line for us?

DfE will procure the lines in large numbers through a procurement framework. The supplier we engage will supply only the circuit into the school. Schools remain free to use the supplier of their choice for the service that runs over that new high-speed connection.

My ICT Support Company have technical questions about what is on offer. Can you speak to them?

Yes. Please ask them to email us.

We are part of, or are joining, a multi-academy Trust. They have a standard ICT system. Can you discuss this offer with them to ensure it will be suitable?

Yes. Please ask them to email us.

How can we check whether gigabit broadband is already available for us, or whether it will be available soon?

There are a number of websites that provide this information. The one we use is [the one provided by OFCOM](#). Although we are aware of which parts of the country are covered by commercial fibre rollout, we do not necessarily know who is providing it and when. Your local authority may be able to help.

What happens if we decide not to take part in the programme, and later change our mind?

Once DfE have awarded the contract for your region it will be very difficult for us to add a new site. It may not be possible. The most likely outcome would be your school having to wait for commercial providers to bring fibre to your area.