

**St Cronan’s SNS SWORDS BECOMES A ‘Digital School of Distinction’**

**Minister Jan O’Sullivan** **presents prestigious national award to school for digital excellence in the classroom**

St Cronan’s Senior National School, Swords has been awarded ‘Digital School of Distinction’ status, joining a growing number of Irish primary schools to receive the prestigious award which promotes, recognises and encourages best practice use of technology in primary schools.

Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O’Sullivan TD, presented the award to teachers and pupils at the school today. More than one in three primary schools have signed up to become a ‘Digital School of Distinction’ and 140 schools have been awarded Digital School of Distinction status since the programme launched in September 2013. The programme aims to sign up a further 750 schools during this school year.

‘Digital Schools of Distinction’ is a flagship award programme supported by HP Ireland and Microsoft Ireland, who have confirmed that they will support the programme with €200,000 in funding for its second year. Primary schools who achieve Digital Schools of Distinction status this year will receive a range of ICT support services, including free printing for a year via a HP OfficeJet Pro printer and a monthly printing allowance of 250 colour pages and 2,500 black and white pages, Microsoft software and educational apps as well as technical support and access to education ICT specialists.

It is expected that 300 schools will be recognised with Digital Schools of Distinction status this year. Plans are also in place to expand the programme into Northern Ireland and the UK in 2015.

Speaking at the event, Minister Jan O’Sullivan said: *“It is very important to give recognition to schools that have adopted a strong digital schools culture. The Digital School of Distinction programme, which is in line with the e-learning roadmap supported by the Department of Education & Skills, is an excellent means to promote and enhance the use of ICT in the classroom. I would like to commend St Cronan’s Senior National School in their achievement”*

The response to the Digital Schools of Distinction programme from primary schools to date has been extremely positive. Loreto Desmond, Principal of St Cronan’s Senior National School said that the programme offers a great opportunity to develop its students’ digital literacy.

“*Over the past number of years we have invested a lot of time and effort in the development of a digital culture in our school and it is very encouraging to see these efforts now come to fruition. Technology is embedded in teaching and learning in our school with a strong level of sharing of expertise and resources among staff. It also helps our special educational needs pupils to be integrated into the mainstream classes with all the necessary assistive technologies. We are delighted that our efforts have been recognised by Digital Schools of Distinction.”*

Congratulating St Cronan’s Senior National School on their award, Martin Murphy, Managing Director of HP Ireland said: *“There has been a huge uptake for the Digital Schools of Distinction programme which is a clear indication of the commitment of primary teachers to make the most of their schools’ digital capabilities. HP is delighted to support this initiative which provides significant support and assistance to these schools as they equip their pupils with the necessary capabilities for 21st century living.”*

Cathriona Hallahan, Managing Director, Microsoft Ireland added: “*The ‘Digital Schools of Distinction’ programme recognises the importance of technology in the learning environment. St Cronin’s Senior National School now joins 140 other schools nationally that have been commended for their commitment to digital literacy with ICT playing an integral role in everyday learning.”*

Gerard McHugh, Chair of the Digital Schools of Distinction Committee and Director of the Dublin West Education Centre said: “*We are very encouraged by the level of engagement with schools to date as we work to grow the number of participating schools. We are looking forward to registering many more schools in the months ahead.”*

Schools who register and who are successfully validated through the programme are awarded Digital School of Distinction status.

The Digital Schools of Distinction programme is supported by the Department of Education and Skills in partnership with Dublin West Education Centre, the Professional Development Service for Teachers/Technology in Education, the Computer Education Society of Ireland (CESI), the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) and the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN). Digital Schools of Distinction is delivered through a public private partnership in association with HP and Microsoft in Ireland.

For further information and to register online, visit [www.digitalschools.ie](http://www.digitalschools.ie) or follow @digital\_schools on Twitter for regular updates.

**Ends**

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**Note to Editors**

The five criteria under which schools are evaluated in order to become Digital Schools of Distinction are as follows:

1. Leadership and vision: Digital Schools of Distinction will have a whole-school ICT policy that outlines a vision and strategy and conveys a positive attitude towards the use of ICT.
2. ICT integration across the curriculum: Schools will show ICT integration across the curriculum in learning and teaching. Staff will demonstrate a clear understanding how ICT can be used in the curriculum to improve student learning.
3. School ICT culture: Schools will demonstrate an awareness that ICT has an impact on the quality of learning and teaching, pupils' attitudes and behaviour and the wider school community.
4. Continuing Professional Development: Schools will demonstrate a commitment to on-going professional development in relation to ICT, with a mechanism in place to inform teachers of courses in relation to professional development, as well as school-wide support and encouragement.
5. Resources and infrastructure: Schools will have in place appropriate ICT resources, including hardware, software and infrastructure, to support particular learning environments. Schools will also have deployed appropriate ICT resources that reflect the plan for future improvement and development of ICT as outlined in the whole-school policy.