

DIGITALLY WISE

A thoughtful approach to technology in education lies at the heart of successful digital application, says **Matt Britland**

In schools today, technology is everywhere. It shapes how we communicate, how we access information, and how we imagine the future. Yet, the most important question is no longer whether schools should use technology, but *how – and why?*

Across Francis Holland Schools Trust, we believe technology shouldn't lead learning; learning should lead technology. Our approach is grounded in a simple principle: to use digital tools intentionally and only when they add meaningful value. When thoughtfully integrated, technology enhances how our pupils learn, create and lead, it amplifies the ambition, confidence and curiosity that define our pupils. The core pillars of a Francis Holland education – Excellence, Community, Character and Creativity – guide our approach.

We set the highest expectations for teaching and learning, and our use of technology reflects this

and deep understanding – before introducing automation and advanced tools. Pupils begin by developing essential digital skills, from confident device use to organising work and navigating key learning platforms. They then progress to hands-on projects in coding, robotics, computer graphics, data work, generative AI and machine learning. Our aim is clear: for pupils to understand before they automate, evaluate before they accept and to improve on what technology produces rather than be led by it.

One of our key responsibilities as educators is to help our pupils become digitally wise, not just digitally capable. Through our Life Programme at Regent's Park and Westmacott at Sloane Square, as well as bespoke provision, our pupils learn to use technology, including AI, ethically and responsibly, while developing critical thinking, maintaining digital wellbeing, and engaging safely and respectfully online.



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commitment. Digital tools are used purposefully – to enrich lessons, sharpen assessment and open up new ways to engage with knowledge, but the teacher comes first. Digital tools enhance excellence, never dilute it. Our pupils develop the digital fluency they need for the future, supported by exceptional teaching and meaningful human connection that remains the foundation of everything we do. Our approach has achieved national recognition, with Francis Holland being named a finalist for the *TES* Best Use of Technology Award 2025.

Community lies at the heart of life at Francis Holland, and technology plays a thoughtful supporting role. Digital tools enrich classroom practice, serving to enhance pupil engagement, provide real-time feedback and facilitate personalised learning. At the same time, these systems streamline communication and free up teachers to invest in the moments that matter – building strong, meaningful relationships that define a genuine community of belonging.

We prepare pupils not only to thrive academically, but also to develop the life skills they need to navigate an everchanging world with confidence, resilience and integrity. Our curriculum is intentionally designed to build strong academic foundations first – critical analysis, creative thinking, intelligent questioning

Our trust-wide mobile-phone policy supports healthy habits, requiring phones to be locked away during the school day, reinforced by regular 'digital detox' weeks. By modelling intentional use ourselves, we help pupils understand that technology is a tool to be managed, not something that manages them.

We want technology to spark curiosity, collaboration, ambition and creativity. It broadens the horizons of what our pupils can imagine, achieve and access that were once unimaginable. From digital design to solving real-world problems, they learn to think boldly, work collaboratively and approach challenges from multiple perspectives, realising their power to shape the future.

Finally, supporting our staff is equally important. Professional learning helps teachers make informed choices about when technology adds value – and when it doesn't. Teachers are encouraged to experiment, reflect and share practice, always guided by the same central question: How does this improve learning?

As technology continues to evolve, we see it as a powerful enhancer of learning when used well. By moving forward thoughtfully and keeping pedagogy at our core, we'll ensure technology complements rather than dominates it, supporting wellbeing, and preserving the depth, care and quality of education that define Francis Holland Schools Trust. ☺