

# School broadband connectivity

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 25 Ebrill 2022  
Petitions Committee | 25 April 2022

Reference: SR22/2498

**Petition Number:** P-06-1261

**Petition title:** Invest to ensure all schools have high quality, effective internet infrastructure and connectivity.

**Text of petition:** A good broadband connection has become essential for education in the 21st century. More should and must be done to ensure our schools are equipped with the best internet connection possible to provide equality to all, wherever pupils live in Wales.

Whilst the previous Welsh Government's programme (20016-21) aimed to prioritise access to super-fast broadband, there continues to be schools where this is not the case.

I call for there to be a true Gigabit (1000Mbps Service Obligation) connection to all primary and secondary schools in Wales, ensuring that no pupil is disadvantaged because of poor broadband speed in school.



## 1. Background

Broadband connectivity to maintained schools in Wales is delivered across the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA) network. Launched in 2007, PSBA connects public sector organisations in the country to a private secure Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Wide Area Network (WAN). PSBA is Welsh Government-funded and delivered by BT.

## 2. Welsh Government action

In 2013, the Welsh Government set targets that by 2020, primary, middle and special schools and PRUs were to have 100Mbps connectivity and secondary schools 1Gbps connectivity. Subsequently, the Welsh Government reviewed the 2020 targets and replaced them with guidelines for 2018. The Welsh Government said that local authority feedback had suggested that the targets were too rigid and further upgrades may provide little benefit particularly where pupil numbers were low. The 2020 targets were therefore replaced with guidelines which aimed to provide more local control and allow local knowledge of schools to influence the decisions around increased bandwidth.

In 2019, the Welsh Government published Education Digital Standards. These say, in relation to connectivity:

Schools' requirements are based on curriculum delivery, and the administrative and operational needs of the school, which all represent very different usage patterns.

Standard A3 states:

Schools to have a broadband service that provides them with adequate bandwidth to meet their needs [...] Schools should have a service suited to the size of the school (in terms of all users – practitioners, office staff and learners), and the school's delivery needs, both now and in the future.

The Minister for Education and Welsh Language's response to the petition says that all maintained schools in Wales have been able to access superfast broadband speeds since 2019. He has provided a contact point and offered for his officials to investigate any instances where this is not the case.

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