

# The DFC to launch Education Data Reality

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The Digital Futures Commission (DFC) is launching its *'Education data reality: The challenges for schools in managing children's education data'* report on Wednesday, 29 June, 9-10 am BST. In this Breakfast Briefing to launch the report, Sarah Turner, the lead author, will reveal the answers to our overarching question: *what are the problems to be addressed in realising the benefits of education data in children's best interests, given the current EdTech landscape in schools?* These answers reflect schools' perspectives on Education technology (EdTech) procurement, usage, data protection and the steps required to enable schools to harness the potential of the technology and the resulting data in children's best interests.



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In this report, Sarah explores how EdTech is currently used within schools, and identifies four problems that constrain children's best interests when it comes to EdTech and the use of education data:

1. **Disproportional risks vs benefits:** The actual benefits of EdTech and the data processed from children in schools are currently not discernible or in children's best interests. Nor are they proportionate to the scope, scale and sensitivity of data currently processed from children in schools. The teachers and school staff reported modest added value of EdTech or the insights that could be extracted from the data processed by the EdTech in use without appropriate analytics skills required from teachers or school staff.
2. **Limited control over data:** Schools have limited control or oversight over data processed from children through their uses of EdTech. This limited control over data results from the design of the specific EdTech, EdTech providers' business models, the broader ecosystem of public and commercial stakeholders with interests in data processed from children in educational contexts and convoluted terms of service and privacy policies. Effectively, the power imbalance between EdTech providers and schools, as service users, is structured in the terms of use they signed up to and exacerbated by external pressure to use some EdTech services.
3. **Insufficient guidance:** Currently, there is a distinct lack of comprehensive guidance for schools on how to

manage EdTech providers' data practices. Nor is there a minimum standard for acceptable features, data practices and evidence-based benefits for schools to navigate the currently fragmented EdTech market and select appropriate EdTech that offers educational benefits proportionate to the data it processes.

4. **Resource limitation:** Patchy access to and security of digital devices at school and home due to cost and resource barriers means that access to digital technologies to deliver and receive education remains inequitable.

Is there a silver bullet to address these problems? Join our lead researcher, Professor Sonia Livingstone, the lead author, Sarah Turner, and our discussant, [Al Kingsley](#) (CEO of NetSupport and Chair of a Multi-Academy Trust) for some answers in our Breakfast Meeting on 29 June, 9-10 am BST. Sign up for the event [here](#).

Our Education Data Reality report forms part of the [education data workstream](#) at the DFC, and draws on interviews with 32 participants assuming various roles in the English school system. These participants represent headteachers, senior leadership team members, governors, teachers, departmental heads, in-school and commercial data protection officers, local authorities and education union staff. They come from diverse geographical locations and different types of schools, ranging from large multi-academy trusts (MATs) to individually run schools, including those for children with special educational needs (SEN).

Read more about our work on education data [here](#).

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