**Upgrading Computers from Windows 7 to supported Operating Systems**

As of 14th Jan 2020, Microsoft have stated that they will no longer provide security updates to their Windows 7 (Win 7) Operating System (OS), and are recommending upgrades to Windows 10, (Win 10). Microsoft state that 'computers will still function' and that you can ‘continue running Windows 7’, however they indicate a ‘greater risk for viruses and malware'. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-ie/windows/windows-7-end-of-life-support-information> .

As a commercial company it’s probably not surprising that Microsoft suggest Win 10 *‘on a new computer’*, rather than upgrading to Win 10 on existing computers. **However purchasing new computers is not necessary to run Win 10, as it will work fine on many older computers including computers of up to 10 years old, and it can currently be downloaded from Microsoft’s website for free** (see link below for details of how to do a free upgrade)**.** In order to run Win 10, computers will need a 1GHz processor, 1GB of memory and 16GB of free disk space, which many older computers will already have.

**As Microsoft has stated that it will no longer provide security updates for Win 7 we recommend that schools who wish to remain using ‘Windows’ OS upgrade their Win 7 computers to Win 10, however the good news is that Microsoft is currently allowing the upgrade to be completed for free on existing Win 7 computers, without schools having to purchase an additional Win 10 licence. As this option may not be available in the future, it makes sense to upgrade as soon as possible. Schools considering changing from Windows OS to Chrome OS on older computers should read point no. 7 below.**

Most schools will have a mix of computers running both Win 7 and Win 10. Schools can check the Windows version running on a computer by pressing both the ‘Windows button’ () and the letter R, and then typing ‘winver’ in the text box. Most Windows computers purchased since 2016 should already have Win 10 installed.

**Important related matter: Data Backup:**

To reduce the risk of losing important school data due to virus or ransomware, equipment failure, or other causes, the single most important step that schools should take is for the staff responsible for this data to carry out regular ‘standalone’ backups of important school data.

A standalone backup is a backup that is stored in a separate ‘off-site’ location, so that if the original data is lost or inaccessible due to virus or ransomware etc., that the school still has a copy of the data that they can access. The off-site location could be another location or be in the ‘cloud’.

**Factors to consider in upgrading from Win 7 OS to Win 10 OS:**

1. You’ll need to check that computers to be upgraded meet the required minimum specification for Win 10, (ie., 1GHz processor, 1GB of memory and 16GB of free disk space.). Check <https://support.microsoft.com/en-ie/help/4028142/windows-10-system-requirements>
2. When upgrading to Win 10 ensure you upgrade ‘like for like’ e.g. From Windows 7 Home to Windows 10 Home or from Windows 7 Professional to Windows 10 Professional.
3. You may hear about Microsoft’s ‘**Windows 7 Extended Security Update (ESU) program**’, which is a way for mainly large organisations to pay Microsoft to remain on Windows 7 and still receive Win 7 critical security updates. For example the HSE is paying €1.1Million for 1 years support as they have software applications that currently run on Win 7. **This program is not suitable or recommended for schools for cost and other reasons.**

**Upgrade Options for computers running Windows 7:**

1. **Upgrade to Win 10 Pro (Free Upgrade)**

It is still possible to do an upgrade from an existing Windows 7 to Win 10. **As this option may not be available in the future, it makes sense to upgrade as soon as possible.** This can be done for free via the following Microsoft ‘Download Windows 10’ and ‘Download tool now’ links, while following the instructions provided.

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/software-download/windows10>

                

**Important:** Before the upgrade to Win 10 is started it is recommended that schools make a backup copy of their important files and applications, despite the fact that there is an option to keep these files as part of the upgrade process.

**There are 2 main options:**

1. Upgrading a single computer or
2. Upgrading a number of computers

In this case select the option to ‘Use the Tool to Create Installation Media’. This is the recommended option as one has to download Win 10 once, saving valuable time etc. A blank (8GB minimum) USB key or USB Disk drive is required.

The update process to download and install Win 10 can take an hour or more, and depends on the speed of the broadband link, (the faster the better) and the speed of the computer being upgraded, however it relatively easy to do and it does work. While the upgrade process is time consuming, it requires very little human intervention, and once it starts, it can be left to run on a computer, until the upgrade is complete.

1. **Upgrading by creating a ‘Master software image’**

Schools with large numbers of school based ‘Windows’ computers generally carry out upgrades by creating a ‘master image’ of files and then using automated tools to ‘copy’ this master image of files to other computers over the school network. This process would generally be carried out by a trained technician or a staff member who has a lot of experience managing software updates.

1. **Request a quote from your IT or technical support provider to upgrade Win 7 computers to Win 10.**

Schools who are not comfortable with upgrading computers themselves will need an external party to carry out the upgrade. Remind these external parties that the Win 10 upgrade licence is free to upgrade existing licenced computers, and that new Win 10 licences are not being purchased. Instead you are requesting a quote for the party/IT company’s time in doing the upgrade. If a school receives a quote for this work and wants to check if it’s reasonable, feel free to email the quote to ictadvice@pdst.ie . We’ll review it and provide feedback to your school.

1. Win7 has been available since 2009, while Win10 was released in 2015, so most Windows computers purchased in the past 4 years will most likely have Windows 10, though a small number may also be Windows 8 or 8.1 OSs, which can also be upgraded to Win 10 if necessary.
2. In addition to upgrading to Win 7, the performance of older computers can also be improved by increasing the memory to 8GB, and by replacing older disks (spinning) drives with solid state drives (SSD) 256GB, (ie., they will start up and run faster). SSD drives are more reliable and faster as they don’t have moving parts and are effectively a disk drive on a ‘chip’.
3. **Microsoft Licencing for Windows**
	* Microsoft licences its software in different ways to different types of customers.
	* As a general point schools should not have to purchase a new Win 10 licence where they are upgrading an already licenced Win 7 computer.
	* Schools may already have purchased a Win 10 upgrade when they purchased the computer with a Win 7 licence, and this may need to be activated.
	* Schools that have a Microsoft Subscription Agreement such as a OVS-ES licence (Open Volume Subscription for Education Solutions), which is based on number of full-time staff and which allows schools to upgrade computers for free with new software versions.  Check this with your school accounts, and or IT/tech support provider.  Alternatively schools may have perpetual licences, which were purchased along with computers.
	* If schools are unclear what licences they have they should ask their IT/technical support provider or the company that provided the computers.
	* ETB schools generally have ‘Microsoft Campus Agreements’ in place for purchasing licences centrally, so ETB schools should contact their ETB for a status update.
4. **Changing OS from Windows to Chrome on older computers.**

While it is possible to upgrade to Windows 10 for free, some schools may want to move to an alternative operating system, such as ChromeOS. Using a product called Cloudready from [Neverware](https://www.neverware.com/), schools can extend the working life of older Windows computers. The devices effectively then become Chromebooks and can be used using a Chrome browser. As they will then be running Chrome OS rather than Windows OS they won’t run any local versions of Windows applications such as Word, Excel, Powerpoint or they won’t be able to play CDs/DVDs, however they can be used for many other educational activities. There is a free Neverware version for users to download and ‘play’ with, so schools may download and try this on 1 or 2 of your computers before making a final decision on suitability for their school. Education pricing is stated as ‘$20 per year’ but we recommend that you email [Neverware](https://www.neverware.com/) to seek specific pricing for the number of licences you need. For more information check <https://www.neverware.com/edu#cloudready-edu-pricing>.

**Related Articles:** Here are two recent and relevant articles which may provide additional information to schools.

<https://www.techcentral.ie/how-to-move-to-windows-10-as-windows-7-dies/>

<https://www.zdnet.com/article/heres-how-you-can-still-get-a-free-windows-10-upgrade/>

**For additional advice or support of ICT Infrastructure or Technical Support please email** **ictadvice@pdst.ie** **or go to** [**www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/Technology**](http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/Technology)