1.4 WIRED AND WIRELESS NETWORKS

Key Terms

A network is where devices have been connected together so that they can share data and resources. Networks can be wired (Ethernet) or wireless (Wi-Fi).

Local Area Network (LAN)	Cover a small geographical area such as an office. Use their own infrastructure.
Wide Area Network (WAN)	WANs connect LANs together over a large geographical area and make use of infrastructure from telecommunications companies.
Bandwidth	The amount of data that can pass between network devices per second
Server	A device that provides services for other devices (e.g. file server or print server)
Client	A computer or workstation that receives information from a central server
Peer to peer Network	All of the computers in the network are equal. They connect directly to each other.
Standalone computers	A computer not connected to a network

NETWORK HARDWARE

Network Interface Controller (NIC): built in hardware that allows a device to connect to a network.
Switches: connect devices on a LAN
Router: Transmits the data (packets) between the networks (eg: the internet and your LAN)
Wireless Access Point (WAP): a switch that allows devices to connect wirelessly.
Cables: the cables in a network can be twisted pair cables, coaxial cables or fibre optic cables.

NETWORK PERFORMANCE

These factors can impact on network performance:
Bandwidth: The more bandwidth, the more data that can be transferred at a time.
Number of Users: Having a lot of people using a network means lots of data is being transmitted which can slow it down.
Transmission Media: Wired connections are faster than wireless. Fibre optic cables are faster than copper cables.
Wireless Factors: wireless can be affected by walls, distance, signal quality and interference from other devices.
Topology: The layout of a network can impact on its performance.

VIRTUAL NETWORKS

A virtual network is part of a LAN or WAN where only certain devices can "see" and communicate with each other usually connected remotely.

EXAM QUESTIONS

1. Give 3 items of hardware needed for a network
2. Explain the difference between a peer-to-peer network and a client server network.
3. The school's network has become very slow. Explain two different reasons why this might be.
4. Evaluate the benefits of using a wired connection rather than a wireless one.