



16 July 2020

Dear Prep School Parents and Guardians

Use of technology and devices from Autumn Term 2020

I write with information about the developments in use of technology we are planning for the next academic year.

The period of remote learning has allowed us as a community – boys and teachers alike – to develop our use of technology for learning to a far greater degree than anticipated. Feedback from boys and teachers has revealed personalised learning opportunities that digital technologies have allowed, which include immediate individual feedback, the use of specialist learning software and access to a range of resources to suit different boys' interests or learning preferences.

Furthermore, the last half term of seeing boys in the Prep School using their personal devices in our classrooms has revealed some more practical benefits of mobile technology, such as the ease with which resources can be accessed (without heavy or shared textbooks), or topics researched and the opportunities to collaborate on tasks from different locations (allowing social distancing).

Whilst many of these technologies have been part of boys' learning for some time at Bedford School, their use has often meant a trip to a computer room (which reduces the flexibility of learning opportunities within a lesson). As such, from September, we intend to complement our traditional teaching and learning with greater use of digital technologies in the classroom.

With this in mind, it will be important that all boys (in Year 5 through to Year 8) in the Prep School have a device that they can bring into school to enable them to access these methods of learning. We know many boys already have a device, so we do not wish to stipulate a particular model but rather a basic specification that is intended to cover a range of designs and budgets. We do appreciate that new devices are not inexpensive, so if financial pressures make it difficult for your son to bring a device, please contact the Bursary so that we can discuss how we might be able to support. We will also have a bank of reserve laptops to loan out to boys whose devices become temporarily unserviceable.

As well as maintaining the correct focus on boys developing their own writing skills (on paper), we feel that it will be advantageous for them to be able adapt and move between digital technology and traditional learning methods. We are mindful of keeping a healthy balance of time off screen, and our usual teaching approach will not be replaced with work on a computer; rather, it will become a part of our educational toolkit. However with this in mind, we have made the decision that boys in Year 3 and Year 4 will not need a personal remote device in school. We have a good supply of iPads to draw upon for occasions when technology would assist teaching and learning for these boys. Furthermore we find that handwriting is not always embedded in the youngest year groups and we believe that the importance of developing this skill supersedes the need for individual digital devices.

Please see below for some further information about these specifications and other practical matters.

FAQs

What are the minimum specifications?

There are minimum functional specifications recommended for the pupil to use their device for digital learning, because Bedford School uses mostly cloud-based apps in the classroom, it is not essential to have a high specification device to run the latest applications. Devices should meet the requirements of the Digital Pencil Case criteria:

- Wi-Fi connectivity*
- Web browser access to school email accounts
- Camera and picture storage
- Video and audio recording
- Devices should have a keyboard attached (a laptop or laptop/tablet hybrid is preferable to a tablet), and they can bring a mouse too, if it is easier to use than a touch pad
- A good quality protective case (labelled)

*To guarantee the best digital learning experience, Wi-Fi capability is an important consideration. A pupil's personal device should be capable of 2.4GHz or 5 GHz dual-band Wi-Fi connectivity. This means that the device should have 802.11 a/n or ac as the Wi-Fi standard. Also, be aware that if your child's device is equipped with wireless standard 802.11 b/g/n, then it is unlikely to be 5 GHz compatible.

We would also ask that boys have a set of headphones for personal use in school, too.

Can you give me some purchasing advice?

The market is highly competitive and so any advice given is likely to quickly date. Although a Windows-based laptop computer is the preferred device, an Apple laptop would also be suitable. A Chromebook with ac Wi-Fi may be chosen as a cheaper option (under £200).

If you have a suitable device at home there is no need to buy a new one. However, if buying a new device (such as a laptop) it is not necessary to purchase an expensive one. So long as it meets the minimum specification outlined above, it will be suitable for school use.

What software will be required?

Bedford School utilises a range of number cloud-based services that are made available to pupils. As well as the hosted services such as Firefly, these include the Microsoft Office 365 suite of applications, which are available for pupils to download and install on up to five of their personal devices at no cost.

Boys' personal devices should be kept secure with an up-to-date antivirus application recommended for all devices.

Can I lease a device from the School?

The school does not directly lease devices to pupils but can advise on leasing plans that are available through third parties.

What about insurance?

Parents should consider insurance coverage to cover the cost of replacement or repair of their son's personal device in the event of loss or damage that occurs on school premises, or during school visits and activities. Household contents insurance does not always cover devices away from the home so this should be checked carefully. Laptop manufacturers and retailers often offer specific policies which could be considered.

What technical support will the School offer?

We will support with software configuration matters associated with connecting to the school's wireless network and school software and platforms. We may be able to support boys who have suspected virus or malware issues, although pupils should ensure their device has an up-to-date antivirus application. We will not be able to give technical or hardware support beyond basic diagnosis and advice.

Will there be recharging facilities in School?

We will expect boys have their device charged ready for the day with sufficient charge to last three to four hours although we are exploring a limited number of central recharging facilities.

Will my son's power device require PAT testing?

Yes – we will test boys' power devices at the start of the academic year. Boarders will already be familiar with this process, which is used to test electronic devices brought into the boarding house.

Will my son use his device to take notes in lessons or complete tests?

Your son's teacher will give instructions relevant to each subject, but we do not anticipate devices will be used for any activities where handwriting would normally be expected. Constructing extended handwritten responses is an essential skill in most subjects and will continue to be developed in lessons. Tests or examinations (internal or external) will not be completed on devices unless boys have a specific access arrangement with the Academic Support department.

Who should I contact with questions not answered here?

Please contact our [Deputy Head, Mr Jonathan Egan](#), or our [Assistant Head, Mrs Jo Christian](#).

With best wishes



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