

16 July 2020



Dear Upper School Parents and Guardians

### **Use of technology and devices from Autumn Term 2020**

I write with further information about the developments in use of technology we are planning for 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 the personalised learning opportunities digital technologies have allowed: immediate individual feedback, use of diagnostic learning software and access to a range of resources to suit different boys' interests or learning preferences. As teachers, we have discovered new aspects of technology to allow us to tailor our teaching to boys' individual needs.

The last few weeks of seeing boys in the Prep School using their personal devices in our classrooms has also revealed some more practical benefits of mobile technology: the ease with which resources can be accessed (without heavy or shared textbooks), the opportunities to collaborate on tasks from different locations and the acceleration in the boys' technical literacy and responsibility.

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 more innovative use of digital technologies in the classroom. Our approach to technology is pedagogically-driven (rather than technology-driven); we have no interest in replacing the learning activities of classroom discussion and teacher instruction but seek to enhance this with technology only where appropriate.

With this in mind, it will be important that all boys in the Upper 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 that they use in school, 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 not ask boys to bring a specific type of ballpoint pen and our approach to devices is the same – if it does the job then it is appropriate! 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.

The decision is part of our long-term digital learning strategy, although we are also minded that use of pupil devices will help to ensure some aspects of educational continuity under the requirements of social distancing next academic year.

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

Thank you for your ongoing support and feedback on the remote learning your sons have been engaged with this term. Whilst we are planning for a full reopening in September, we do wish to learn from the boys' experiences of remote learning in the event that it is required at some stage in the future. All boys have been surveyed as part of their House days and we will be using this to inform some of our digital learning strategy ahead. Mr Montgomery (our Assistant Head Teaching and Learning) would also be pleased to receive further feedback from parents.

With best wishes



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## FAQs

### What is the minimum specification?

There are minimum functional specifications recommended for each boy to use his device for digital learning. As 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
- Calculator application
- Camera and picture storage
- Video and audio recording
- App for taking notes
- Devices should have a keyboard attached (a laptop or laptop/tablet hybrid is preferable to a tablet)
- Protective case

\*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.

### **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.

Experience suggests that devices with a solid state drive (SSD) give more 'ruggedness' when being transported in backpacks.

### **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. We recommend that boys use Windows 10, which has good inbuilt antivirus software.

### **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. Please contact [IT Support](#).

### **What about insurance and security?**

Parents should consider insurance 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 be using his device in lessons all of the time?**

Absolutely not. We see the device as being part of the 'pencil case' that boys can access for specific learning activities and are minded to ensure 'screen time' in a particular day is limited. There may be times (such as when writing coursework) where devices might be used more frequently.

**Can my son use his mobile phone as his device?**

We feel that mobile phones are helpful for 'snacking' on information and activities, but meaningful learning requires a keyboard function and larger screen.

**Who should I contact with questions not answered here?**

Please contact our [Director of Digital Learning, Dr Albin Wallace](#) who will be pleased to help.