

Dear Parents

I am writing to you with further information about our BYOD policy. We have explained the benefits in terms of teaching and learning, but I include a reminder, as well as a little more detail concerning physical and cyber security.

Philosophy

The period of remote learning has allowed us as a community to develop our use of technology for learning to a far greater degree than anticipated. Feedback from boys and teachers revealed personalised learning opportunities that easily available digital technology allows. This includes the ability to provide 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, because we were able to observe boys using their personal devices in the Prep School, we recognise more practical benefits of mobile technology, such as the ease with which resources can be accessed (without heavy or shared textbooks). Researching topics is much more straightforward, and the availability of mobile technology enables more 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, their use has often meant a trip to a computer room (which reduces the flexibility of learning opportunities within a lesson).

Mobile devices will also be particularly helpful in the short term whilst we are bound by Government guidelines to keep us safer during the Covid-19 pandemic. They will enable teachers to assess understanding of learning more easily, identify misconceptions at an individual and class level. BYOD will also provide a means of marking and feeding back on work at a time when handling books is less straightforward. In addition, we will all be in a far better position should we face another localised lockdown.

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 to 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, devices 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 for the first two years.

Physical Security

We appreciate that laptops and other devices are expensive pieces of kit. That said, boys in Y3-6 used them in school last term with very few issues at all. It is important that the boys are responsible for their devices, and that families have their own insurance to cover loss or damage. They must use their lockers when their devices are not with them (and they are provided with lockable lockers), and not leave them outside.

The main area of concern is when transporting the devices between home and school, and around school. This term, the second concern is alleviated by the fact that, for most subjects, boys will stay in the same classrooms, with allocated desks. Laptops may be brought into school using a school rucksack or the current school shoulder (laptop style) bag. Boys may not take their rucksacks around school with them, as this encourages boys to carry far too much weight on their backs, and they are cumbersome in stairwells and corridors. The boys are, though, welcome to carry a device in a laptop sleeve/case or in their book bag. We are currently looking at a choice of school branded laptop bags which may be purchased at the school shop, No Limitz, as an optional item. If you wish, you will be able to order these shortly. It is perfectly acceptable for boys to bring their own laptop sleeve or case if they wish.

Cyber-Security

Our IT Director has kindly prepared some answers to FAQs relating to cyber-security. See below:

What protection is in place within the network to prevent boys from introducing malware or a virus that then spreads to other users on the network?

The School employs a multi-layer network security approach that includes various hardware appliances and monitoring software. The School and wider Harpur Trust are also Cyber Essentials certified. Our WiFi Network operates device isolation so no BYOD Device is able to communicate with another BYOD Device. We also isolate by Key Stage Groups. Access to other School VLANs is strictly controlled at a network level.

What access controls are in place to prevent boys from accessing inappropriate or sensitive content?

Boys will be required to log on to the WiFi which will put them into their appropriate Key Stage filtering group. The school takes its safeguarding seriously and filters access at a network level accordingly.

What controls are in place to stop one boy from accessing or using another boy's laptop?

We will explain to the boys how it is important from a security point of view, and also essential not to touch other boys' devices especially during this time in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19. During this term, boys will be mostly in their tutor base for lessons, so this will not be so much of an issue, as boys will have a desk which is theirs. Boys are taught to respect each other's property in our pastoral education. In addition, computers will only be used when directed by teachers and under their supervision.

How are you monitoring access from multiple devices?

We have full monitoring on what devices a boy is using and where they are accessing it from.

How will you offer technical support to devices of different configurations and brands?

We will provide support to enable accessing the School WiFi but will not be providing formal support for BYOD. However, we will always offer best endeavors if a boy has an issue. BYOD Support is the responsibility of the Parents / Boy.

Will you be teaching the boys more widely about acceptable use, how to keep themselves and their devices safe etc?

Yes. This will form part of the first day's briefing, as well as being ongoing and in PSHE lessons (PD as we call it), assemblies and via periodic updates to parents. The link below may well be helpful in this regard.

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/information-for/individuals-families>

A reminder of the FAQs we sent out previously:

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 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.

Pupils' 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 the pupil'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 3-4 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, at jegan@bedfordschool.org.uk, or our Assistant Head, Mrs Jo Christian, at jchristian@bedfordschool.org.uk