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Bringing your own laptop to school

At Samuel Whitbread Academy we use Google Chromebooks and the associated G Suite of apps and software. We believe that individual access to your own device can be hugely beneficial to your learning. Using these tools, information can be shared more easily between teachers and students and learning materials become readily available, and they are increasingly being used in lessons by students to record the work.

We welcome students bringing their own devices into school to support their learning. This is by no means compulsory, and their use will be carefully managed by teachers in lessons. Many students are using them in many of their lessons, alongside their other written work but there is no expectation that all students have a laptop in school.

What sort of device can I bring in?

We are using Chromebooks in school extensively and we think that these provide a cost effective solution in supporting school work. If you choose to use a small and affordable windows laptop for example, the G Suite and Google Drive can all be accessed. We would generally advise against students bringing in high end and highly expensive equipment as devices are brought in at your own risk, and would need to be covered by your own insurance.

Why Chromebooks

- The 11.6" devices are compact, about A4 sized. They will fit in a school bag and aren't too heavy.
- They can provide a more affordable option.
- We already use G Suite for Education and teachers are using Drive, Gmail, Docs and Classroom.
- If you're not familiar with G Suite, it offers powerful word processing, presentation and spreadsheet software, all backed up automatically to your Google Drive. No more losing your work because you forgot to save it. Microsoft Office documents can be opened in Docs, Sheets and Slides.
- Unlimited cloud storage, so no need for memory sticks or emailing work to yourself. All work you do in school can be available on any web enabled device in the world. Apps are available for Android and iOS that can sync information to mobile devices.
- You will be able to login with your school google account (eg. 09jsmith@mybest.org.uk)
- Connectivity
 - At school - you will be connected to the school Wi-Fi and as such certain sites will be blocked.
 - Away from school - you can connect to your home Wi-Fi, or Wi-Fi in public locations.
 - Offline - if you can't connect to Wi-Fi, the Chromebook still functions. When you reconnect your work will upload to Google Drive.
 - The device will be managed while it is on the school network and we can monitor and track usage to keep students safe online.

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What sort of device could I buy?

Many manufacturers now produce a Chromebook model and they are widely available online and in shops. As a school we have a mixture of Acer, Dell and HP devices, other companies also produce similar computers. We use devices with an 11.6" screen (often sold as 11") as these are light, small and portable.

As Chromebooks store files in the cloud on the Google Drive, the amount of on board storage is less relevant than it would be for a PC or Mac. As they are going to mostly be used for simple browsing and office type applications, they do not need lots of processing power and high levels of memory either, so even the most basic of model will be adequate for what might be needed in school.

At the time of writing, a number of entry level Chromebooks, such as the Dell Chromebook 11, Asus Chromebook C223NA, Acer Chromebook 11, HP Chromebook 11 are all available in the region of £175 and at times, even less. We have found that the different Chromebooks that we have perform similarly and are consistently reliable.

You might also want to consider an entry level Windows notebook such as the HP Stream 11, or something similar which is priced similarly. The good thing about the Google Suite of applications and storage is that files and applications can be accessed on any device with an internet connection.

However, we are unable to recommend or endorse any specific device directly and any information in this letter is provided for illustrative and informative purposes and to help you in any decisions you might take.

What else do I need to know?

As with all personal equipment that young people bring into school, it is done at their own risk, and we would ask that you have sufficient insurance in place. We've found that our machines are better cared for when they are in a good quality carry case when not being used.

It's important to note that the class teacher will decide when it is and when it is not appropriate for a student to use their own device in lessons. We do encourage their use, but also recognise that we have to prepare the vast majority of students to be hand writing their GCSE and A Level examinations by hand. A separate policy exists for those who need to word process their exams, which is available on our website within the examinations policy.

If you would like to know more about which device might be suitable, as with all consumer electronics, there is plenty of advice online with trusted reviews. If you'd like to know more about how we use IT in school to support learning, then please contact Mr Rowell (trowell@bestacademies.org.uk) for more information.

Kind Regards

Thomas Rowell
Assistant Principal



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