**BYOD - Gillotts School Guide for Parents and Carers**

Effective Date: June 2021

**Overview:**

Since 2015 Gillotts school has run a BYOD (Bring your own device) policy which means that students are required to have a mobile device with them every day in lessons to support them with their learning. From the start of the new academic year in September 2021, all students will be required to bring a mobile device with at least a 7 inch screen (ideally at least 10 inches) into school each day.

This device will need to be capable of holding a charge for at least 5 hours and will need to be fully charged at the start of each day. This device should either be a Chromebook, laptop or tablet. **It cannot be a mobile phone.**

**What type of device and why?**

Our experience is that all of the three types of device which will be allowed (Chromebooks, laptops and tablets) have advantages and disadvantages. However, it is important to bear in mind that it does need to be robust as it will be carried around during the school day.

The students will need to look after their own device and they will not be covered by the school’s insurance in cases of damage or where they are stolen.

**Windows Laptops:**

Windows 10 is preferred as it is supported by Microsoft. Although older versions of Windows will still work they will become more unstable over time.

The recommended specifications to look out for:

* 11” (min) to 17” (max) screen - our recommendation is for 14” as this tends to be the best compromise between price, comfort and battery life.
* 4 GB (min) Ram (Memory) or higher
* 256 GB or larger SSD Hard Drive recommended (SSD Hard Drives are much faster than older SATA Hard Drives but tend to be smaller as technology moves more towards cloud storage)
* Anti-Virus Software: it is always recommended that you install antivirus software - there are many available (McAfee, Norton, Kaspersky etc) for prices ranging from £19 to £40 per year.
* If you have a home PC with antivirus software installed, check your licence as many providers allow you to install on 2 or more computers. AVG Free is an option - just keep selecting the “free” option when downloading and ignore the free trial for Pro version.

**Chromebook:**

Acer, Asus and HP produce the most widely used range of Chromebooks. Other manufacturers include Samsung as well as a Google branded range but these tend to be more expensive.

Overall the Chromebook has evolved over the past decade to become a genuine alternative to Windows Laptops and PCs. With more powerful components, decent build quality across the price ranges and an established selection of “apps” the devices give the benefits of the laptop format without the concerns for viruses or loss of data as they store most information in a private cloud account. They also have good battery life.

Chromebooks work well for school as we use the Google Workspace for Education and Chromebooks are “native” to Google. Price-wise, Chromebooks can be found with a reasonable specification from around £170 while our top end price recommendation is to spend no more than £300.

When shopping around the device should meet the following specifications:

* 11” (min) to 17” (max) screen - our recommendation is for 14” as this tends to be the best compromise between price, comfort and battery life.
* 2 GB (min) Ram (Memory), 4 GB would be our recommendation.
* 36 GB or larger SSD Hard Drive - Chromebooks only use a small amount of local storage and do also come with 16GB Hard Drives. It is recommended that you look at 36GB or larger due to not wanting to be limited to the number of add-ons (applications) you can have at a later stage.

**Tablets:**

Tablets are a popular alternative to laptops, due to being very portable and having a long battery life. Both Apple and Android devices are established in this field but when it comes to Android it is recommended you stick to the well-known brands (apart from Amazon, see note below).

**Apple I pads**

We recommend the Apple I Pad 10.2 inch 2020 Edition version. We would also encourage you to purchase a separate keyboard to help with typing.

**Android Tablets**
Android has a good track record in the tablet market as, unlike Apple, the operating system is open to any firm to develop for. The downside is that cheap imports are often poorly built and may cause more issues than the saving in cost is worth.

Brands such as Asus, Google, HTC, Samsung, Lenovo, Huawei are the market leaders in this area - Microsoft also offer a Windows tablet called “Surface” - but this tends to be very expensive.

|  |
| --- |
| **Amazon Kindle/Fire Tablets - Do not purchase for school work**Unfortunately, although a few of the models are actually very good as tablets in terms of speed, price and quality, Amazon controls the range of apps available and a number of apps we use are either not compatible or not available on Kindle and Fire tablets.  |

**Which device type do we recommend?**

On balance, we believe that Chromebooks are the most suitable type of device as they:

* have a keyboard
* are quite robust, particularly if a case is used
* boot up quickly so students can start working within a few seconds
* do not slow down as they get older
* can hold a long charge
* are integrated with Google applications which we use all the time in school

If your child already has a laptop or tablet this will be a suitable device for school. However, if you come to replace it at some stage we would suggest purchasing a Chromebook.

**Costs and Quality**

At the time of writing this review we are still seeing low stock and inflated prices across many PC and device ranges due to the series of lockdowns, home-working and home-schooling. In addition to this, we have had large parts of the manufacturing processes disrupted by the pandemic. We are not sure how long this will affect prices for.

There will always be offers around for computers, laptops and tablets and at the end of the day you should be expecting the device to be used for a good few years. It is important to bear in mind that it will be carried around in your child’s school bag and therefore needs to be robust. Purchasing a case to protect the device will be a very sensible further investment.

If you have any technical questions about the requirements for a larger screen device, please contact me by e-mail: itservices@gillotts.org.uk

Andrew Cole

IT Services Manager