Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) scheme - which device should I buy?

Introduction

As you will be aware, all our students are required to have a large screen mobile device in school every day to support their learning. This device needs to have a minimum screen size of 10 inches.

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.**

The device will be connected to the internet via our school Wi-Fi network and access will be filtered by RLT/Gillotts to ensure that the students can only access age appropriate websites, safeguarded and receive School services.

Which applications will my child be using?

Irrespective of which type of large screen mobile device your child brings to school, there are a number of core applications (apps) which they need to have installed on their device. These include:

- Google Chrome Browser
- Google Calendar
- Google Classroom
- Google Drive
- Google Mail

You may also want to consider installing the following apps, as students will use these in some of their lessons:

- Dictionary.com
- QR reader app
- A voice or sound recorder app
- Periodic Table by Royal Society of Chemistry
- Word Reference (MFL)
- Duolingo (MFL)

What type of device and why?

Our experience is that all of the three types of large screen device (Chromebooks, laptops and tablets) have advantages and disadvantages. However, it is important to bear in mind that the device 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 devices will not be covered by the school's insurance in cases of damage or where they are stolen.

Chromebooks:

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 the Google platform.

Price-wise Chromebooks can be found with a reasonable specification from around £150 and devices with a higher specification will cost around £300.

When shopping around the device should meet the following specifications:

- Screen: 11" (minimum) to 17" (maximum) screen - our recommendation is for 14" as this tends to be the best compromise between price, comfort and battery life.
- Ram: 4 GB (minimum) or Higher (Memory)
- 64 GB or larger SSD Hard Drive - Chromebooks only use a small amount of local storage. It is recommended that you look at 64GB or larger in order not to be limited with the number of add-ons (applications) you can have at a later stage.

Important information relating to setting up a Chromebook

- Existing Students will need to log into the device using their school credentials
- New students will be assisted in setting up new devices when they arrive at the school.
- We recommend that the device only be used for their school account.
- If you have already set up your child's device with the 'Parent Lock' or 'Family Link' feature, this will need to be removed from the device. This can be done by Powerwashing the device and may be done by IT if needed to get the device operational under the child's school account.
- Please ensure that the students device is charged and in their bag as students will be using their devices in school from the start of term.

If you are unsure about any aspect of this process, please e-mail: itservices@gillotts.org

Other device types

There are a range of other device types which students can currently use as their BYOD device. These include Windows laptops, ipads and Android tablets (not Amazon Fire devices).

We strongly recommend that students use a Chromebook rather than one of these devices. This is, in part, because the school relies very heavily on Google applications. Chromebooks are designed around using the Chrome operating system (OS) and are the most compatible devices. It is also likely that at some point in the next 12-18 months most or all students will be required to have a Chromebook as part of our move to the River Learning Trust..

If your child is using a non Chromebook device, it is very important that parents do not enable or install any parental controls on this device. If this is the case it may not be possible for your child to use the device in school/ with their school account. In addition, the child must have full administrative rights to the device.

a) **Windows Laptops:**

Windows 11 is required as it is supported by Microsoft.

The recommended specifications to look out for are:

- Screen: 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.
- RAM: 8 GB (min) Ram (Memory) or higher
- Storage: 256 GB or larger SSD Hard Drive recommended
- Anti-Virus Software: Functioning anti-virus: Microsoft defender (preinstalled) or third party Software: (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.

b) **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 Ipads**

We 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. 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 and Lenovo are the market leaders in this area.

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?

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 recommend purchasing a Chromebook.

Costs and Quality

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 the IT Services team by e-mail: itservices@gillotts.org

Yours faithfully

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