

## Advice and Recommendations for Purchasing Electronic Devices for School Use, December 2015

During the run up to Christmas parents often ask for advice about purchasing laptops, tablets and other devices for school/homework use. Below there are some basic tips and advice about things to look out for, things to avoid and ways to save money.

### Laptops

- Dual band wireless (2.4 & 5 GHz) would be useful as our Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) network makes use of 5 GHz to improve connectivity in high usage areas. We have found laptops with Intel wireless chipsets work particularly well.
- Battery life and weight should be high on the list as the device should ideally be able to retain charge for a full school day and light enough to carry around.
- A lot of the components in a laptop are integrated into the main board. It may be wise to budget for extended warranty to avoid expensive repairs, or check home insurance cover.
- When budgeting for a laptop, people often assume additional software is going to cost a lot. *MS Office* is the industry standard, but at £80 for the base student version, it can be expensive. *Open Office* is a free alternative that can open and save regular office documents. The use of the school remote desktops also means the student can use most of the software available in school, at home. Similarly, antivirus needn't cost £30-40 a year. There is *Microsoft Security Essentials*, which is free. Also *AVG* and *Avast* produce free solutions. The savings would be better spent on better hardware.
- For non-windows laptops, we have found that Chromebooks, Linux laptops and Apple devices work well on the BYOD network in school, however, the filtering will prevent a lot of the ecosystem on Chromebooks. The use of cloud productivity packages like OneDrive/Office 365 and google docs are blocked for students. Also, the word processing package on Apple laptops (Pages) saves to a format which the school computers cannot open.
- Generally speaking, if the spec of a prospective device is adequate for what it is needed at home, this should still be the case in school.
- It's worth mentioning that it is not advisable to use mobile internet enabled (e.g. mobile phone) devices as hotspots for internet use; our wireless will block them as rogues.

## Tablets/phones

- The school mainly uses iPads, but Android, Windows mobile and blackberry tablets and phones all connect and work on the school BYOD network, and can use the resources.

Any device will need to have no settings for proxies or specified DHCP settings saved. This will interfere with the operation of the device on BYOD.

There are apps available on apple and android devices that support the electronic resources available at THS. Owncloud (our file-sharing software) has iOS and Android apps. Frog also has apps on iOS. The VMWare Horizon Client (our remote desktops software) is available for iOS Android Mac and PC. There is also regular web access to all of these resources which only requires a modern web browser.

Should you require any further advice about purchasing a device for school use, please email Dr Ennion: [tennion@thomas-hardye.net](mailto:tennion@thomas-hardye.net)