

Friday 31 May 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

UPDATE: Years 7 to 12 Device Provision from September 2024

We hope you are well and enjoying the half-term break. We have received some individual questions regarding our device provision and thought it would be helpful to share the responses with the entire parent community.

Why are we using devices?

Over the last three years, as part of our strategic ambition to prepare our students for a digital future, we have issued all pupils in Years 7 to 11 with an inkable device and asked all Sixth Form students to bring their own device to school. This has enabled a significant increase in the use of devices to enhance and personalise student learning, to improve educational experiences and to use our resources in a more environmentally friendly way.

Our safeguarding accountability

The use and provision of devices must be undertaken in compliance with our legal safeguarding duties. The updated government KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023) statutory guidance for schools and colleges outlines the requirement for schools to provide a safe environment to learn and work, including when online.

In the government's updated guidance, it is the schools' responsibility to ensure filtering and monitoring helps safeguard pupils and staff from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. As such we are required to do all we can *"to limit a child's exposure to harmful and inappropriate online material"*.

Why must devices be school-owned? Why can we no longer BYOD?

To comply with this new government guidance, we need the ability to filter and monitor all devices which requires us to install specific technology onto all devices. This means that we cannot responsibly fulfil our duty to filter and monitor students who bring in their own devices.

Filtering allows us to block harmful websites, whilst monitoring allows us to be alerted to trigger words or harmful content. Being able to pick up worrying incidents and key trigger words whilst in school is an important part of being able to provide a safe environment and has already been extremely effective and helpful in Years 7 to 11.

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads receive all alerts. These are reviewed and if they are found to be of concern, a member of the pastoral team will speak to the student and if needed, inform the parents.



We install and monitor using two pieces of technology:

- Smoothwall is a web filtering platform that scans and blocks unwanted web content.
- SENSO is software that monitors keywords that students may be inputting on a Windows device. It can also give teachers access to students' screens during lessons as a classroom management tool.

Access to school software. To make our academic software easily accessible, all our devices must be enrolled into our Mobile Device Management system.

Security challenges with BYOD. Students bringing in their own devices provides us with a variety of security challenges, including an inability to ensure devices and their owners comply with school policies and procedures, to protect students' data, and to ensure the schools are legally compliant. Personal devices may also lack data encryption capabilities, contain malicious apps or malware, or be more vulnerable to attack from online threats. We are unable to ensure that devices have the filtering and monitoring software installed, and the responsibility to manage anti-virus software, security updates and safety measures falls to the device owner, which gives us little or no control over the safeguarding of the device.

Why are we leasing devices?

We have decided to lease rather than buy devices for two main reasons:

Flexibility and upgrades. Over a seven-year period technology will improve and equipment will age. Our lease contracts provide us with the flexibility in our contracts to upgrade devices when required.

Warranty benefits. Leasing the devices incorporates an extended warranty for all devices so students are covered in the event of any hardware failures.

It is for these reasons we made the decision to issue devices to all students in the Senior Schools from September 2024 (with the exception of the Upper Sixth for whom it would cause too much disruption from an academic perspective).

Why are we now itemising the device charge separately?

In the past, we have not itemised devices separately on our termly invoices, rather the cost that you now see as a separate line item was previously incorporated into the general fee. We decided to separate out the cost and include it as an individual item to provide cost transparency. This separate charge was taken into consideration when the fee level for 2024/5 was determined.

You may be aware that many other schools who include device provision within their fees had different fee rises and you may also be aware that many other schools have moved to a fee model which offers more transparency. This is becoming the common model across the sector.

What does the termly device charge cover:

We have been advised that the devices will last a maximum of three to four years. After four years, the battery life and memory will be unlikely to be sufficient for day-to-day school use for any student.

A child starting in Year 7 will receive three brand new devices during their time in the Senior School. We have listened now to the feedback about the functionality of the Microsoft Go and will be moving to the Surface Pro.

The specification may change from year to year depending on the release of new models, but for Years 7, 9 and 12 in September 2024, it will be:

Year 7 - Microsoft Surface Pro 9 for Business

Year 9 - Microsoft Surface Pro 10 for Business

Year 12 - Microsoft Surface Pro 10 for Business

Students entering Years 8, 10, and 11 in September will continue using the same device as they have had this year, but those devices will be collected over the summer, wiped and rebuilt to improve performance.

The termly device charge and what it includes.

We have worked closely with several suppliers to secure the best possible pricing. The charge for device rental is £125 per term (£375 a year).

From September 2024, this includes:

- Microsoft Surface Pro for Business 9/10 device in Year 7, 9, 12 (with the ability to purchase at the end of Year 13)
- Strong protective case
- Type cover (keyboard)
- Pre-fitted screen protector (offers protection against accidental damage)
- Software, safeguarding filtering.
- All ongoing updates
- Extended service warranty

Will I own the device at the end of my child's time at Habs?

It will be possible, should parents/students wish, to purchase their device when they leave the School. The cost would be calculated around 6 months beforehand by the leasing company, based on the expected residual value of the device. We will share further details in due course.

I can find the device cheaper online; why can I not purchase it myself?

The devices are Business models (as opposed to consumer models available at a cheaper cost from high street retailers). Business devices are built with better components and stronger cases, so are more suited for regular school usage. It is also only possible to purchase the extended warranty for Business devices.

What will I need to purchase additionally?

We kindly ask that you purchase headphones and a stylus as these are cheaply available and your feedback suggests that the stylus is a very personal preference.

My child has concerns about the speed and functionality of their current device - will this improve?

The Surface devices were chosen because they combine functionality with portability and durability, having been designed with school usage in mind. However, we are aware of concerns over the performance of some devices and will be making some adjustments to the configuration of devices when they are rebuilt over the summer.

We do, of course appreciate any feedback and we will be asking the students over the Autumn Term. We are also adjusting our filtering mechanism and investing heavily in our infrastructure to improve our WiFi so the usability of the devices is not hindered by connectivity or bandwidth issues. This is a new journey for us, and we appreciate your support as we develop and improve.

We hope that this explains the considerations that have informed our decision making. Please be assured that we are fully committed to balancing costs to parents with providing the best possible education for our students. We have worked hard to negotiate these costs and we will continue to review this decision over time and ensure that the costs remain as low as possible. We are very grateful for your support.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Robert Sykes
Headmaster
Habs Boys

Dr Hazel Bagworth-Mann
Headmistress
Habs Girls