

Buying a Laptop - Advice from our ICT Operations Manager

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Where to buy

You do not have to purchase devices from any particular supplier. However, we do recommend that you purchase from a retailer that offers good warranty and insurance packages and have someone available to speak to face-to-face regarding any claims or repairs (for example, John Lewis). The IT Support Team at Wimbledon High School will endeavour to assist with internet and school system related queries, but devices with hardware and software faults will generally need to go back to the place of purchase. The IT team at school are always happy to assist where possible and advise, but cannot carry out repairs due to warranty conditions and BYOD agreements in place.

Laptop/Tablet requirements

You have the freedom to choose whatever **Windows** device fits your daughter's needs, but it must meet the following as a minimum in terms of functionality:

- Touch Screen of 9.7 inch or greater
- Detachable or flip screen to enable flat writing using a stylus (2 in 1 device)
- Windows 10 or 11
- Wireless connectivity
- A camera for video and still image processing
- The ability to play and record audio
- Web browser for access to Firefly and other online learning resources
- The ability to install and access OneDrive and other Microsoft Office applications such as OneNote, Word, Excel etc

You do not need to purchase a subscription to Microsoft Office or Microsoft 365 as this is provided free by us for the duration of your daughters time at Wimbledon High School). Your daughter will also be able to download and use the apps from the Adobe Creative Suite during her school years.

Device Specifications

When searching for a device and choosing a price range, you will need to consider a few key questions. This guide will help you understand what the key specifications of a device mean. Most online shops will allow you to search for devices by these parameters and retail staff should also be able to guide you.

Processors - The better processor you have, the faster it will deal with inputs. So, for example, a better processor will make Microsoft Office applications load and handle larger files quicker. Both AMD and Intel processors are on a level playing field and should be considered if it gives you more choice or better pricing. The I5 intel processor for example is comparable to the AMD Ryzen 5 processor

Memory (RAM) - The more RAM the computer has, the better it will be at multitasking. If you have 5 applications all running at once, you will get a smoother and faster experience if you have more RAM. We recommend 6GB of RAM as a minimum, although the minimum requirement for Office and Windows is technically 4GB

Hard Disk/Storage - The larger the hard drive, the more data you can save on the laptop and the more applications you can install. We always recommend saving work to online storage; however if you do want to store photos and videos, you will need a bigger hard drive. An SSD (solid state hard drive) is one of the newest developments in computer technology over recent years, and if the laptop has an SSD its general performance will be quicker. A device with a 64GB hard drive is an absolute minimum. 128GB or more is recommended if your daughter may want additional software. 256GB is probably a minimum if you are wanting to be able to use specialist software such as photo editing, music applications or video editing.

Touch screen - We want the students to have the facility to write or type. You will find that searching for 'convertible laptop' or similar will usually show suitable devices.

Size and weight of device – Always consider that you will generally get less in terms of device specifications for your money if buying lighter and smaller devices. We would recommend for this reason that you have the opportunity to see and hold a device before purchasing.

You will need a **stylus**. Check that it is compatible with the laptop. We like Bamboo brand as they offer reasonably priced but good quality models.

Example specifications

Budget Device (Estimate £200-£400) - An entry level device that is compact and meets the minimum specifications to run all apps that will be required for school purposes. Due to its specifications please be aware that this type of laptop has limited multitasking capabilities and may have a small hard drive which may fill up rather quickly, and could possibly need upgrading sooner than some more expensive devices. Typical budget devices may have an Intel Atom/Celeron/AMD/ Dual Core processor, 4GB of RAM and a small hard drive

***Recommended* Mid-Range Device** (Estimate £400-£600) - A mid-range device will offer a reasonable spec, with smaller compromises on quality the further up the price range you go. These will have better specifications and will generally have the lower end of the higher quality Intel "I" series processors. You are likely to see an I3 or maybe towards the top end of the budget an I5 processor in this category. I would look for 6GB RAM and an SSD hard drive in this category if you can. You may need to compromise on the size of the hard drive to get an SSD at the lower end of this price bracket but I would avoid anything smaller than 128GB. The Microsoft Surface Go 3 with 8GB RAM and a 128GB SSD is a good example currently in this price bracket.

High Spec Device (Estimate £600+) - Please consider the level of insurance that you are taking out should you decide to go significantly over this budget and make sure accidental damage is covered. There is certainly no expectation that you purchase a device way over this budget. If you are spending upwards of £600 I would expect that you should get a device that has an I5 or I7 processor, 8GB RAM+ and at probably a 256GB SSD Hard drive. Again, size and weight of the device may impact the specifications you can get for your money. If you are buying this device to make use of particular software or applications (Such as Adobe Photoshop for example), please check the device specifications against the requirements for the software.

Purchasing a device

We have moved away from recommending specific devices and focusing more on advising what type and specification of device your daughter may need. We find that the market moves so quickly and what is available varies so much that it becomes frustrating for parents when our advice then becomes outdated. The guidelines above will help you make informed decisions about your purchase - they have been devised and recently adapted in detailed consultation with teachers who know what their students need to be able to do in their lessons.

Currently, the Microsoft Surface range, Lenovo, HP and Dell all offer suitable devices in the price ranges above which are popular with current students.

When purchasing, it may be worth looking out for offers and sale events (such as Black Friday/January Sales/Back to School promotions) but be aware that these may not always be the best offers and stores may be using the opportunity to temporarily raise and then reduce pricing giving the perception of heavy reductions, or discounting older stock.

Be aware of "Price Match" promises: you may be able to purchase the equivalent device at your preferred store that has excellent customer service, while price matching from another re-seller.

If you wish to purchase direct from Microsoft, a small education discount is available. However, you need to weigh this up against the fact that Microsoft have only one physical store in the UK. Other popular retailers also often offer longer extended warranties which may be helpful.

Device protection

Devices are not covered by school insurance policies; it is up to you whether you choose to insure the device via your own home insurance policy. To reduce the chances of accidental damage consider using a tempered glass screen protector, laptop shell and or case to protect the device from the most common accidents of dropping the laptop or spills from drinks.

Anti Virus, Backing up Files & Family Management

Anti-Virus software must be installed on the laptop. We recommend Avast Free Anti-Virus software. We recommend that files of importance are backed up to your daughter's school OneDrive account, which has unlimited storage. This will mean everything is backed up and if the device was lost or the hard drive became corrupted, no critical school work would be lost. Documents and other files should never be stored only on the laptop with no backup copy.

Your daughter's use should be managed and monitored using Microsoft Family settings or a similar product. If you choose to use Microsoft Family or another management software to help monitor and control your daughter's use, there are some settings you will need to change and enable to allow her device to work on the school wifi network. We'll be in touch in more detail just before the start of the school year

If you have any queries, please do contact the Director of Digital Learning & Innovation on digital@wim.gdst.net

Apple iPads and MacBooks

If you have older daughters at the school or have friends here then you may know that early on in the BYOD programme we allowed students to bring any device, including Apple and Chromebooks. It has become very clear to us that a Windows device work best for the students.

- The device must run the Microsoft apps – OneNote, Teams and OneDrive. This is only available on Windows and Apple devices and we find that that the iOS apps are not as developed as the Windows ones. Class time also runs more smoothly when everyone is using the same app.
- The touch screen is important for intuitive working and the use of a stylus for writing and drawing. MacBooks do not have a touch screen.
- Websites with some kinds of animation do not work on an iPad. We find that many maths and modern languages resources use this technology and your daughter's experience in lessons will be compromised.

Therefore we ask that students bring Windows devices, in order to ensure they have the best experience of BYOD as an effective tool for learning.

Advice on Microsoft 365 if purchasing your daughter's laptop early

It's not possible for us to provide Office 365 before students start at school in September, as our licence doesn't allow this. In the interim there are two options:

- Sign up for Microsoft 365 account using the pay monthly option (currently £7.99 per month). The first month is free, and you can cancel on a month by month basis. This option will allow you to download the Office 365 Windows apps to the laptop.
- Use the free online only version of Microsoft 365 - details here. It doesn't have as many features and functions as the Windows apps but would be fine for a Year 6 pupil for a few months.

Once your daughter joins us in September we can help her transfer any documents she wants to keep over to her school account.