More Information on purchasing a BYO device for your child

You can choose for your child any suitable device that is capable of connecting to our network and capable of running most standard applications. Your child will be supported in their use of any appropriate device. It is ultimately a parental decision as to which, if any, device a child brings.

MacBooks are preferred but they are not compulsory. This is largely a consideration around the quality of build of the device, however your child would not be disadvantaged at all by bringing a Windows device even though teachers and most students will have Macs. With the majority of applications the differences between the two platforms are relatively minor. There are a number of students presently that bring Windows devices and use them very successfully. For most Mac applications there is generally a similar Windows application that operates in a fairly similar way. Microsoft Office works well on both platforms.

As the device, for most students, would be expected to last the whole of the time at high school (6 years) we would recommend that the device by very well built and reliable and is one of the reasons that Macs are preferred but not compulsory. There are also some very well built Windows laptops now available, especially in the last year or so. Unfortunately there are also some that are unlikely to last. The life of a student device is a hard one compared to that of a device in the hands of an adult or sitting on a desk in an office most of the time. This is a parent's decision about how much they wish to spend and how long they would expect the device to last. We understand that this is a big investment for many parents and not one they will make lightly. Some parents may be content to get three or four years of life out of the device. For most parents, this is a purchase that they would expect to be used by their child for the next six years and therefore quality is a critical consideration.

We would generally not recommend devices that use other operating systems than iOS, Mac OS (Sierra-capable) or Windows 8/10. Devices that use other, or older, operating systems generally do not behave as well on networks such as ours and may perform unreliably in such an environment. However, we will do our best to support any device that a student brings.

The things that we would suggest are most important when considering a purchase:

- High quality build that will survive the rigours of student life for six years (in and out of bags multiple times a day, the screen opened and closed numerous times etc). In particular, we would suggest paying particular attention to the hinge which is typically in our experience, a failure point over time with some cheaper Windows devices.
- SSD hard drive (at least 128Gb) that can withstand bumps and knocks much more than traditional spinning hard drives (MacBooks and some Windows devices have SSD drives - if you can, it would be a good investment to get a device with an SSD hard drive). Traditional spinning hard drives generally are more prone to failure as they get older and are much more susceptible to bumps and knocks. Having an SSD drive means one less moving part that could fail.
- Long battery life and battery management that works well in conjunction with the operating system for the student to reliably get a full day of use out of the device for years. Mac OS and Windows 10 are generally better at power management. Cheaper batteries may have a shorter lifespan and the student finds that the device runs out of charge quickly each day.
- Capable of being updated to newer versions of the Operating System over time. This is true of almost all Macs and the majority of newer Windows devices.
- 64 bit Operating Systems are the norm for Mac and new Windows devices. Four or eight GB of RAM would be recommended.
- Solid keyboard and trackpad that will be capable of surviving years of use. In our experience, trackpads can be another point of failure with some cheaper Windows devices.
- While some people like touch screens, we have found that they can also be another point of failure for a device as it ages. It is probably a personal preference but it is worth noting that screen repairs may be more expensive.
- Strong solid chassis while still light enough for the student to carry in their school bag. Cheaper devices will often use cheaper but thinner plastics and less rigidity in the frame.
- A strong bag or case to protect the device when not in use.
- A screen size in the range of 11 to 13 inches is probably the best compromise between size and weight. Any bigger can be a bit cumbersome for students.
- We recommend some suitable sort of warranty (such as AppleCare). This may vary greatly with Windows brands so it is worth checking out closely if you go that way. Ultimately it is the parent's decision to consider such things as warranty and insurance.
- We are somewhat wary of devices that only have USB-C ports (one version of MacBook and apparently a couple of newer Windows devices only have these ports) as they are still relatively uncommon and may require adapters to be carried around with them. However, a small number of students have these devices and use them successfully at school.
- A reliable manufacturer with a low device failure rate for that particular device. There are a number of manufacturers of Windows devices that have various price points for their different devices and the build quality can vary depending on how they price the device. In our experience, Macs have a very low failure rate. The best Windows devices also have a very low failure rate and there cost is often similar to that of a Mac.

We certainly understand that it is a big decision for a lot of families and you have obviously given it a lot of thought. Rest assured that whatever Windows or Mac device your child brings, we will do our best to support them and would hope that they have six years of trouble-free and engaging computing.