

Headteacher: Mr J Parr BA Hons

15th September 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an exciting opportunity for our teachers to develop new ways of delivering high quality learning for our students with technology. It is clear that learning and the way we teach should not return exactly as it was before this crisis, as we have moved a long way in terms of teaching and learning methods and want to embrace the opportunity for change. We would like to continue to build on this change in approach to enhance our curriculum offer for our school communities. Using IT safely and effectively is an essential part of everyday life for our students and we are committed to equipping them with these skills for life.

You will also be aware that although schools are currently fully open to students, the government has instructed us to be ready, should there be a need, to immediately begin remote working. This could involve setting work for students who may be shielding or for whole Year groups in the case of local lockdown, whereby there would be a rota of students spending up to a fortnight at a time at home. Should we find ourselves in another lock down situation, we will be delivering a high-quality remote curriculum immediately. Therefore, ensuring that students have a device that is 'school ready' with the specific software, security and ability to engage with live lessons and access the associated resources, if required, is paramount. This will allow students to avoid the numerous problems faced at the start of the school closure in March.

In short, we wish to enable students to have personal access to equipment that is school ready and that we know:

- Would function as we would need it to, with sufficient battery life and peripherals to engage in learning out of school, e.g. live-streamed lessons;
- Is strong and sturdy enough to withstand daily life;
- Is lightweight, meaning carrying it will not be a burden;
- Will be set up to automatically integrate with school systems and software by automatically logging in to their individual Office 365 account and provide unlimited cloud storage;
- Has appropriate permissions and restrictions, including anti-virus/firewalls to remain safe.

In order to provide all students with the opportunity to access such a device we have joined forces with Freedom Tech, a technology leasing company, who provide students with access to the latest devices in a way that is cost effective. Together we have set up the Church Stretton Chromebook Programme. By joining this programme students will have a School ready Acer Spin 512 Chromebook exclusively for their own use at home, with 3-year extended warranty, accidental damage and theft insurance, both with £0 excess for a one-off payment of £414.90. There is no financial gain to Church Stretton School from this scheme and we have worked with a number of technology suppliers to negotiate the most favourable price. We understand that this cost may not be easily affordable which is why a leasing option will be available via monthly direct debit payments over a range of payment terms in addition to the option of outright purchase, for example 36 monthly payments of £13.93. At the end of the leasing period you will have full ownership of the device. Further details of the programme and the payment options available can be found in the accompanying flyer and on the portal.

Orders can be placed using the portal at www.tech4learners.co.uk, you can logon by providing your email address, the username: **Stretton20** and password: **S3cure02!**. The portal will be open for orders on Wednesday 9th September, the deadline for orders to be placed is Sunday 11th October and the first direct debt payment will be taken on 25th October. We would expect delivery of the devices to be in early November.

In the longer term, we plan to allow students to bring in devices purchased through this scheme to lessons. If we can do this, then we would be able to significantly enhance the learning experience in many subjects. Please note that we will not allow students to bring their own device into school because research has shown that 'bring your own device' schemes create more issues in the classroom than they solve. The school readiness aspect of a device will ensure that any use in class is seamless and as problem free as possible.

We have tried to address most of the questions you may have about the scheme in the attached flyer and FAQs, however, if you have any further queries please contact me via email: daniel.bird@csschool.co.uk.

Kind regards
Mr D Bird
Assistant Headteacher

FAQs

Why Chromebooks?

- 8 second boot-up-time means there is no time wasted waiting for the device to start-up;
- All work will be in one place and accessed via student's School Office365 account;
- Automatic updates, meaning there is no need to purchase and install new software on their device;
- Can be used for homework;
- Feedback can be received in a more effective way e.g. audio recording to listen to rather than written feedback.
- Technical support at school and home through Freedom Tech;
- Research has shown these devices are very reliable and have good longevity;
- Chromebooks are increasingly being used in further education;
- It will be used as a professional tool to support home learning, but parents and students will be able to use it for their personal requirements at home, such as online shopping, Social Media, games, streaming of music and videos;
- Supporting students in developing technological skills for the world of work;
- They will have a school ready device, which should the need arise, will be immediately able to access live streamed lessons in the event of any future periods of lock down;
- We are planning for these devices to be used to support in school learning in the future, although this provision will not be offered immediately.

Why are you teaming up with Freedom Tech?

- Freedom Tech are Nationally recognised technology leasing company who have successfully worked with many Schools to provide cost effective access to learning devices;
- No upfront cost if you choose to lease;
- Scheme runs for up to 3 years, with the option to buy at the end of the lease at a minimal cost;
- Accidental damage cover, with a next day courier service should a replacement be required.

What are the key features of the programme?

- The school are providing Parents with the opportunity to secure an Acer Spin 512 Chromebook, on a lease or outright payment, for their Child(ren);
- The specifications of the devices we are offering have been carefully researched to ensure that students would be able to engage in live lessons at home, should the need arise; allowing them to participate in real time, submit work for marking/assessment and receive feedback electronically, including audio recording of feedback from their teachers;
- All students have a Windows account with access to Office365 and MS Teams environment, with access to cloud-based software and specific educational software, which will be easily accessed on this school ready device;
- Whilst the Chromebook is operated through the school account, activity on the Chromebook can be filtered and monitored providing a high level of e-safety;
- Students and parents will need to sign a Chromebook user agreement which outlines their responsibilities under the scheme and the responsibilities of the school.

Why can't my child(ren) use their own laptop/tablet/phone instead?

A classroom of pupils with many different types of device makes it impossible for teaching staff to ensure all pupils can effectively access the same resource. All our teachers have experience of using Chromebooks and can tailor lessons and resources around them. Furthermore, with many different types of device on site, it would not be practical for us to ensure that every pupil's machine is always fully operational. Having a standard model means that we can ensure a suitable network infrastructure exists to support these devices. Equally decisive, however, has been the feedback from the pupils themselves, as many did not want to be competing with their peers about who had the newest/most expensive/stylish device. They preferred the

idea of a single common specification, which, like uniform, was the same for everyone. It was this clear message that was decisive for us in adopting the route we have chosen, rather than a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) scheme.

Is this the end of traditional teaching?

Absolutely not, your child(s) will continue to work and learn with traditional writing implements, paper and books. However, technology does enable greatly enhanced access to information and powerful tools for communication, learning and working. When deployed effectively and appropriately, ICT can make a significant contribution towards your child's progress. Furthermore, mastery of ICT will of course be necessary in their future workplace, and we wish to ensure that they are trained in using these tools effectively, safely and professionally. Church Stretton School is fortunate in having a staff of excellent and experienced teachers who are personally and professionally committed to face to face, personalised, high quality teaching delivered both within and beyond the classroom. Church Stretton School remains committed to developing the whole child and to ensuring that the deployment of technology is carried out in a manner that is consistent with, and directed by, our inclusive and caring ethos.

How much will it cost?

Our experience has guided our decision on a device, warranty and insurance. The devices we have selected come with a licence, 3-year extended warranty and 3-year theft/accidental damage insurance. The one-off upfront cost of the package is £414.90 or there are leasing options that will allow you to spread the cost by monthly direct debit, for example 36 monthly payments of £13.93. At the end of your payment plan the device then belongs to you.

What about repairs & technical support?

All devices are fully managed, and many features/apps locked down for security and e-safety. This enables us to disable machines making them useless in the event of loss/theft. The in-house ICT team will provide day to day technical support. These devices benefit from an excellent battery life, and if your child adopts the habit of charging their Chromebook at home, they will find that it will last all day.

I have a question that has not been answered by the above?

Please contact me by e-mail: daniel.bird@csschool.co.uk.