

Pupil Laptops: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Academic Year 2011/12

Who needs a laptop in school?

Laptops are not currently used routinely in class so we do not expect pupils to bring a portable computer to school. Desktop computers are frequently used in teaching throughout the campus and pupils typically use email or USB storage devices to transfer information between home and school. PCs are available throughout the school for private study. Dispensation is given to a small number of pupils to use laptop computers in class following formal evaluation for learning support needs in which case a simple, robust machine is recommended; internet access is not available to machines during lessons. The school provides computers during examinations for these pupils.

Do boarding students need a laptop?

Many boarders, especially in the Middle School and Sixth Form, find a laptop useful for work and communication in the evenings and at weekends. Personally-owned portable devices can be connected to the school's wireless network which operates in many areas of the campus, including all boarding houses. Every house also has a suite of PCs for pupil use in a quiet part of the house.

How do students access the internet through the school's wireless network?

The IT Service Department provides and maintains a wireless network that gives connected devices access to the internet in many parts of the campus. If your child brings a wireless enabled mobile computer or other device to school, they will be able to connect automatically to the internet. The school filters wireless internet access for appropriate content in our school environment. Please email the Director of Information Systems, Mrs Sarah Williamson (sxw@sevenoaksschool.org) if you do not wish your child to have internet access.

Please note that 3G internet access is unfiltered, giving unfettered access to the internet. The school is concerned about the impact this may have on the students as well as their peers and our e-security policy therefore prohibits the use of 3G datacards and similar devices in school. Parents must also accept that, if their child uses an internet phone (smartphone) or similar 3G portable device in school, they will have unfiltered and uncontrolled access to the internet. The school is unable to monitor this type of use.

What support does the school offer for pupil-owned laptops?

The IT Service Department provides no hardware or software support for any pupil devices. Pupils are responsible for the maintenance of all personal computing and electronic equipment brought into school. If your child boards at Sevenoaks School, you may wish to consider on-site maintenance by the laptop manufacturer or supplier. Calls for repair in the event of malfunction are the responsibility of the child and/or parent and must be made in consultation with boarding house staff. Pupils may instead wait until leave weekends and holidays to arrange repairs. Parents are also advised to ensure that their child's laptop computer is covered by their own household insurance or other policies as they are not fully covered by the school's policy.

What type of device should a pupil use in school?

Above all, laptop computers should be fit for purpose. We recommend robust, reliable devices that are easy to use and maintain. The school operates a PC environment running Microsoft Office 2010 on the Windows XP Professional operating system (updating this year to Windows 7). Pupil devices running different operating systems are generally supported on the network including **Windows:** Vista, W7; **Apple Mac:** OS Lion, Snow Leopard, Leopard, Tiger; and **iOS:** including iPhone and iPads 1 and 2. Pupils should be aware of how to save in interchangeable file formats if necessary.

Additionally, there are several pre-requisites for laptop configuration; failure to meet these criteria may make wireless network connection impossible:

1. valid licence for the operating system installed
2. anti-virus installed that can be updated online and run routinely (*except iOS devices*)
3. anti-spyware installed that can be updated online and run routinely (*except iOS devices*)

Does the school offer a laptop purchasing scheme?

Sevenoaks School does not currently offer a scheme to parents for the purchase and maintenance of a laptop for their child to use at school.

How does a pupil arrange to connect the laptop to the school's network?

Full details about how pupils can connect devices to the school's wireless network will be explained to boarding pupils on their arrival at the start of the Michaelmas Term. Systems for connecting to the wireless network have been further automated this summer to speed up and improve access for boarders. Full details will be provided to students during the first week of term.

What needs to happen before connection?

Before your child arrives at Sevenoaks, please ensure that anti-virus software and anti-spyware software are loaded on the laptop with the latest definitions. Both should be run in the 24 hours prior to connection.

The pupil's responsibility

As no repairs to or maintenance of pupil-owned laptop computers are available in school, it is essential that pupils understand how to look after valuable, portable equipment carefully at all times. The following checklist should help pupils and parents to prepare for next year:

- Do you know how to exchange files on your system with the school's MS XP-Pro and Office 2002 environment?
- Are anti-virus and anti-spyware software installed and do you know how to run them?
- How do you plan to deal with repairs?
- How will you back up data and how often?
- Is the laptop insured by a family insurance policy?
- Is the machine security-marked and can you lock it to a desk in the boarding house for added security?
- Do you know about good practice for looking after your laptop?