



Technology in school

FAQs for Year 7 parents

Parents of Year 7 pupils will be aware that it became necessary to cancel the scheme through which parents could purchase iPads through school. We're grateful for the feedback we've received. Several common questions have arisen through this feedback which we have answered below.

The cancellation of the iPad scheme was very sudden and took place in the middle of the summer holiday: is the school covering something up?

We would like to be absolutely transparent about this: discussions have taken place throughout the year concerning the future of the iPad scheme. These discussions were about the pros and cons of using iPads in the classroom. Whilst iPads facilitate the helpful use of technology in the classroom, they can also be a distraction and, in this time of financial hardship for many, are a considerable expense. Although there is plenty of marketing material provided by big tech companies, there is actually very little research about the use of iPads in the classroom. The little research that does exist is, at best, ambivalent about the value of iPads in the classroom.

However, because the use of iPads is well established in Bournside, on balance it was decided to continue the iPad scheme for the new Year 7 pupils. Unfortunately, in order to make the scheme financially viable, we need a high percentage of take-up. In the course of the summer, it became clear that we had not received a sufficient level of interest in the scheme to make it financially viable to continue. Clearly we cannot know why fewer parents than normal have signed up to the scheme but we think there are two factors: additional expense at a time when many household budgets are more stretched than normal and a growing unease about the impact technology is having upon the welfare of children.

Does this mean I must buy an iPad privately?

No. No learning in Year 7 requires an iPad; many families may choose to buy devices for their children at this age but a lower priced laptop computer or tablet would be suitable. Provided students have access to the internet, via the family's computer, a smartphone or their own device, they will be able to access all of the resources required.

We don't have internet access at home – what should we do?

If you don't have an internet connection at home and/or don't have an appropriate device, students are welcome to join our homework club which begins Monday 13/9/21 in the library where access to all necessary resources are available and where a member of staff will be on hand to support learning.

Did the school deliberately downplay the importance of iPads in order to reduce the numbers of parents taking up the scheme?

No. The scheme was publicised in the exactly the same way as it has been for many years.

The school uses Showbie for resources and ClassCharts for setting homework. How are pupils supposed to access these without an iPad?

Neither Showbie nor ClassCharts require an iPad. Both can be accessed from any internet connected device such as a mobile phone or laptop or desktop computer. Showbie can be accessed [here](#); ClassCharts can be accessed [here](#). Students do not normally need to access resources electronically in lessons. In lessons where this is necessary (for example IT lessons) appropriate devices are made available.

What about other resources?

All of the apps and software we use have equivalent websites with exactly the same functionality as the app. Kerboodle (often used in Science) can be accessed [here](#). To access the school's Microsoft Office 365 sites, school email and other Office software, click [here](#). Again, no iPad is required to access any of these sites or applications. Details for other subject specific sites will be provided by teachers in the lessons.

Without an iPad and with the new small student planners, where are students supposed to record their homework?

During lessons, pupils do not need to make a note of their homework (such as the task, the due date) because homework is set by the teacher via ClassCharts. ClassCharts can be accessed through any internet connected device. It is not necessary to use an iPad. Often the necessary resources are provided in hard-copy form in the lesson or are attached to the task in ClassCharts. ClassCharts can be accessed [here](#).

How should students submit homework?

Almost all homework should be submitted in exercise books in the normal way. Occasionally, work may be set via Kerboodle. This can be accessed via the Kerboodle internet site. Instructions on using Kerboodle will be provided in the lesson.

Where do we find a list of the websites pupils need to use?

Please click [here](#) for links to the main websites used at school. Students learn about the websites they need (such as Showbie, ClassCharts, and Microsoft products) in their IT lessons. At this early stage of the term, some students will not yet have had these lessons. Teachers have been asked to ensure that they check that students understand where to access these packages and how to use them before relying on them for communicating homework tasks etc.

What alternative arrangements have been put in place?

As noted above, the two key software packages (Showbie and ClassCharts) do not require an iPad. If pupils need to use IT facilities in their lessons (for example in IT lessons), these will be provided. Following the necessary use of remote working last year, we have a particular drive, this year, on the correct use of exercise books for students' work. In all year

groups, not just Year 7, the vast majority of schoolwork will be completed in exercise books in the traditional way. This allows pupils to have one easily accessible location for their notes, marks from tests, exercises completed in class and so on.

Will the next Year 7 have iPads? Will the current Year 7 be the only year in the school without iPads?

We will be reviewing this in the course of the year.

What happens if there is another period of national lockdown or students are required to work from home?

As has been the case throughout the pandemic, we will make the necessary technology available to families who require it.

What if I have other questions?

Please read the questions above carefully and check our website. Many questions about the websites we use (such as ClassCharts) are best answered by going to the websites themselves and reading their help pages. If you would like to discuss these issues further, please contact our Deputy Headteacher, Will Penny (wjp@bournside.gloucs.sch.uk).