

A PARENTS GUIDE TO...

Laptop Use In School

Why do we encourage laptop use for some students?

Using a laptop and typing work in lessons or examinations can be a real benefit for some students.

Why do some students use a laptop in school/for exams?

- Traits of, or a diagnosis of, a Specific Learning Difficulty, such as Dyslexia.
- Medical – difficulty writing by hand (handwriting causes pain/discomfort if done for long periods).
- Difficulty with producing clear handwriting.

What are the benefits of using a laptop in school?

Typing their work can help a student to:

- Process information.
- Organise their ideas.
- Plan longer writing tasks.
- Structure and edit their work more easily.
- Produce legible work if handwriting is an issue.



How is laptop use in school arranged?

- A teacher will recommend that a student considers typing their work.
- The student will then meet with the Faculty's Literacy Team, who will liaise with both teachers and parents, to assess whether typing is a suitable option for a student.
- If typing is agreed then a 'Safe use of Laptops in School Agreement' form needs to be signed by the student and parent/guardians.
- Trial use of laptop in one subject to begin with. Use in more subjects can follow if appropriate.
- Support from Literacy Team and teachers when beginning laptop use as well as support and monitoring throughout the year.
- Meeting with Exam Access Assessor if using laptop in Examinations.

It is important for students and parents to understand that using a laptop brings with it an extra organisational burden. The student will need to manage bringing their laptop in to school for appropriate lessons, keeping it charged, and most importantly work done on the laptop will need to be printed and stuck in their books.

FAQs

'I am worried that my son/daughter will not write again if they start typing'.

At this stage in their education, a student's handwriting will not alter greatly, so if a student produces handwriting that is particularly difficult to read then sometimes it is best for them to type their work. Some parents worry that students will 'never write again' if they start typing their work, however, this is not the case; they will still do plenty of handwritten notes, and many students that type some of their work will still handwrite in other exams such as Science and Mathematics).

'What constitutes evidence for laptop use being a "regular way of working"?'

Students need to provide printed copies of notes, essays or timed assessments that they have done in each subject that they wish to type in, to show that this way of working is beneficial for them.

Typing work in examinations

In order to type their work in a public examination, a student must have:

- Had this approved by the schools Exam Access Assessor Mrs J. Barnes.
- Provide evidence that typing is their 'regular way of working' for each subject that they wish to type in.
- Signed a Data Protection Notice.

Students may then take their examination in the designated laptop room, where they will be able to type. Students do not have to type their entire exam paper, but can handwrite some answers and type others if they wish (when they need to draw graphs for instance).

Where can I look for support?

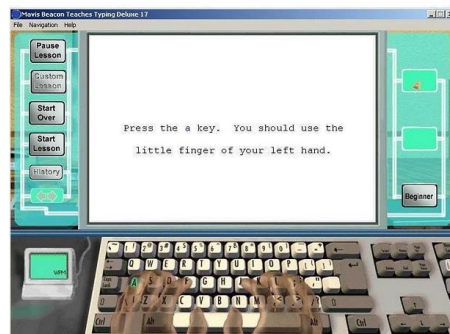
Typing support:

BBC Dance Mat

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z3c6tfr>

Mavis Beacon Typing Tutor

www.mavisbeaconfree.com



Who can I contact at the school for advice?

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)– Mrs G Reed, greed@thelangton.ken.sch.uk

KS3 Laptop Use: Miss N. Kitt, Faculty Literacy Coordinator, nkitt@thelangton.kent.sch.uk

KS4 Laptop Use: Mr J. Head, Faculty Literacy Coordinator, jhead@thelangton.kent.sch.uk

Sixth Form Laptop Use: Mrs J. Freeland, Julia Freeland, Sixth Form Learning Mentor, jfreeland@thelangton.kent.sch.uk

Generic guidelines on laptop use in school:

Here for your information we outline the key issues regarding laptop use within SLBS:

- 1) Unfortunately the school does not have a big enough budget to provide laptops for individual pupils. All pupils in the school who use laptops have had to provide their own. Therefore, you would be asked to provide a laptop for your son if this is a long term arrangement. The department does have a laptop that can be loaned to a pupil for a 'trial' if they wish to see whether having a laptop in lessons is helpful to them and also to allow them to begin to see the organisational skills they will need to think about (e.g. collecting and storing the laptop, printing off work etc). Also if finances limit a parent's ability to buy a laptop, we are happy to discuss this matter to ensure we can support the student appropriately.
- 2) The school does ask that all laptops that are brought into school are insured. The reasons for this are clear.
- 3) The model of laptop would need to be considered. Your son/daughter may choose to carry it with him for all lessons and therefore weight is an issue. He/she will only need basic software for within lessons such as Word so a basic Microsoft Office Package must be installed.
- 4) We initially recommend that the transition to using a laptop is integrated gradually and that your son/daughter chooses a specific lesson he/she would like to type in. Once he/she has accustomed himself to using a laptop in one subject, we would recommend that he/she then moves on to a second subject and so on. He/she can use his/her laptop in all subjects where he/she feels it would be beneficial; commonly our pupils choose English, History and Geography due to the extended pieces of text and dictation which are common in these subjects. It is vital to success that the logistics of laptop use are mastered: all work must be printed, trimmed to fit, and stuck neatly into workbooks. We recommend a habit of daily printing, so that he/she does not fall behind.
- 5) His/her laptop can be charged and stored within the Faculty of Support and Guidance area if required. We can meet with your son/daughter to speak about this idea once he/she starts bringing a laptop in. Other pupils prefer to do this at home.
- 6) Typing skills go hand in hand with laptop use. We recommend that your son/daughter follows a program to better his/her typing skills. The internet has many, free, typing tuition websites and a quick internet search will find one to suit your son or daughter. We are well aware that for many students, touch typing is difficult, however we do not insist that all boys can touch type. What is most important is that they are **fast** and **efficient** typists even with two fingers!
- 7) Once typing becomes your son/daughter's **normal** way of working, and his/her preferred style of working in lessons, we can apply for him/her to type in all future external examinations such as GCSE's. This will need to be established well before he/she sits an exam.