



Pupil Laptop Computers at Epsom College

Many parents of pupils at Epsom ask for advice about buying computers for their children. There are a number of things to consider. Will the computer be brought to college? Will it be kept at college during term time? Have you read the latest college information on insurance? Parents should ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of this cover. The Bursar's or Admissions office can supply more information.

Generally, pupils will want a portable solution, which means a laptop computer. These should have some form of security marking and a security device such as a Kensington lock to secure the laptop when unattended for example, to a radiator. Being portable and valuable makes these devices attractive to thieves.

Hardware

While pupils are keen to have the very best machine, a standard inexpensive model is more than adequate for everyday school needs. Entry level models are also fine. A key consideration is technical support. Laptop computers contain proprietary parts and the college's technical staff will be unable to carry out repairs. It is essential that a manufacturer and model be chosen where repairs can be effected in term time at a location close to the college. It is essential that some method is available for making backups of data on laptops. Floppy disks have too little capacity. Solutions include USB or Pen drives, CD writers or a wireless card for connection to the college network – see later. **Pupils must make a regular back up of any work stored on their laptops.**

Software

Apple or Windows machines are suitable, as is Linux. If Windows, it is preferable to get Windows XP Professional. The Home version is okay, but lacks some advanced network facilities. The College currently uses Microsoft Office 97, which is no longer available to buy. Most office systems such as MS Works, later versions of MS Office, Open Office, Star Office, WordPerfect, Lotus and so on will support compatible file types. The only exception is Access 97, affecting only pupils taking GCSE IT or Computing in the Sixth Form and this does not cause any real problems. Pupils will need anti-virus software with a subscription **so that it is kept fully up to date**. Without this, other pupils' and college machines may be put at risk. Updates to software and virus data should be completed at home and as frequently as is possible.

Networking

The college wireless network system is available for pupils and now offers extensive coverage over most of the college. Initially installed in boarding houses, it is being extended to day houses and departments. Wireless coverage of all study bedrooms can not be guaranteed owing to the construction of the buildings, but common areas in the houses will have coverage and all pupils will be able to find an area in which to work. To connect to the college network, pupils will need to have installed a wireless card supporting the IEEE 802.11b or 802.11g standards. These are inexpensive and widely available. They must register the laptop with the IT Office and have signed a copy of the IT policy document. They will receive instructions and our system will be configured to accept connections from the machine. Pupils will be able to access their files, college email, college networked printers and the college's filtered email service.

For any more advice please contact the Director of IT . Tel.: 01372 821178 or it@epsomcollege.org.uk

27/6/06