Halton Virtual School & College – Digital Device Policy

As digital platforms have continued to expand to support learning in classrooms and at home, we recognise it is important that our children in care are provided with the correct equipment to allow them to access this form of learning.

Request for a device

Pupil premium Plus (PP+) grant can be used to fund digital devices such as laptops and tablets for children in care from key stage 1 upwards who require one and there are 2 ways in which this can be requested:

1. Request for a digital device to be made through the PEP linked to a SMART academic target (typical cost of device would range from £100-£400 depending on the type of device being requested). The education provision would be responsible for purchasing the device and supporting with set up of the device before allocating to the child/young person.
2. Any requests for laptops can be flagged to the Virtual School team and recorded on the PEP document against a SMART target however funding won't need to be requested on the document. Halton Virtual School can purchase laptops through the local authority IT department however are unable to provide any technical support once devices are distributed.

Any devices purchased through PP+ belongs to the child/young person and the device goes with them when they transition from an education provision or has a change of home address.

PP+ will not be used to replace devices that have been damaged or lost through negligence, accident, theft, or malicious action. It is also not expected that PP+ is used to replace devices that have been provided within the last 3 years. Any discussions around these conditions will need to be directed to the Headteacher or Deputy Head of the virtual school.

Eligibility for a device

- Requests can be made for any school age child where appropriate and required.
- For pupils in Years 12 and 13, the need for a device can be discussed at their PEP meeting and reviewed on an individual basis. Considerations will be made including:
    - Reasons for needing the device
    - Any devices that have been provided previously
    - Engagement of the pupil
    - Next steps or future pathway
- For newly arrived unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) in our care, laptops will be issued once this has been agreed by their social worker to enable them to access online ESOL resources whilst awaiting assessments or placement at an education provision.
- Requests for digital devices for care leavers aged 18-25 years will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Personal advisors may submit a request to the Virtual School team, clearly outlining the rationale and specific need for the device in relation to the young person's education, training, or employment.

Access to licenced computer software

The virtual school is unable to provide access to licenced software such as Microsoft Office or firewalls on laptops. Most schools and providers will be using Office 365 or Google Workspace and will provide students with accounts to access these to complete work on.

Where a child or young person does not have access to this either because they are not on roll at a provision or their provision have not provided them with an account, parents/carers can support their child or young person to sign up to an individual/personal account that is free to access online. It is also the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure relevant safeguards are in place such as parental controls and firewall or antivirus software.

For Devices Provided Directly by Halton Virtual School

On issue of a laptop purchased directly by the virtual school, an agreement form will need to be completed with parent/carers and the child/young person (where appropriate). The agreement outlines the areas below:

Terms of Issue

- The virtual school is responsible for purchasing the device only and cannot provide technical support for devices once they are issued.
- The virtual school cannot repair or replace devices, particularly if issues have occurred that have been caused by accidental damage or misuse of the device.
- The virtual school cannot support with forgotten passwords.
- The virtual school cannot provide access to the internet.
- The device issued becomes the property of the child/young person therefore must go with them when they move home.

Acceptable Use & Safeguarding

- The device has been provided for the purpose of home learning and accessing school or college licenced digital learning platforms.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers/residential staff to monitor appropriate use of the device and put parental controls in place where necessary to ensure online safety and adhere to any acceptable use policy of the child/young person's education provision.

Care & Maintenance

- It is the child/young person's responsibility (with support from parents/carers where necessary) to ensure the device is stored safely when not in use and take care when using it.
- It is the child/young person's responsibility (with support from parents/carers where necessary) to remember any passwords that are set on the device.
- If the Bit Locker device encryption is turned on for the device, it is the responsibility of the user to make note of the Bit Locker key and keep this information safe for future reference as this information is not held elsewhere and cannot be recovered by a third party.

Laptop Agreement Form

Name of child/YP receiving the equipment:	
Asset/Serial number of device:	
Issued by: (name of person delivering the equipment)	
Date of delivery:	

Statement of Issue

This device now belongs to the child/young person named at the top of the form. In circumstances where the child/young person changes address, the device is to move with them as it is their property.

Acceptable Use Policy

- The laptop has been provided for the purpose of home learning and accessing school or college licenced digital learning platforms.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers/residential staff to monitor appropriate use of the laptop and place parental controls in place where necessary to ensure online safety and adhere to the acceptable use policy of the child/young person's education provision.

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- It is the child/young person's responsibility (with support from parents/carers where necessary) to ensure the device is stored safely when not in use and take care when using it.
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Terms of Issue

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- The virtual school cannot support with forgotten passwords.
- The virtual school cannot provide access to licenced software such as Microsoft Office, firewalls or antivirus. (An account can be created on Microsoft 365 for free access to web versions of Word, PowerPoint, Excel and other apps.)
- The virtual school cannot provide access to the internet.