

Accessing Home Learning: What Support Is There?



At The Wyche, if we ever have to close a class, a bubble or the whole school again we are ready to teach online through the **Class Notebook** in **Microsoft Teams**.

This factsheet seeks to reinforce the message that we can offer help if needed, and we're in this together; the goal being to provide quality education for your children.

We know there is a lot of juggling going on as a result of the evolving COVID-19 situation and that remote learning can be complicated, with potentially both parents trying to work from home and two or more children trying to learn online. Not everyone has multiple laptops, desktops, tablets or access to high-speed broadband but there are solutions out there for you to be able to get support to upgrade your tech for the purposes of home education. We also recognise there can be considerable pressures on for those who find themselves out of work, with reduced income or worried about job security.

What is Microsoft Teams?

Teams is Microsoft App. It's a powerful tool for communication and providing online content. Teachers can provide education, resources and activities to provide learning. They can see your child's online work, mark it, give immediate feedback and extend learning if necessary, getting as close as possible to the experience of working in an exercise book, with a teacher on hand, in a classroom.

Microsoft Teams does not require you to have a Windows-based computer. Whether you're using Windows, Apple, iOS or Android devices, Teams is designed to work with them all as long as you have a web browser. **However, children will have a better experience of online learning if you have the right equipment at home.**

Microsoft Teams does not require you to own or buy any software packages. Even if you don't have Office 365 on your device, you can still access the **whole** of Microsoft 365 via the cloud and learn remotely, without needing to buy any software at all. Often you'll find the option to download these apps completely free.

I've been in touch regularly with you to keep you posted on the work we've been doing behind the scenes to ensure that Teams is set up, teachers are fully trained and our remote learning offer is ready if we need it. Remote learning work has already been planned to a high standard and is ready to go at a moment's notice. Your child's page currently doesn't have any content. The Week 1, 2, 3, etc. folders are there if we need them; if a child or has to self-isolate at short notice we want minimal delay in providing meaningful work online.

Training

There has been a lot of change recently and rolling out Teams is part of our development of a wider digital offer to keep you informed and up to date, alongside and in addition to the very popular and effective Seesaw app in every class for two-way communication and a new, refreshed and contemporary website which will be ready soon. These solutions used together we hope to offer communication, information and high quality remote learning where and when it is needed. Some parents have asked me if we are keeping Seesaw. Yes, we are.

We all hope not to have to use the remote learning provision we now have on standby, but if we do please be assured support will be available to help every parent, carer and child who needs need it. I have already sent a flowchart to help parents log on and access the resource. We are demonstrating Teams in class with your children so they know what to expect and, if and when further support is needed, it will be provided. Many of you have already logged on and experimented with the pages and some children who have needed to self-isolate have been set work, accessed it, completed it well and received personal feedback on their page.

Hardware

Teams is designed to work on almost any device with a screen and a web browser and whilst it will work on a smartphone, children will have a better experience with a larger screen and keyboard.

New kit

You don't need the latest i-mac or PC to access our online learning provision. Affordable, entry-level tablets and netbooks will do the job fine, as long as they have a web browser.

Raspberry-Pi has produced an amazing product called the Raspberry Pi 400, billed as ‘a computer for the coronavirus age’ which depending on what you need, should cost between £67 and £95.

There is a lot of detail in this article <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-54782255> but essentially parents can buy an entire computer based inside a keyboard which simply plugs into an ordinary TV and enables it for internet working. The Raspberry Pi site has details and costs: <https://www.raspberrypi.org/products/raspberry-pi-400/?resellerType=home> it is designed to be simple and accessible and is definitely more affordable than a new desktop or laptop.

Reconditioned Kit

Many hardware providers refurbish and recondition PCs, Macs and Android devices selling them with wiped memories and restored parts for a fraction of their costs. A quick search of Amazon, ebay and a range of online merchants will show many bargains in refurbished hardware which will more than do the job for online learning. We recognise that this can still be an expensive option if you are on a limited budget, however.

Difficultly Accessing Hardware

If for any reason you do not have any suitable technology at home and have limited means to buy it, please get in touch with me via email or telephone to set up a meeting in confidence. The school has been exploring the potential to purchase hardware at a reduced cost for those who have no other options.

Internet Access

If you don't have broadband at home due to cost reasons you may qualify for “BT Basic+Broadband”. This provide phone and unlimited broadband for a fixed fee of £10.07 a month.

<https://www.btplc.com/inclusion/ProductsAndServices/BTBasic/BTBasicBroadband/index.htm>.

Other providers and deals are available of course, and it's worth talking to your own supplier about their options and describing the challenges you may be facing providing home education. If you are still struggling please contact me and the together, we can look into other options.

Working together

Let's hope we don't need to educate remotely but whilst there is a chance, let's work together to get it right. If you feel able to support a fellow parent in accessing Teams, that would be very welcome; I know how closely you work as a parent group and how much support you already offer the school and each other.

If you have any questions or concerns about this whole process, teachers are glad to help through Seesaw, and I'm on the gate every day and can be reached by emailing the office or by calling the school – get in touch and we'll work it out together.

Yours,

Stephen Murphy, Headteacher

NB: We are not as a school endorsing any of the websites or products mentioned above, just signposting to what is out there, in the hopes that we can support every family to access home learning if and when it is needed.

If you in the parent body have any leads as to support with affordable or free devices or broadband access, please let us know.