



Ridgeway Academy



Blended Learning Chromebook Programme 2024



Dear Parent/Carer

You may already be aware that Ridgeway Academy operates a Blended Learning programme where all incoming students in years 7 are required to have a device in school for use in lessons and at home.

We always seek to innovate in the classroom, ensuring students benefit from a wide variety of teaching styles and learning experiences. Our teachers are a professional and highly dedicated learning community who are committed to engaging, supporting, stretching and challenging students to achieve in all aspects of life. We take a blended learning approach that takes traditional methods and skilfully combines them with modern evidence-informed approaches including the highly sophisticated use of technology.

In September 2022 the Alban Academies Trust launched a common programme across all secondary schools for students joining in year 7. The programme required all students to have their own Chromebook.

This guide provides information about ordering the school's required device (a Chromebook) via a dedicated ordering platform.

Since the launch of the original programme, technologies have developed and so have the ways in which teachers and students make use of devices to support learning. The latest generation of Chromebooks allow us to maintain the functionality of a tablet-style device, whilst also providing the capability to use technology to support the more demanding aspects of our curriculum, including the completion of extended writing tasks and more complex research activities.

At the heart of all decision making within the Alban Academies Trust is inclusivity; as such we will ensure that no student is disadvantaged by this decision. Later in this guide we will outline financial support for students who are in receipt of Free School Meals, as well as families suffering financial hardship.

We hope you and your child are excited about joining Ridgeway Academy and that this guide provides relevant information ahead of this September. We hope this will help you to purchase the required Chromebook and understand more about our use of technology to enhance and support high quality teaching and learning.

Louise Jesson – Assistant Headteacher



Equipping your child with a suitable Chromebook

All students are required to have their own ASUS Chromebook. The device can be purchased through our reseller, Albion Computers.

Why do we want all students to have the same Chromebook? Equity. We want all students to be able to access the same learning experiences as each other. The custom specification Chromebook has been designed to ensure that it meets the needs of what we want students to use their device for within the school curriculum and when completing home learning outside of school.

Purchasing our custom-built device through Albion Computers

We have worked directly with device manufacturer, ASUS, to build a custom specification Chromebook device. This device has been built to meet the demands of an educational setting, taking account of the power and performance of key hardware but also its durability. Unlike consumer units ordinarily purchased from a high street or online store, this device has been vigorously tested for an educational setting. Tests include drop testing; input-output port durability testing; hinge open and close cycle testing and pressure testing on the lid and bottom of the device. Whilst these tests don't offer a guarantee against breakages, they do give peace of mind that these devices are built for an educational setting.

The negotiated cost also includes a manufacturer's warranty of **5 years**. This is a unique feature of the custom specification on offer.

Albion Computers, the Alban Academies Trust's chosen reseller for this device also offer accidental damage cover and an extended battery warranty (of 5 years) for the device and the opportunity to enter a financial repayment scheme when purchasing.

Our chosen device

The custom specification device which will be sold by Albion Computers is the ASUS CR1104FGA. A sleeve style case will be provided with the Chromebook as part of the bundle available to purchase.

Technical Specification

Processor: Intel® N100 Processor

Memory: 4GB LPDDR5 on board RAM

Display: 11.6" HD (1366 x 768) 16:9 Gorilla Glass Touch Screen

Storage: 32GB eMMC

Battery: 10-13 Hours life

Interface: 2x USB Type-A ports, 2x USB Type-C ports, with display and power delivery support, 1x 3.5mm Combo Audio Jack, 1x Micro SD card reader

Additional Features: Front Facing Camera: 720p HD and World Facing Camera. Rubberised edges.

Weight: 1.45kg



How to purchase the device and costs

Albion Computers have created a school specific portal where you can purchase the device bundle through a single payment or set up a finance agreement with a third party.

Please visit <https://store.albion.co.uk/ridgeway/> to access our school's dedicated store.

The cost of the device bundle, which includes a **sleeve style case** and **5-year warranty** is **£350.40**.



Through the portal you will also have the option of purchasing 5-year accidental damage cover and/or an extended 5-year battery warranty for the device. Cover is provided by the device manufacturer, ASUS. Costs for this cover are:

Accidental damage cover (5 years) - **£38.40**

5-year battery cover - **£28.80**

It is important that you review the policy details available at the time of purchase.

Both warranty and accidental damage claims are logged and handled through ASUS and not directly with the school or trust.

Order deadline and delivery

To allow appropriate time for manufacture and shipping, the Academia portal for placing orders will close on Friday 28th June 2024. After this date, no further orders can be accepted, this is to guarantee delivery within the first few weeks in September. The purchased device will be delivered directly to the school in early September for distribution to your child during the first few weeks of term.

Protecting your child's device

It is important that your child's device is appropriately protected. If you choose to purchase a device through Albion a sleeve style case is included within the bundle.

It should be noted that the loss, damage or breakage of a personal device is **not** covered under school insurance. The school is **unable** to pay for the cost of repairs or replacements. As such, we highly recommend that devices are covered by an appropriate insurance policy. It is worth checking whether gadget insurance, which can often be added to home insurance or bank accounts, may offer cover for this device.

Students are encouraged to store their devices in lockers, particularly during lunchtimes or times when their bag is unattended.

Lockers

At Ridgeway Academy we provide specifically designed lockers through <https://www.ilsschools.co.uk/> Lockers can be hired directly through the website and keys will be posted to your home address ready for access in September. Lockers will be available to order in June.

Support and funding available

We are fully committed to removing any challenges or barriers to students accessing learning. For students currently in receipt of Free School Meals, we are able to use Pupil Premium funding to support our loan device scheme. This scheme enables the school to loan a fully protected device to your child with only a small financial contribution from parents/carers.

For further information or to acquire a device through this scheme, please contact Lez Rossington, Pupil Premium Coordinator by emailing rossingtonl@ridgeway.aat.school

Keeping your child safe whilst using their Chromebook in school

Alban Academies Trust is committed to keeping all young people safe. This commitment includes students' use of technology when in school. In line with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education, Alban Academies Trust utilise market leading tools for filtering and monitoring. For the purpose of filtering RM SafetyNet is deployed across all schools. NetSupport classroom.cloud is the client used for the restricted monitoring of devices. More information, including FAQs for families can be found on this dedicated page of the Alban Academies Trust website - <https://albanacademiestrust.org.uk/online-safety/>.



Frequently asked questions

How will my child use a Chromebook to support their learning?

This varies from class to class, but the answer may be, 'For just about everything'. Popular G Suite tools and applications make classroom collaboration easy, and there are apps to support learning like video-making, podcasting, and coding.

In our experience, having access to a touchscreen device with a camera opens many creative possibilities in Art, Design and Technology, Music and Maths while also enabling students to film and review practical performances in Drama and PE. A device also allows interactive activity and online research: every student immediately has access to an atlas, a French/Spanish/German dictionary, the latest statistics on the economy, a flexible musical instrument, a camera and more!

Teachers also make use of Google Classroom in every lesson. It is a tool used to help organise student classwork and assign homework and projects.

For students undertaking GCSEs, vocational qualifications and A Levels it will allow access to online learning resources at home and at school, such as e-textbooks as well as platforms like Seneca Learning and other tools to support independent revision.

What evidence is there to support 1:1 device use in schools?

We are following the [DFE national strategy](#) and using the latest [EEF research](#) in making our decision. These show a net learning gain and also an improvement in collaboration, feedback and metacognition for students with access to a 1:1 device.

We have in place a continued programme of professional development and training to support the roll out of these new devices for students, teachers and for parents based on the latest research.

Could we buy a cheaper Chromebook and 'opt out' of the school's recommended device and purchasing portal?

Yes, however whilst there are other Chromebooks on the retail market, the custom specification device is not a standard consumer unit and so is robust and will survive well in a school setting.

We have worked directly with the manufacturer to ensure that the specification meets the demands of our schools setting both now and in the future.

Finding a device with all the same features, technical specification and 5 years warranty is near impossible in the current market. The key features which support the use of devices in school include – tablet mode (full-flip device), both a forward and world facing camera.

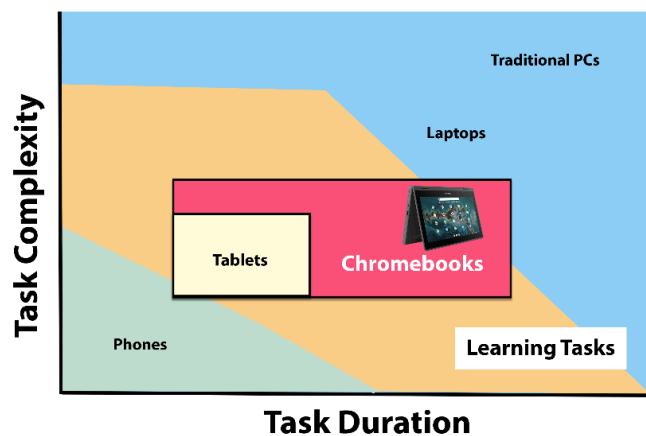
A level of standardisation also ensures training and support is easier for students and staff.

Why have you gone with a touchscreen - this makes it more expensive?

From our experience, we know that there are increased learning opportunities associated with being able to operate both a touchscreen tablet (that can run the wide range of Android apps) and a laptop with a keyboard. A touch interface brings significant benefits to many day-to-day learning activities, for example: painting, music making, annotating documents, using whiteboard apps, photography and video, while access to a keyboard adds an even greater range to the benefits available.

My child already has an internet connected phone - why can't they just use that?

A 'smartphone' is not a suitable learning device. Screen sizes are too small to be able to access eBooks, conduct research and write presentations or essays. It is a fallacy promoted by IT vendors that one device can satisfy every possible educational use. You wouldn't use a laptop to film in drama, likewise you probably wouldn't type an extended piece of writing on a tablet device.



- Low duration/complexity: web research, photo or video capture, blogging/tweeting, scanning QR codes, reading eBooks, quizzes, surveys etc.
- Longer duration/complexity: word processing, programming, movie editing etc.

Furthermore, we require access to the Internet to be filtered and therefore require devices with 4G/5G connections to be switched off for the safety of our students and staff throughout the school day.

Is the battery good enough? How will charging work?

Chromebooks have a battery life of over 10 hours. This varies depending on what the Chromebook is being used for but as long as students charge their Chromebook overnight, it will last all day. Students are responsible for bringing their fully charged Chromebook to school every day.

Are there any Chromebook guides available to support parents/carers and my child?

Yes, there is a lot of freely accessible guidance out there. This link is a good place to start:

<https://www.google.com/chromebook/howto/>

Additionally, in the first few weeks in September, all year 7 students will receive specialist teaching and guidance to get them up and running with their new Chromebooks as well as the school's digital platforms.

Will my child need their own Google account? If so, how will the school be able to put apps on the Chromebook?

Your child will be provided with a school email address which is a Google education account. The school will use administrative processes to enable the distribution of apps to each student account; they will be automatically installed as soon as a student logs into their device.

Did you look at Windows, Apple or Android as alternatives?

Yes, very seriously. We believe that each of these devices and options have their strengths, however, the simplicity of the Chromebook overcomes the barriers presented by alternatives to allow the focus to be on learning. Sandringham has also been a Google school for over a decade and has used Google Classroom for the last 9 years. As such, we are in a strong position to make the most of these devices.