

March 2010

Dear Parents,

At the end of last term the Headmaster wrote to you in his end of term letter under the heading of 'The Two Edged Sword' about the use of computers within the school community. It is my pleasure now to provide further details about Repton's strategy as we expand and develop this aspect of learning.

Networked computers

It is our firm belief that all Repton pupils will benefit from having a networked computer at school whereas at present, although the vast majority of pupils have computers, only about half have them networked. Networked computers:-

- can access our ever increasing range of academic resources on our Intranet;
- have controlled, monitored and filtered internet access for the protection of both pupils and the network itself; and
- will from Summer 2010 allow pupils online access to their assessment grades

and I explain each of these in more detail below.

Consequently, and as the Headmaster announced, we are instituting a rolling programme, such that by September 2011, all pupils at Repton will be required to have a networked computer. **In order to phase this in appropriately, this requirement will apply to pupils in A Block (Year 10) and the Lower Sixth (Year 12) at the start of Michaelmas Term 2010 and will continue for the remainder of their time at Repton. In Michaelmas 2011, it will once again apply to pupils starting in A Block and the Lower Sixth, but will in addition apply to B Block.** Even though it will not be a requirement for all pupils to have a networked computer until September 2011, it is our very strong recommendation that all pupils do so.

Networking a computer means in effect registering it with the IT Department so that it can be configured properly with operating system, updates and antivirus endpoint software. Pupils still have 'administrator rights' on their networked computers and install their own software. **Over the course of the next academic year 2010-2011, changes to the network architecture will mean that computers not registered with IT will not be able to access the network and the electronic learning resources therein.**

The benefits of a networked computer

Electronic Learning Resources

We are rapidly developing our electronic resources and pupils will benefit from making greater use of these than in the past. Our Intranet gives access for pupils through 'SharePoint' to the many and varied departmental based learning resources. In addition from September 2010 pupils will be able to access the school library database and also 'ClickView', a library of several thousand video resources. We are also encouraging the use of Blogs and Podcasts throughout the curriculum.

Protected Internet Access

By connecting to the internet through our network we can properly filter and monitor access. The World Wide Web is a fantastic educational resource for pupils with almost unlimited information and research potential. This diversity though brings along dangers and we are all acutely aware of the dangers of unfiltered internet access in terms of 'unsuitable' material, chat rooms, cyber bullying, computer viruses and the like. In the interest of protecting users we believe that pupils should only access the internet through our filtered connection.

Online Assessment grades

From next term, pupils will be able to view online their assessment grades as the year progresses. As you are aware pupils are reported on seven times throughout the year: 4 sets of MAs and 3 end of term reports. Pupils will have access to these assessments online through SharePoint and will be able to read teachers' comments and see grades. In addition, pupils will have the facility to write online their own review at each Assessment period. We believe this greater involvement in their learning will help pupils to benefit more from the assessment process.

Networked Computers: makes and specifications

In order to connect a computer to the Network, it **must** be brought to the I.T. Centre before being used on the School Network.

Both PCs and Macs can be networked at Repton.

ONLY THE FOLLOWING ENGLISH OPERATING SYSTEMS WILL BE ALLOWED IN SCHOOL:

- **XP Professional**
- **Vista Ultimate**
- **Vista Business**
- **Windows 7 Ultimate**
- **Windows 7 Professional**

- **Apple Macintosh – MAC OS X 10.3 "Panther" and above**

(Details of how to obtain these upgrades are available from the I.T. Dept 01283 559313, who can also perform the upgrade as part of the network setup charge).

Foreign Operating Systems **will not** be allowed on the School Network.

Dual Boot Operating Systems **will not** be allowed on the School Network.

It is strongly recommended that any computer brought into the School is covered by your own Insurance for theft and accidental damage.

We do not intend at present to require pupils to bring their computer to lessons, though increasingly this may be the case. **However, unless you have a particular reason for providing your son/daughter with a desktop computer, our recommendation is that you consider purchasing a laptop to benefit from the ease of portability.**

Other ICT issues

In addition, there are one or two other ICT issues which I would like to draw your attention to.

Acceptable Use Policy

Accompanying this letter, on blue paper, is a copy of the latest Acceptable Use Policy of the School's network. We require that all pupils sign this and indeed pupils will not gain access to the network until they have done so. I would ask you to read this document carefully and along with your son or daughter so that he/she is aware of it. I would like to draw your attention to the use of 'dongles' which access the internet through mobile phone networks. Whilst we accept that this is a popular method of accessing the Internet, their use is not allowed in School. We strongly believe a restricted and monitored Internet connection is a more sensible approach and want to offer protection to our network and to the pupils in our care.

The Pupil Portal

It is now possible for Repton pupils to access the internal network from outside the School. In particular, pupils can access the Intranet and their own User Work and email accounts via the Pupil Portal. This gives pupils access during the holidays to teaching and learning resources and the ability to continue working on a document (e.g. coursework) whilst at home. We hope this will encourage pupils to continue their learning during holidays especially as examinations and coursework deadlines approach.

The details of how to use the Pupil Portal are set out in separate documents which accompany this mailing.

Network Access Control and USB Flash Drive / Storage Media

Computer virus attacks and Spyware problems continue to plague networks and we have to look continually at network security to protect pupils, the School and the School network. Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in the number of viruses that are being distributed by pupils plugging USB memory sticks and other removable storage media devices into networked computers. These viruses have previously been picked up when pupils have used such devices on machines that may have out of date operating systems or have out of date or no antivirus software.

We would like to discourage the use of such devices; with a properly networked computer and with the pupils' portal we see no need for them. We strongly encourage pupils to keep their work stored in their 'Userwork' and not on portable memory devices. Pupils' Userwork is regularly backed up which greatly reduces the risk of losing important work or examination coursework.

WStore Purchase scheme

A laptop Scheme is provided by WStore for parents who wish to purchase a laptop for their son/daughter. This scheme provides an all in one solution to provide a current laptop with appropriate software with damage cover and other optional extras. Details about this scheme will be sent out over the summer holiday but in the meantime, please contact the IT Department at Repton School if you require further information. The laptops come properly configured for network use. Please note that if you purchase your computer from elsewhere there will be a £50 network setup charge.

We hope that parents will support us in these initiatives so that we can deliver a safe, reliable and useful computer network which pupils can safely use every day at Repton to enhance their learning experience. If you have any queries regarding these matters please contact IT Services on 01283 559313

Yours sincerely,

Mr P V Goodhead