Device Buying Guide for Schools

Laptops, Chromebooks & Tablets

Start with teaching, not tech

As you compare models and prices, keep in mind:

- **Who** the devices are for
  Staff, pupils, specific year groups, SEND, admin.

- **What** they'll be used for
  Cloud tools (Google/M365), MIS, creative/media, coding, exams, home learning.

- **Where** they'll be used
  Single rooms, shared trolleys, across sites, at home and in school.

- **What** you already have
  Wi-Fi, filtering, identity (Azure AD / Google), device management.

Capturing this in a short summary makes later decisions easier to explain to SLT, governors and trustees.

You may already have a mix in place; the priority is matching each device to the way it will actually be used in the classroom.

Laptops

Best for staff, KS4/KS5, exams and desktop software.

- Full Office/M365, MIS and specialist curriculum tools
- Strong for multitasking and admin
- Well suited to exam configurations

Chromebooks

Best when you're mainly using Google Classroom or web-based tools.

- Fast start-up, easy central management
- Great fit for online platforms and browser-based apps
- Often the lowest cost per learner for class sets or 1:1 schemes

Tablets (e.g. iPad / Windows / Android)

Best for EYFS/KS1, creative subjects and SEND.

- Touch-first, camera-rich, highly portable
- Strong range of creative and accessibility apps
- Useful for TAs, peripatetic staff and learning on the move

Note down "who gets what and why" to manage expectations and support future refresh decisions.

Baseline specs to ask for

If you're not sure what you need, use these starting points...

Student shared devices (KS2–KS3)

Laptops / Windows

- CPU: Entry-level education CPU (e.g. Intel N-series / AMD equivalent)
- RAM: 4–8 GB
- Storage: 128 GB SSD minimum

Chromebooks

- RAM: 4 GB (8 GB preferred)
- Check Google's Auto Update Expiry (AUE) date lasts beyond your planned lifecycle

Tablets

- Storage: 64 GB+
- Protective case as standard

1:1 schemes & KS4/KS5

- RAM: 8 GB
- Storage: 256 GB SSD for Windows; 128 GB+ for tablets
- Better screens and keyboards (heavier daily use)

Staff laptops

- CPU: Current-generation Intel Core / AMD Ryzen (or equivalent)
- RAM: 8 GB minimum (16 GB for power users)
- Storage: 256 GB+ SSD

Windows 11 – key points

If you're buying or refreshing Windows devices:

✓ **Check readiness**
TPM 2.0, compatible CPU, SSD and at least 8 GB RAM for staff

✓ **Plan deployment**
Use Autopilot and Intune (or equivalent) so devices are quick to roll out and easy to manage

✓ **Support staff**
Provide short guides or briefings to avoid frustration with layout changes

✓ **Think exams & accessibility**
Agree how exam configurations and accessibility tools will be set up and supported

Durability, battery and daily use

If devices will see heavy, shared use (as they often do), factor that into your spec.

Durability

- Reinforced corners, spill-resistant keyboards, strong hinges
- Anti-glare screens where possible
- Tough cases or bumpers for devices used by younger pupils or travelling between home and school
- Accidental damage options and realistic repair turnaround times

Battery & charging

- Aim for **8–10 hours** claimed battery life
- Decide whether 1:1 devices are expected to arrive charged from home
- For shared sets, plan for charging trolleys/cabinets or classroom charging points
- Build simple routines for charging and rotating devices so lessons aren't disrupted

Management, security and safeguarding

As device numbers grow, management becomes critical.

Identity & access

- Azure AD / Google accounts with sensible grouping for pupils, staff and guests

Device management

- Intune / Endpoint Manager for Windows
- Google Admin for Chromebooks
- MDM for tablets

Security

- Encryption, secure boot, regular OS/firmware updates, endpoint protection

Safeguarding

- Filtering and monitoring that work with your devices on-site and, if needed, off-site

Exams

- Clear approach to locking down devices and user accounts during assessments

Budget, lifecycle and using Everything ICT

As you may know, the sticker price is only one part of the picture.

✓ **Total cost of ownership**
Devices + cases + charging + deployment + management tools + support + end-of-life

✓ **Lifecycle**
Typical lifecycles are 3–5 years; align with warranty length

✓ **Phasing**
Prioritise exam years and staff, then scale as budget allows

How Everything ICT helps

Through the Everything ICT DfE-approved framework, schools and trusts can:

- Turn needs like "staff refresh" or "Chromebook class sets" into clear, compliant specifications
- Compare new devices from pre-approved suppliers on spec, warranty, support and value
- Bundle devices, deployment, management tools and recycling into a single, compliant procurement
- Use direct awards, three-quote exercises or mini-competitions with a full audit trail

You stay in control of what you buy. The framework keeps the process compliant, efficient and easier to manage.

⊙ **Speak to the team**   ⊙ **How it all works**