



Student Devices Information Booklet

This document aims to provide useful information about student devices in Blackrock College.

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1. Our Blended Approach: Empowering Learning in a Digital Age

At Blackrock College, we believe that education extends beyond the classroom walls. Our commitment to excellence and innovation drives us to embrace educational technologies that enhance learning experiences both within and outside traditional settings. With the introduction of our 1:1 student device programme, we're equipping our students with the tools they need to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Blended learning is at the heart of our approach. By integrating digital tools with face-to-face interactions, we create a dynamic learning environment that captivates students' attention. Whether it's collaborating virtually, exploring interactive content, or critically evaluating information online, our students gain essential digital skills that prepare them for success beyond the classroom.

In today's fast-paced world, technology proficiency is no longer optional—it's essential. 1:1 student devices empower learners to navigate online platforms confidently. From research to data analysis, our students harness the power of technology to enhance their understanding and creativity.

While preparing for State Exams is crucial, our vision extends further. We're shaping confident, creative individuals who are active and informed members of their communities. The skills acquired through our student device programme go beyond exams—they prepare our students for life.

As a student, parent, or teacher, we all play a vital role in ensuring the success of the 1:1 device programme. Together, we create a community of 21st-century learners who embrace challenges, collaborate, and strive for excellence.

2. Intended/Appropriate Usage and eBooks

Our 1:1 student device programme at Blackrock College aims to enhance learning experiences and prepare students for the digital world.

Accessible and Approved Software

Students can access a library of approved software via the Company Portal app. The Company Portal is Microsoft's version of an 'approved app store' which is curated by the College IT Department. Each of these applications are for educational purposes and enhance learning and teaching. Students are unable to install applications outside of this library. This ensures that student devices remain as educational tools. This library is constantly updated as new educational apps become available. Therefore, parents and students can see a full and up to date list of all approved apps on the Company Portal app, installed on student devices.

Appropriate Internet/Browser Access

There is a fine balance between the ability to research and getting ahead of new unwanted or inappropriate sites that can be accessed. We believe that a combination of education and restrictions is important. We teach and promote responsible and appropriate use in tandem with blocking problematic sites as soon as we are informed. We constantly update websites blocked as there are always new ones. Please see section 3 for more information about restrictions in place.

Acceptable Use Policy

The Blackrock College acceptable use policy for students can be found here: [POLICY-ACCEPTABLE-USE-POLICY-I.T.-STUDENTS-Oct-2022.pdf \(blackrockcollege.com\)](#)

Seamless Collaboration with Microsoft 365 and Digital Inking

Microsoft 365 apps provide essential tools for collaboration:

OneNote: With access to OneNote as their digital notebook, students can organise class notes, create sections for different subjects, and easily share their notes with teachers and classmates. Collaborating on group projects, research, and study guides becomes seamless within OneNote.

Microsoft Teams: Think of Teams as a virtual classroom. Students can participate in discussions, collaborate on assignments, and access class learning materials.

Word, Excel, and PowerPoint: These applications allow students to create, edit, and format documents, spreadsheets, and presentations. These skills are valuable not only for academics but also for future endeavours.

OneDrive: Student files are stored securely in the cloud. They can access their work from any device, collaborate with others, and never worry about losing important documents.

Digital Inking Capabilities: Student devices are equipped with digital inking capabilities. This feature allows students to take handwritten notes, annotate documents, and express their creativity directly on the screen. Whether they're solving math problems, sketching diagrams, or brainstorming ideas, digital inking enhances their engagement with content.

eBooks

Are eBooks replacing physical textbooks?

No. We have a blended approach using both physical textbooks and devices as teaching and learning tools. This means that students still have access to the physical textbooks but will have opportunities to leave them in their locker or at home, reducing school bag weight. The student journal helps students organise themselves and students are regularly reminded to use this. As different subjects have different requirements regarding books and necessary equipment, each class teacher tells their students what is required for their class. Students should note this in their student journal.

Are publisher eBook apps available on the student device?

Yes. All publisher eBook apps are available via the Company Portal app on the device. Students can select their eBook app for installation and then need to register an account with the publisher to access the eBooks.

Do we have to purchase eBooks separately?

No. eBooks are included free with the purchase of the physical textbook. Each textbook comes with an eBook code printed inside the cover. This code can be redeemed in the publisher's eBook app.

What if we have already redeemed our eBook code?

The eBook codes can only be redeemed once. Codes are linked with the account that was used to redeem the code.

Ideally, each student would have all of their eBooks associated with their Blackrock College email address, but if eBooks have already been activated, they may be associated with a personal email address. Those eBooks can still be accessed on the student's device. Each publisher app is available via the Company Portal on each student's device and each app will require signing in with a username and password.

If the eBook has already been activated, the student will need to use the same username and password that they activated their account with.

In the case where an eBook was redeemed using an account linked to the Willow Park 1st Year email, these books can still be accessed. Willow Park 1st Year email accounts will remain active for the duration of a student's Junior Cycle.

Can we pass down or sell on eBooks?

Unfortunately, no. Publishers have made eBook codes single use preventing the resale or handing down of eBooks.

Can we buy the eBooks only and not purchase the textbooks?

No. The College has a blended approach and textbooks are required. However, eBooks do not incur an additional cost.

What happens in the case of a subject change?

If a student changes subject, they will require the materials for the new subject, including the textbook. The eBook can be redeemed using the code supplied free of charge within this new subject textbook.

3. Inappropriate Usage and Device Restrictions

How are the student devices moderated and restricted?

Microsoft Intune and Ativion are the two cloud-based management tools used to moderate and restrict student devices. As they are cloud-based tools, the below policies and restrictions take effect no matter where the device is located, providing piece of mind.

Microsoft Intune

Microsoft Intune is a cloud-based endpoint management solution. It allows the College IT Department to manage all student devices. Its primary goal is to simplify app and device management while ensuring security and compliance.

With Intune, the College IT Department has created policies that govern how devices access resources. For example:

Access Controls: Specify what students can access such as specific apps or data.

Security Policies: A number of security policies are in use such as rules for passwords, encryption, anti-virus and other security measures. Students are also restricted from accessing administrator tools or installing new software.

Compliance Checks: Ensures devices meet security and restriction standards.

App Management: Intune handles app deployment, updates, and removal. Educational apps are distributed via the Company Portal app, which is self-service.

Zero Trust Model: Intune aligns with the Zero Trust security model, emphasising security at every level.

Ativion

Ativion is also a cloud-based student device management tool. It acts as both a real-time monitoring software for teachers and a roaming firewall.

Realtime Screen Monitoring: Ativion can be used by teachers to view student devices in their classrooms in real time. This ensures that students are kept on task and that teachers have visibility of their learning.

Roaming Firewall: Ativion has been configured to restrict internet access, preventing students from accessing inappropriate or harmful web content. This roaming firewall works both in and outside the College.

Will social media/gaming/gambling be blocked on the student devices?

The College IT Department is proactive in ensuring websites and apps of these types will be blocked. We have ensured that the technologies we are implementing are cutting edge at dealing with these issues.

The device management system, Microsoft Intune, applies restriction policies to all devices and these policies are actively updated. The College has also invested in an advanced IT infrastructure, including a complex firewall and Ativion which will block access to inappropriate/distracting websites, going above and beyond Intune's policies.

As the number of social media/gaming/gambling websites is ever expanding, the College IT Department rapidly respond when new restrictions are needed. We work in partnership with our student digital leaders, parents and staff to manage the necessary restrictions. If a parent has a concern about any website, please contact the College IT Department so that we can apply new restrictions as appropriate.

How is internet access restricted?

The internet browser has policies applied to it by the device management system Intune, such as safe search, and these policies are actively reviewed and updated. Please see above regarding website blocking.

Do the restrictions still apply after school, outside the College network?

All restrictions applied by the device management systems work outside of the College network. The College IT Department recommends that parents consider setting up parental controls for their home Wi-Fi. Information regarding parental controls is below.

[Webwise - Internet Safety](#) - Here you will find information, advice and free education resources addressing a range of internet safety issues and concerns.

Parental controls are available on most Internet-enabled devices including computers, smartphones, tablets and gaming systems. Parental controls can help reduce the risk of your child encountering inappropriate content when they are online. When enabling parental controls, use age-appropriate settings to filter, monitor and block your child's activities. We recommend using parental controls especially for younger children on all available devices, computers, and tablets in the home. Parents should also understand that while parental controls are a good support, they are not 100% effective, therefore it is also very important to talk to your child about using the internet safely.

Blackrock College uses Microsoft Intune, Ativion and the College Firewall to protect students from distracting and inappropriate online content. Parents may wish to consider implementing parental controls on their home Wi-Fi. This will enable parents to take control of screentime and block specific sites at certain times (such as YouTube). This can be done easily and normally for free by most internet service providers (ISPs). We recommend contacting your provider or checking their website for more information.

For your convenience, the please find a list of ISPs that offer parental controls and links to their setup instructions.

(Links correct at time of publication of this booklet)

Virgin Media

<https://www.virginmedia.com/help/security/parental-controls>

Eir Fibre

<https://www.eir.ie/helpandsupport/smartphonehelp/?page=topic/settings/set-up-parental-control/device>

Vodafone

<https://n.vodafone.ie/protecting-you/secure-net.html>

Sky

Unfortunately, Sky has removed its parental control features in the Republic of Ireland (See below for alternatives)

DigiWeb

<https://digiweb.ie/parental-controls/>

If your child has a smartphone they use outside the home, and you wish to put similar controls in place on this device also, please see: [Online safety - How to set up parental controls \(webwise.ie\)](#)

Other Solutions

Another option is to purchase a new home Wi-Fi router that has parental controls. Not only will this most likely boost your Wi-Fi speed and coverage, it will also provide you with more control and visibility of your connected devices.

Some popular options include:

Netgear routers - <https://www.netgear.com/ie/home/services/smart-parental-controls/>

Synology routers - https://www.synology.com/en-global/srm/feature/device_content_control

TP-Link routers - <https://www.tp-link.com/uk/home-networking/wifi-router/>

Please note, the College IT Department is unable to assist with the set-up of home parental controls. For guidance, set-up help and support, please contact your internet service provider.

Are students allowed to bring in mobile phones to school?

Yes, but they must be switched off and locked in a Yondr pouch during school hours.

Can the student device be used in night study?

Yes. Please see the below extract from the night study charter.

Electronic devices including mobile phones:

6th year - allowed use of student device for the duration of Night Study for homework/study purposes only. Allowed to use phone and headphones for listening to music only. Phones should not be visible on desks.

5th year - allowed use of student device for the duration of Night Study for homework/study purposes only, allowed to use earphones for first 30mins for languages/music homework. Phones MUST be pouched.

3rd year - allowed use of student device for the first half of Night Study for homework/study purposes only, allowed to use earphones for first 30mins for languages/music homework. Phones MUST be pouched.

4. Setup and Configuration

Is all the necessary software that a student will need pre-installed?

Absolutely! The device will be ready to go out of the box with all necessary software pre-installed including the full suite of Microsoft 365 apps. You can access the Company Portal app to access our full library of approved applications.

Will the setup be specifically configured for each student based on subjects?

Students will have access to a range of subject specific apps which can be installed from the Company Portal app that has been developed by the College IT Department. The IT Department liaise with all teachers and student digital leaders to ensure the best educational apps are available to students. This application library is updated regularly.

Can external software be installed?

No. To ensure all devices are secure and to prevent malicious applications being installed accidentally, software that has not been approved by the College IT Department cannot be installed. If the application is deemed educational, please contact the College IT support to confirm whether the app can be made available.

Will devices have a unique identifier to stop them being mixed up?

The College highly recommends that students add a name tag to their device for identification purposes. Beyond this, the device management system, Intune, can identify each device and the correct owner.

Is ransomware a risk to the College?

The College has invested heavily over the past number of years to ensure we are protected from ransomware and other cybersecurity risks and has disaster recovery protocols in place. The College IT Department manages the antivirus software Windows Defender and Microsoft Endpoint Security which keeps devices secure, protected and fully up to date.

Is data stored on the student device backed up?

Microsoft OneDrive will be each student's file space and all data stored here is backed up in real time and can be accessed on any device. Devices are also configured to automatically back up any files stored in the student's user profile (i.e. data stored on the desktop, documents, or pictures folders) to OneDrive.

5. Support, Insurance and Warranty

The first port of call for all support queries is the Blackrock College IT Department. Students may call down to the IT Department office for device support.

The College appreciates that accidents and breakages can happen. For insurance and warranty issues or questions, please contact the College IT Department for support on an individual basis.

Can the student device be tracked in the event of loss or theft?

No, tracking settings such as "Find My Device" are not compatible with educational or business Microsoft accounts.

If a device is broken and needs repair, will the student be left with no device until it is returned?

There are a small number of loan devices in the College for students that need them in exceptional circumstances.

6. BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)

I have already purchased a device for my son; can he use this?

No, devices other than the student devices made available for purchase by the College will not be allowed in the classroom.

There are a number of important reasons for this:

1. The student device is there as a tool and it should not get in the way of teaching and learning. So, a teacher should not have to be a tech expert in working with different devices - they need to know that each student has the same device, and that each device will work in exactly the same way.
2. Some devices may not be a good fit for the classroom, even very expensive devices:
 - They may be too big, or too small
 - They may not have all day battery life
 - They may not have touch screens or be compatible with Digital Stylus Pens
 - They may not be able to access the same content and applications
3. As technology is constantly developing, the College undertakes a huge amount of research and consultation in identifying the correct and best model of device for students every year.

4. Most importantly perhaps, is that personal (non-educational SKU) devices cannot be set up, managed, and supported in the same way. Every type of device has some kind of system that will allow it to be managed, but that would mean running numerous different systems at the same time in trying to manage different devices. That is not practical, both from cost implications, but also the disruption it would bring to teaching and learning. To ensure the successful introduction of a student device programme it is essential that devices are set up as educational devices only.

Is the student device compulsory?

Yes. The College fully acknowledges that this is a significant expense, and this cost is not being asked of you lightly. We hope that you appreciate that you are not just buying a device but investing in your son's education through all the benefits that the device brings in a blended learning environment.

7. Ownership and 3rd Level

Who ultimately owns the device? The student or the College?

Devices are owned by the student. The model in place is that devices are student owned and College managed.

What happens the device after 6th year?

The device will be reset and all management and restriction policies will be removed. Once a device is reset, the device can continue to be used by the student (i.e. in 3rd level).

Can the student device be used at 3rd level?

Yes, as stated above, once a student leaves Blackrock College after 6th year and their device is reset, they ultimately own the device and can bring it to 3rd level.

However, we cannot account for which courses a student may take in 3rd level, so there may be instances where a very specific type of device will be required.

8. Ergonomics and Health

Has any consideration been given to student eyesight, screen time, ergonomics, and repetitive strain injuries?

Having spent a lot of time on devices during the Covid-19 Pandemic we are acutely aware of student eyesight and screen time concerns. Students will not be on their devices constantly from 8.30am to 3.45pm – that is why the blended approach is key in what we are doing. If students are using the stylus, it is unlikely that repetitive strain injury will occur as this is similar to writing with a standard pen – Students do not only use their devices in class. They also experience traditional learning methodologies (copies/pens) and active learning methodologies.

9. Battery and Charging

Will students be able to charge their device at school if necessary?

The College recommends students charge their student device overnight and bring it into school fully charged. Power outlets are available in classrooms should a student need to charge their device battery.

Does one overnight charge last the whole school day?

Since battery consumption is down to an individual's device usage, we cannot say that all student device batteries will last an entire school day.

10. Training

Will there be an induction held for students?

Yes. The Second Year Student Device Induction is part of the Second Year Induction. The students receive their devices on this day and a comprehensive induction takes place during the same session.

Will students receive training on storing files and notes efficiently?

Yes. Complementing the Student Device Induction, all Second- and Third-Year students have Computer Science classes where they learn about device use best practices, cyber security and safety, computational thinking as well as other 21st century digital skills such as programming.

What training have teachers received?

Please see our Digital Strategy document, specifically “Training and Collaboration” on page 7. [The Digital Strategy can be viewed here.](#)

11. Exams

Can students use their device for school exams or state exams?

No. In cases of AEN requirements, the College will continue to support students as required.

Will students be disadvantaged when they have to sit a traditional written state exam?

Students will not only be writing/typing using the student device. Students will still be using copies/A4 pads/pens/pencils etc. That is why we are stressing the blended approach to learning. The devices are not replacing anything that currently exists within the classroom – they are a tool to enhance teaching and learning. Students taking examinations will still be trained in ‘how to sit a traditional exam’, we have many opportunities throughout the academic year where students are given practice in this skill.

12. Device Lifespan

How long will the Student Device last before an upgrade will be required?

We envisage the device will last the full length of your son's education in Blackrock College. With ongoing support from the College IT Department, we will ensure the device is kept fully up to date, secure and protected, and running smoothly.