

iPads at Farnborough Hill

Our vision for the iPad is that it integrates seamlessly into the classroom, visible and vibrant whilst in use but unnoticed when it is not needed. The iPad fulfils this role perfectly. Technology must be used to enhance lessons or it has no place in the classroom; it must be robust, reliable and above all purposeful. When planning lessons teachers do not spend time worrying about whether pupils' pens will work or whether their lessons will come to a halt because the pages of a textbook inexplicably won't open. The same must be true of technology, it must work every time. We believe we can achieve this with the iPad.

The iPad is best used in lessons when it is incorporated, but does not dominate, offering up possibilities that were not open to the learner before. Sometimes its role can be minor, enhancing a text book with an animation or video and sometimes it can be revolutionary, the iPad screen becomes a window into a whole new world of possibilities.

Our exploration into mobile devices began in Autumn 2014; we visited a number of schools and educational technology events in order to explore the variety of approaches available to us. It immediately became clear that this was not something to rush into. We would need to drill down into the educational benefits of different platforms, ensuring that our infrastructure could support such a radical influx of devices and that our teaching staff were trained to fully utilise them in the classroom.

It is hard not to be awestruck by the shiny appeal of the iPad and its marketing potential. Sceptics might argue that this is our primary motivation, but in reality Apple has a rich

history in education. Tools for classroom management and device deployment that simply did not exist before have become vital in ensuring the iPad's success in an educational setting. Apple have committed huge amounts of resources into improving their educational provision, including software and classroom tools, programs for classroom management and device deployment, support for schools and training programmes for teachers.

Traditional laptops dominate a desk with their footprint and the screen creates a barrier between the teacher and the pupil. In contrast, the iPad takes up very little space on a desk and can easily be stowed away in a bag. Battery life is historically poor at a similar price point to the iPad and the classroom is no place for charging cables and the hazard they represent. Laptops can start up slowly, wasting valuable lesson time in the process. With an iPad a pupil can become immersed in learning within seconds. Other tablet manufacturers exist of course and these were considered carefully, but ultimately we believe that the wealth of manufacturers of similar devices, conflicting standards and sporadic eco systems was not conducive to our vision of seamless devices in education. It is easy to make comparisons to computers and imagine perceived limitations of an iPad compared to the technology we are used to, but the iPad should not be viewed as a replacement for a computer, but as an educational aid with its own unique advantages and workflow. A simple interface which disposes of much of the clutter of a traditional desktop and allows the focus to be on learning.

It was clear from the start that if I:L devices were to work, we would need a reliable

system for the creation and distribution of resources electronically. The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) a government initiative of the early 2000's which was ahead of its time would finally have a use in the mainstream classroom. If every child has a device then they can access the materials on the VLE wherever they are. We introduced the industry leading Firefly in September 2014, because it allows quick creation and organisation of pages with rich content,

including images, video, interactive quizzes and automated assessment. It also comes with a full suite of iPad Apps allowing teachers to set assignments, mark them electronically and return them to pupils with a wealth of feedback. Along with Firefly we also utilise the Microsoft Office 365 platform, including OneNote and OneDrive, which allows our pupils to access to their documents and notes regardless of their location.



Also vital to the scheme was ensuring that staff are comfortable and confident using the technology. To ensure this is the case we provide all teaching staff with iPads, as well as regular training and support. We have invested in Jamf Pro, a world class Mobile Device Management system with clients including IBM and Apple themselves. Designed exclusively to support mass deployment of Apple products, this system can automatically send apps and resources remotely to our pupils' iPads, removing the need for parents to purchase them individually ensuring that they always have what they need to complete their work. It allows us to exercise tight control over the iPads, blocking access to apps and functionality that contradict our educational vision and unrelenting commitment to keeping your daughter safe online.

We began trailing iPads on a 1:1 basis in December 2015 which proved to be incredibly successful. Our pupils quickly and seamlessly integrated them into their school lives. Both teachers and pupils immediately latched on to the educational benefits of the device. We have seen some amazing developments in the Farnborough Hill classroom; electronic textbooks have become commonplace, reducing the weight of school bags and bolstering our green credentials. Pupils have become educational treasure hunters, trawling the app store for programs that can help them learn and recommending them to their teachers; who in turn incorporate them into lesson plans for the following year. iPads allow pupils to collaborate in real time on documents, produce rich multimedia pieces of work and have a world of information at their fingertips all without needing to leave their desks. But it does not stop when they leave

the classroom, with the iPad at their side the tools are always with them to continue their learning.

As a result of the immensely successful trial, the decision was taken that from September 2017 all pupils in Years 9 – 11 would be required to have an iPad to see them through the next stage of their educational journey. For pupils in Years 7 and 8 we have bookable class sets of iPads which teachers can use to avoid moving classes to ICT rooms for research purposes and web based tasks. Shared iPads are also available in the Library which can be used to complete prep and to enhance Library based lessons.

In the academic year 2018/19, we engaged the services of an Apple distinguished educator to train staff in the most effective use of the iPad. The staff in question have been given the title of IT champions; their role is to champion the use of the iPad in the classroom within the academic faculty to which they have been assigned, passing on the training they have received. In 2019/20, teaching staff were issued with Apple pencils with the intention that these can be used for online marking using OneNote, part of the Office 365 suite. If successful, as it has so far proved to be, the Apple Pencil will be a part of the kit requirement for Year 9 pupils from September 2020, adding peer marking and a world of possibilities in Art and Design to our use of the iPads.

We hope that parents will join us in embracing the iPad with our pupils as they continue to explore everything that its rich ecosystem has to offer. With your support we believe that it can have a truly revolutionary effect on your daughter's education.

