

Minibook scheme for the year 9 pupils – a parent’s perspective.

I was a little apprehensive about enrolling my child to the Year 9 minibook scheme at Maiden Erlegh School as I was concerned about its safe use at home, the security of the minibook whilst in my child’s possession to/from school, the cost implications, etc. I also believed that use of digital technology was increasing both at work and at home and thought that it was important that my children were familiar and educated on the correct use of digital technology. Not doing so could place them at a disadvantage.

My main concern was the possible use of the minibook for accessing social networking and inappropriate sites but I have managed this by just allowing my child a limited time in the evening for homework. I still have the option to switch off the wireless router should there be tantrums! I also found re-assurance from the fact that the minibook also had the Securus monitoring software for safety and sensible use.

The donations initially appeared to be prohibitive but the insurance scheme offered was probably the best around and it swayed my decision as it covered practically every eventuality within reason.

The minibook was easily connected to my home wireless network and the school provided clear instructions on how this can be done. Connecting to my home printer was also simple and the school provided a dedicated email contact for technical issues which I have not yet had a reason to use.

The minibook is charged and the antivirus software updated and ready for school the following morning. My child has managed this by incorporating it into the daily homework routine in the evening. It does not take much time to recharge the battery (approximately an hour) which is sufficient for the following school day. It takes very little time to update the antivirus software.

I have encouraged my child to take good care of it by ensuring that it is properly covered and secure in the school bag whilst in transit and not to drop the bag, minimising any risk of physical damage.

Since the introduction of the minibook scheme, I have noticed that my child is considerably more comfortable with searching for information on the internet, speed of using the keyboard, use of educational software packages, use of Microsoft Office, etc.

My child has also gained a great deal of confidence in the use of IT in general and I have noticed an increased keenness to do research on homework and consequent improvement in the studies. My child has also mentioned to me that its use at school is increasing as most of the teachers are using it for their lessons and all my child’s friends have now opted into the scheme.

My concerns (as a parent) were as follows:

- ‘out of the box’ setup and installation at home – Actual experience was that we had a problem with setting up network access but this was resolved quickly by following the ‘Set internet connection on MES Laptop on home network’ document.
- Apprehensions on quality and reliability of the machine. – no real issues have arisen.
- Durability of the machines – Insurance cover was important and appears to work well. I remain concerned that we are giving hi-cost equipment to children and we should not forget that they are children

What I wish I had known or taken notice of;

Differences when swapping between school and home for printing and saving work

How much time my daughter would actually be using the minibook for during the day

How much of what is actually happening on the minibooks, during lessons, can be accessed by teachers or school

My child only uses the minibook for school related tasks, I am not sure how much parental control I would be able to use if my child used it for everyday use.

Would have preferred when donating for the minibook to be able to do it more securely, I had to complete a form with all details including security code

Advantages

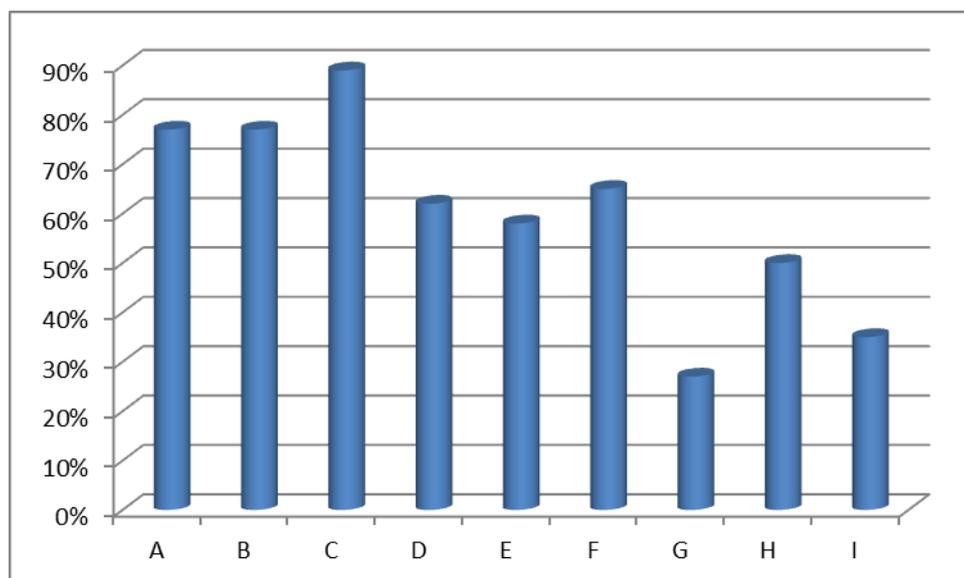
Modern technology is moving so fast and it allows my child to use it in a work related setting which I am sure will benefit my child in the future. My child has not had any problems or technical difficulties so I assume the system is robust

Being able to access information at my child's fingertips ie Business Studies – first lesson of year 9 and my child was producing computer based pie charts

Being small enough to easily fit in with other school equipment.

I feel that my child has benefited greatly from the scheme and enjoys the freedom of learning in a different way.

PARENTS' VIEWS FROM SURVEY 2010/11



| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| My child uses the minibook regularly in lessons. | A | 77% |
| My child enjoys using the minibook in lessons. | B | 77% |
| My child uses the minibook regularly for homework. | C | 89% |
| My child is more motivated to do their homework on the minibook. | D | 62% |
| I feel my child uses the minibook for the right proportion of lessons. | E | 58% |
| My child uses the minibook for varied activities. | F | 65% |
| My child appears more engaged with their learning because of the minibook. | G | 27% |
| On the whole having the minibook has enhanced my child's learning experience. | H | 50% |
| I have had technical problems with the device itself. | I | 35% |

This survey was undertaken in the Winter of 2010/2011 and confirms other evidence eg: from email contact with parents, parent focus groups for example.

The engagement issue is interesting because although "engagement with learning" scored 27%, motivation to do homework scored much higher. Minibook use at home does not have to be entirely for school work and some parents saw an increase in on-line time where they had allowed that facility. Where parents expressed concern about this we gave them advice and have increased our advice to parents (and students) about on-line safety. We also published our advice to parents re home learning activities with extension activities, many of which were IT based, to which parents could direct their child.

There have been technical teething problems with each new device and we have dealt with each one as we have become aware of them.

A follow up parental survey will come out in the Spring term and will be an opportunity for further feedback on the scheme.

WHAT DO STUDENTS THINK ABOUT MINIBOOKS

What we most like using our minibooks for in lessons

| ACTIVITY | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Easier research | Presentations |
| Videos | Noteflight in music |
| Writing ("it's easier") | Making animation |
| Learning games | Note taking |
| Blogging | Listening to music |
| Forums | Online quizzes |

How we use our minibook for homework

| |
|-----------------------|
| Research |
| Typing up work |
| Presentations |
| Essay writing |
| Preparation for tests |
| Photoshop |

"I like using them for research because it helps us to understand things better."

"They are great for me because I concentrate better when I have music playing."

"When your family need to use the computer you can still go on the internet and do your homework - or do fun stuff."

"It's a useful way to learn in

"They are useful to just jot something down and finish it off later and has most definitely helped me on the homework side of school."

"It's good to find out information which you wouldn't be able to normally."

"They are good and make tasks quicker to do"

