



Katherine Warington School

Katherine Warington School (KWS) opened its doors for students in September 2019, established by a partnership of three existing secondary schools, the University of Hertfordshire and Rothamsted Research (who together form the Harpenden Secondary Schools Trust).

With an ethos that's aimed at enabling every student to make outstanding progress, whatever their starting point, the school balances traditional academic values with an innovative, technology-rich approach to provide high quality education for young people within their local community.

It was this vision to make the school a beacon of best practice for technology provision that led Dean Inns, IT & School Business Manager at KWS, to seek out strategic partners to help make their vision a reality:

"We had 180 students as our first intake to plan for. As a new school, it gave us the opportunity to design the technology around the learning, rather than the learning around the technology."



“So as the technical lead I was able to work with the teaching staff and Senior Leadership Team to establish the best way for us to help each student make outstanding progress.

“As a school we invested in the right infrastructure to serve as a solid foundation for digital success: the best WiFi, the best switching, the best infrastructure. We needed to make sure that the device provision matched these supreme standards, and the best way to do that in our opinion was to deploy a 1:1 programme that gave each pupil in the school a personalised device.”

The 1:1 path

To that end, after asking Herts for Learning to recommend a partner for 1:1 device programmes, Dean engaged with Freedom Tech to discuss their Tech 4 Learners programme.

Dean continues:

“From the first meeting Freedom Tech proved to be able to offer everything we needed. We spent lots of time considering all the options for our pupils and parents. We wanted to ensure it was as affordable as possible for everyone.

“Having assessed the range of technologies to power teaching and learning, we settled on Google. We loved Google Classroom and Google Workspace for Education and what it could give us in terms of collaboration between staff and pupils. To complement the platform, we also decided that a Chromebook from Asus was the right fit for our school.

“We firmly believe that a Chromebook is a far more productive device for education than a tablet, as there is only so much you can do on a touch screen. Chromebooks are fast to start up, they go from sleep to active use in just 2 seconds – that opens up huge possibilities for their use in parts of lessons in the classroom.

“Chromebooks also have a fantastic battery life, 10 hours for the models purchased through our programme. Students charge them at home overnight and then they last all day. Compared to the 3-4 hours you get on most laptops that is a huge bonus.”

Engaging with Parents

In order to give the programme the best possible chance of success, Dean and his colleagues wanted to ensure that parents were fully engaged in the process from start to finish.

Dean explains: “Throughout a process of consultation with Freedom Tech, we were able to generate 1, 2 and 3 year options with prices starting from £10.25 per month. We started communicating the programme to parents before the parents information evening. We wanted to make certain that parents knew the measures we were taking to provide a world-class education experience.

“Freedom Tech were gracious with their time, even coming to present to parents during the parents information evening. Our SLT complemented Freedom Tech’s presentation by setting the vision of how these devices would help deliver on our promise of using digital technologies to help our pupils make outstanding progress.”

A huge uptake

Parents were clear in their feedback. With almost a 100% uptake of the programme amongst the new intake of 180 pupils, the school were also able to subsidise the cost of a device or offer long term loans to a handful of students whose families were in financial constraint to achieve a full 1:1 provision at their first attempt.

All Chromebooks come with Freedom Tech’s industry-leading warranty and support package that provides a next-day device swap at school if there are any issues.

KWS didn’t stop there though. As part of their ongoing commitment to do things the right way, they also organised a formal handover of the devices during a parents welcome evening. This allowed the school to get a signed user agreement from parents and allow for any questions about how to look after it or support students with their independent learning.

The classroom impact

A number of months into their Chromebook 1:1 project and the praise is flooding in from all corners of the school.

Mrs Zoë Coomber, Head of Maths & SLT lead for Chromebooks, Curriculum & Feedback says:

“Our Year 7s are using Quizlet in Geography for revision flash cards, and referencing knowledge organisers online for Maths each week, developing independent recall and revision techniques that are often not touched on until Key Stage 4.



"We have developed a Maths Google Site where students can independently access all the lesson resources, including worksheets, tasks and knowledge organisers.

"Our Headteacher comments on how the Chromebooks are 'thoroughly aiding engagement' and our SENCO enthuses about how the Chromebooks are 'AMAZING' for our SEN students. We are complete advocates for the Chromebooks.

"Chromebooks have also supported our Remote Learning provision during Lockdown and have proved an invaluable asset with students and staff able to work from home with ease."

Looking to the future

As a new school with high aspirations, the story doesn't end there.

As Dean points out, this is just the beginning of the KWS journey:

"Obviously this year represented our first cohort of students. We are committed to the long-term impact our decisions will have on their success even after they leave our school gates for the last time.

"We have been supported by Tablet Academy who have helped our staff to integrate digital technology into our curriculum delivery. They have also delivered a Parents information evening on supporting learning with Chromebooks and Google Workspace for Education. Our medium-term plan is to get all teachers Google Certified.

"As we were still recruiting the internal team we needed at the time of running the first stage of the programme, we ran two ordering windows for parents. I think with the staff we need now all onboard, and the valued support of Freedom Tech, I feel confident we can run a single ordering window efficiently and drive another huge uptake from parents."



Why Freedom Tech

Dean has no hesitation in recommending Freedom Tech to other schools.

"I would urge any other schools considering a 1:1 device programme to reach out to Freedom Tech. The Tech 4 Learners programme represents a great way for parents to get a device that comes with a high quality warranty and support package you simply wouldn't get at a high street store.

"Everyone we deal with at Freedom Tech is extremely efficient and responsive. Whenever we have had individual challenges with devices they have been turned around and swapped out with no fuss. Their support process works really well.

"As a growing school, it was important we didn't burden ourselves with lots of red tape and administration. That's why we have Freedom Tech. They manage all of the programme for us from end-to-end. We need that extra pair of hands. It's complete peace of mind."