



Cheadle Hulme School

## Why do Students use Technology at CHS?

Dear Parent/Guardian,

*This document should be read in conjunction with our Y7-9 and/or Y10-13 **digital learning guides**, which can be found [here](#) on the School's website. We have also produced an **online safety guide**, which can be found on the same page.*

First and foremost: at CHS, technology is **never** used purely for the sake of it. Technology is a tool, not a means to end, and our teachers continually evaluate whether or not it's the best tool for the job. Attempting to add glamour to a curriculum by sprinkling in technology without forethought has led to many mixed experiences of ed-tech in schools over the decades. Indeed, it's what's driven many to be somewhat wary of new and emerging educational technologies!

At CHS, we think of technology as a carpenter may think of one the tools in their workshop and ask ourselves: *what's the best tool right now?* If that's not technology, then it shouldn't be used. When technology is used wisely and timely, it can have a **very** positive impact, as outlined in the The Education Endowment Fund's excellent report on [Digital Learning](#). We recommend you read this in conjunction with their report on [Collaborative Learning](#), something that is readily facilitated by our increasing use of cloud-based tools and technologies.

### What is 'the cloud' and why is CHS using it?

Files stored in the School's on-site servers are what we call 'local' files. Files stored off-site in secure servers run by reputable and regulated third-parties are what we call 'the cloud'.

We view migration to the cloud as a [disruptive innovation](#) that can have a hugely democratising effect on teaching and learning, much in the same way the printing press did in the 15th century and the internet did in the 20th century. When files are stored in the cloud, teachers and students are not bound by any particular location, classroom or device: they are free to access their work, collaborate, research and communicate wherever and whenever they have access to the internet.

In short: the cloud represents *freedom* from many traditional educational constraints.

The dual backbones of our move to the cloud are Google's **G Suite** and Microsoft's **Office 365**. Pupils have a **business** account for both, managed by the School, which provides unlimited storage for documents, spreadsheets, presentations etc.

Pupils' activities are monitored closely by the School from an administrator interface whereas Google do not monitor their activities on G Suite, do not target them with advertising or even own the data hosted on their servers. You can find out more about G Suite for Education privacy features [here](#).

Students also have a Microsoft Office 365 **business** account, presently used to access their email and calendar via Microsoft Outlook. These account credentials also enable students to log-on to the School's computers and use both offline and online versions of Microsoft Office. They can also sign-in to Microsoft Office apps on their mobile device and other devices that they may use at home. However, Microsoft Office documents created and stored **offline** do not always automatically sync to OneDrive, so caution is advised when using them. We recommend instead that students use **online** Microsoft Office apps to ensure that no work is ever lost.

In short: if a student creates an **online**, cloud-based document in their **Google Drive** or Microsoft **OneDrive**, it is always stored online and can be accessed from any device signed-in to their school account. This could be an iPad running Google or Microsoft apps or a laptop/desktop running a web browser signed-in to Google and/or Office 365. Cloud-based files are saved automatically, so there's no concern about losing work and students can switch from device to device, seamlessly accessing and editing their files. Students are instructed how to create and manage cloud-based documents in Lower School Computing lessons.

### **So what does this look like on a day-to-day basis?**

Examples of activities students may undertake using G Suite or Office 365 include:

- writing an essay for English using Docs or Word
- preparing a presentation for Geography using Slides, PowerPoint or Sway
- conducting market research for Design Technology using Google or Microsoft Forms
- making a website for Computing using Sites or SharePoint
- analysing a spreadsheet for Physics using Sheets or Excel
- recording a video for Drama and uploading it to Google Drive or OneDrive
- making important notes from a lesson using Keep or OneNote

These are just a few examples and departments make use of a much wider range of subject-specific apps and services that students have installed on their iPads or can access via web-browsers on their iPads and laptops. As stated above, student email is presently hosted by Microsoft and accessed via Outlook, though we are currently evaluating a migration to Gmail and Google Calendar.

In short: students have access to a wide range of industry-standard apps that they can use to create wide variety of electronic documents. Over time, they will learn how to use them all, the strengths and weaknesses of each and how to select the best app for a particular task.

### **Why is CHS using G Suite *and* Microsoft Office 365?**

The future is the cloud. We see this in banking, entertainment, retail and service sectors and it's the case for education too. We believe the best way to embrace the cloud is to go 'all in' and currently Google's range of products offer the most reliable and intuitive experience, particularly when it comes to collaborative working.

However, we also recognise that Microsoft Office remains the standard product used in many businesses and educational institutions. This is a dynamic situation and will continue to change over time. We believe in equipping our students to be adaptable and flexible learners who can cope with challenge and change. The ability to use both platforms and to be able to adapt their skills to new systems over time is a valuable skill and one that we will continue to help them to develop.

In short: We believe that learning to embrace multiple digital platforms is a valuable life skill, which is why we have consciously decided against a 'this or that' approach. We operate a climate of choice but with a clear sense of direction.

## **What are Schoology and Google Classroom?**

If Google Drive is the filing cabinet into which staff and students put their files and resources, Schoology and Google Classroom are the assistants which hand out work and collect it back in. Both have deep integration with Google Drive and both are being used across the School by departments embracing the exciting teaching and learning opportunities the cloud affords.

Staff can post announcements and reminders to students via these Learning Management Systems (LMS) and students have 24/7 access to essential reference materials and, in many cases, their ongoing assignments. Students should still make a note of assignments in their planner, however, in addition to checking their email on a daily basis, where notifications from our LMS' are sent.

In short: a positive approach to *self-regulation* that involves both *analogue and digital approaches* is the mindset we strive to develop in our 21st century students.

## **Why don't we standardise on one Learning Management System and set all homework electronically in one place?**

Schoology and Classroom have different features and each one will suit the approach in particular subjects better than the other. We want to give our teachers the choice of which tool suits the learners' needs the best in their subject. We also want the students to learn to manage their own work, as this is a valuable life-skill. Convenience is welcome in many areas of our lives, but it can also be problematic, especially if it reduces our capabilities and prevents us from developing useful transferable and critical skills. We believe that student use of traditional planners should continue to be the backbone of effective organisation and time-management. Some of them find this a challenge, but we think that this is a [desirable difficulty](#) and that they will learn in the process of dealing with this challenge.

In short: many homework tasks are recorded electronically, but the traditional planner remains the record of all tasks and the means by which students can manage their workload and their success in doing this can be monitored by form tutors and parents.

## **What else do students use their devices for?**

We think of students' devices as a window to the knowledge base of humankind. As such, students may use their devices for a wide variety of research-based activities, in addition to using them to access various subject-specific online resources such as Hegarty Maths, Educake, Kerboodle or Cambridge Elevate. They may also use subject specific apps, particularly in practical subjects.

## **Are their devices used outside of lessons?**

Students are able to use their devices at recess and lunchtime in supervised environments only. They are not permitted to use their devices around the school campus or for non-school related activities during school hours. Further information on the rules for student use of IT in school can be found in the [IT Acceptable Use Policy](#).

## **What I can do to support the School's technological vision?**

As per the guidance in our digital learning guides [here](#) on the School's website, it is essential that all students:

- develop a healthy and sustainable relationship with technology, which means keeping digital devices out of arm's reach when sleeping to ensure a good night's rest
- arrive at school each and every morning with a digital device that is sufficiently charged to last a full working day of regular use
- do not use technology unless they have been instructed to by their teacher or know that doing so will support and benefit their learning
- look after their digital devices by keeping them in a robust case and in a safe place in between lessons
- use their digital devices in a responsible and mature manner at all times, showing respect for others and the School's digital facilities
- use their planner effectively to record all homework tasks and deadlines, rather than relying on electronic methods

We ask that you please review the relevant digital learning guide on the School's [website](#), explore any queries that you may have with the School and engage in regular discussion with your son/daughter about how they use digital technology at CHS.

## **Who should I contact if I have any queries?**

Digital Learning enquiries: Luke Dunn [lukedunn@chs.school.co.uk](mailto:lukedunn@chs.school.co.uk)

Pastoral enquiries: Susan James [susanjames@chs.school.co.uk](mailto:susanjames@chs.school.co.uk)

Technical enquiries: Mark Smith [marksmith@chs.school.co.uk](mailto:marksmith@chs.school.co.uk)