

AN AMERICAN LAPTOP IN SURREY

When a teenager is used to doing their schoolwork on a laptop, and then moves to a school that only provides computers in the ICT suite, how do you stop their work from suffering? And how can you help them complete long essays quickly and accurately, without the frustrations of a return to hand-written homework?

Laurie Stansbury faced these issues when her son Colin, then aged 16, moved to a new school in Surrey.

Previously Colin had used an Apple iBook laptop. "He used that for a year, as the school he was at was keen on developing pupils' keyboarding skills. The school saw this as a way to help pupils with the International Baccalaureate," explained Laurie.

However, when Colin moved schools the new one was concerned about pupils becoming distracted on their laptops – for example, by using the internet, or by playing with different fonts and WordArt. There were laptops in the computer labs but none for pupils to use in their other lessons or at home.

Laurie turned detective in search of a solution. "I looked on the internet for an alternative as Colin had become really good at using a keyboard, which was a great help with his note-taking abilities."

"After reading about other solutions I found the Neo to be just what we were looking for – portable, indestructible and compatible with our home Mac."

Colin's school, TASIS, the 1,000 pupil American School in Surrey, used AlphaSmart 3000s with its pupils in the year groups below Colin, but Colin blazed a trail by being the first Neo user.

Colin finds it much easier to type on a Neo than a laptop, "I can take notes quickly and easily and then take them around with me as I go to lessons. The Neo is a straightforward word processor which means there are no distractions on it, such as the internet or games. So I have no excuses for not getting on with my work!"

The lack of distractions and ease of typing recently helped Colin record his biggest achievement on his Neo, a 2,500 word history essay written in just three hours. "This showed us more than anything how effective the Neo is at helping Colin to work quickly and put his thoughts down on paper," said Laurie.

Laurie added that the Neo's ease-of-use has been complemented by the support available from AlphaSmart. "My experience of Neo and AlphaSmart has been the exceptional level of support they offer if I have had any questions. I am always encouraged by how quickly they respond."

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