

Network Rail donates old laptops to help pupils learn remotely during lockdown

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Network Rail has donated refurbished laptops to St. Willibrord's R.C. Primary School in Clayton, East Manchester, to help every pupil in the school continue their learning from home during lockdown. Over 70 children took delivery of their laptop this week, with more devices due to be collected in the coming days.

The recycling initiative is being run by a team of volunteers at Network Rail who plan to distribute at least 8,000 refurbished laptops to schools across Britain to help pupils who are without a home laptop for remote learning during the national lockdown.

Stephanie Hart works in IT Services at Network Rail and came up with the idea to donate refurbished laptops to schools and is leading a team of volunteers to deliver the project. She said: "I've been working on this idea in my spare time, so it is just fantastic to see pupils collecting their device. We're asking colleagues across Network Rail to nominate schools in need of laptops and we hope to help as many as we can."

Carl McIver, Headteacher, St. Willibrord's R.C. Primary School said: "We're extremely grateful to Network Rail for their incredibly generous offer of supplying enough laptops for every child in our school. This

means that we've been able to make a universal offer to our families to be able to loan a machine from school and ensure our children have access to a device to support their remote learning.

"Within a few days, thanks to Network Rail, we have already been able to support 70 families with laptops and we have many more taking us up on the offer on a daily basis. Our teachers, pupils and their parents are working extremely hard to ensure minimal disruption to education, and these laptops will really help us stay connected.

"This project will also have a long-lasting impact upon the school's ability to support the ICT curriculum and enable us to replace our aging and unreliable PC stock with machines that teachers and pupils alike can depend upon for many years to come."

According to estimates from Ofcom, 1.14 to 1.78 million children in the UK (nine per cent) do not have home access to a laptop, desktop or tablet.

Aidan Hancock, Group Chief Information Officer at Network Rail, said: "There's clear evidence that many British households don't have enough laptops for their children to engage with remote learning. That's why I'm so proud of Stephanie – she has worked tirelessly to champion this initiative, often in her spare time.

"With the support of colleagues, who are using their volunteer leave to help her, the plan is to distribute at least 8,000 laptops to schools across Britain. Recycling our old laptops to schools is not only the right thing to do, it's one of the many ways we minimise waste. Sustainability is important to our passengers and it's important to us – recycling materials where we can is just common sense."

Photo credit: Network Rail