Screen Use and Digital Technology Policy

Holy Trinity C of E Primary Academy and Nursery EYFS inc. Ladybirds

2026

Introduction

At Holy Trinity, we recognise that digital technology is part of the world in which children are growing up. When used appropriately, technology can support communication, creativity, inclusion and learning.

However, young children also need plentiful opportunities for face-to-face interaction, conversation, physical activity, outdoor play, imaginative play, exploration and hands-on experiences.

We therefore take a balanced and considered approach to screen use. Screens will never replace high-quality interactions between children and adults or the rich, play-based experiences that are fundamental to children's learning and development.

We have regard to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and current government guidance regarding screen use for children under five.

Aims

We aim to:

- Keep screen use in the setting limited, purposeful and age appropriate.
- Prioritise play, movement, exploration and face-to-face interaction.
- Ensure technology is used because it enhances an experience rather than simply occupying or entertaining children.
- Support children to begin developing healthy relationships with digital technology.
- Protect children from inappropriate online content and other digital risks.
- Work in partnership with parents and carers to support healthy screen habits.
- Ensure screen use does not interfere with children's sleep, physical activity, communication, relationships or opportunities to explore the real world.
- Support children to begin understanding how to use technology safely.

- **Our Approach to Screen Use**

Screen use within the setting will be intentional, limited and purposeful.

Screens will not routinely be used as a passive activity, distraction or method of managing children's behaviour.

Before using a screen with children, practitioners should consider:

- Why are we using the screen?
- What will it add to the child's experience?
- Could the same purpose be achieved more effectively through a real-life or hands-on experience?
- Is the content appropriate for the child's age and developmental stage?
- Can an adult share and discuss the experience with the child?
- Is the child still receiving sufficient opportunities for movement, conversation, play and exploration?

Where there is no clear benefit to using a screen, a non-screen activity will be chosen instead.

Children Under 2

We recognise current government guidance that screen use for children under 2 should be avoided wherever possible, other than shared activities that encourage bonding, interaction and conversation.

Babies and children under 2 will therefore not routinely be provided with screen-based activities within the setting.

Exceptions may include purposeful shared experiences such as:

- Video calling a parent, carer or family member where appropriate.
- Looking at photographs together with an adult.
- Using technology to support a specific communication or accessibility need.
- A brief, adult-supported experience where there is a clear developmental purpose.

Screens will not be used to entertain or occupy babies.

Children Aged 2–5

Government guidance advises parents and carers to try to keep children's total screen time to around one hour per day, and less where possible.

We recognise that this refers to a child's overall screen use and may include screen time experienced at home.

For this reason, we will not treat one hour as an entitlement or target for screen use within the setting.

Screen use within the setting will be considerably more limited and will only take place where practitioners have identified a meaningful purpose.

Appropriate Uses of Technology

Appropriate use may include:

- Looking closely at photographs or videos connected to children's current interests or experiences.
- Exploring something children cannot easily experience directly, such as watching an animal hatch or seeing inside a volcano.
- Taking photographs of children's constructions, artwork or discoveries.
- Using a digital microscope.

- Creating photographs, animations, music or recordings.
- Listening to music or appropriate audio content.
- Video calling family members or other appropriate people as part of a meaningful experience.
- Using maps or images to investigate places children are interested in.
- Supporting communication and language.
- Using assistive technology to support a child with SEND.
- Looking up the answer to a child's question together where this extends their learning.
- Using technology creatively rather than simply consuming content.

Where possible, adults will participate in screen-based experiences with children and use conversation, questioning and shared attention to extend learning.

Passive Screen Use

Passive screen use will be kept to an absolute minimum.

Televisions, tablets, interactive whiteboards and other screens will not routinely be used to show programmes or videos simply to occupy children.

Children will not routinely watch television programmes, cartoons or lengthy online videos during the day.

Screens will not be used:

- As background entertainment.
- During free play without a clear purpose.
- To routinely settle children.
- As a reward or punishment.
- To keep children occupied while practitioners complete other tasks.
- As a substitute for interaction with an adult.
- As a replacement for outdoor play, physical activity or first-hand experiences.
- Screens During Meals and Snacks

Screens will not routinely be used during meals and snack times.

Mealtimes are important opportunities for:

- Conversation.
- Social interaction.
- Developing communication and language.
- Building relationships.
- Recognising hunger and fullness cues.
- Learning appropriate eating behaviours.

Children will therefore be encouraged to focus on eating and interacting with the people around them.

Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour

We recognise the importance of physical activity for children's health, development and well-being.

Screen-based activities will not unnecessarily increase the amount of time children spend sedentary.

Children will be provided with frequent opportunities throughout the day to:

- Move freely.
- Play outdoors.
- Run, climb and balance.
- Develop gross motor skills.
- Participate in energetic play.
- Explore their environment physically.

Periods of sedentary activity will be broken up with opportunities for movement wherever appropriate.

Screen Use Before Sleep

Where children sleep or rest at the setting, screens will not routinely be used immediately before sleep.

We will support calm, screen-free routines around sleep and rest periods.

Adult Interaction

Where children are using screens, practitioners will aim to make the experience interactive.

Adults may:

- Talk about what children can see.
- Introduce new vocabulary.
- Ask appropriate questions.
- Respond to children's comments.
- Encourage children to make connections with their own experiences.
- Extend the digital experience into real-world play and exploration.

For example, rather than simply watching a video about minibeasts, children might watch a brief clip before going outside with an adult to search for minibeasts themselves.

Online Safety

Any internet-connected technology accessed by children will have appropriate safeguards in place.

We will:

- Use appropriate filtering and security settings.
- Use age-appropriate websites, applications and content.
- Check content before sharing it with children wherever practicable.
- Supervise children's use of internet-connected devices.
- Prevent children from freely accessing search engines, video-sharing platforms or other unrestricted online content.
- Ensure children cannot make purchases or access inappropriate applications.
- Maintain appropriate privacy and security settings.
- Follow the setting's safeguarding, online safety, mobile phone, camera and data protection procedures.

Children will not be permitted to browse the internet unsupervised.

Advertising and Commercial Content

Where possible, children will not be exposed to advertising, inappropriate commercial content, autoplay videos or links that may lead to unsuitable material.

Practitioners will select content carefully before sharing it with children.

Photographs and Videos

Photographs and videos of children will only be taken in accordance with our safeguarding, data protection and parental consent procedures.

Only authorised devices will be used.

Personal mobile phones or personal devices will not be used to photograph or record children.

Images and recordings will be stored, shared and deleted securely in accordance with the setting's policies.

Supporting Children with SEND

We recognise that digital and assistive technology can provide important benefits for some children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

For some children, technology may support:

- Communication.
- Visual timetables.
- Choice making.
- Emotional regulation.
- Accessibility.
- Independence.
- Understanding routines.
- Participation in learning.

Reasonable adjustments will therefore be made where screen-based or assistive technology is beneficial to an individual child.

The needs of the individual child will take priority over arbitrary screen-time limits where technology forms part of appropriate SEND support.

Healthy Digital Habits

Practitioners will help children begin to develop positive habits around technology.

Children will gradually learn that:

- Screens are only one of many ways to learn and have fun.
- Devices can be put away when they are no longer needed.

- It is important to move our bodies and play.
- We should talk to an adult if something on a screen worries or frightens us.
- Not everything seen online is necessarily appropriate or reliable.
- Technology should be used safely and respectfully.

These messages will be introduced in an age-appropriate way.

Staff Use of Screens

Practitioners are important role models.

Staff will therefore be mindful of their own use of phones, tablets, laptops and other screens around children.

Devices used for observations, registers, communication or other professional purposes will be used efficiently and will not unnecessarily interfere with staff interaction with children.

Staff should not become so focused on completing electronic observations, photographs or administrative tasks that meaningful interaction with children is reduced.

Personal mobile phone use will follow the setting's mobile phone and safeguarding procedures.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise that families will have different approaches to technology and screen use.

We will work respectfully with parents and carers and may share information about:

- Current government recommendations.
- Healthy screen habits.
- Age-appropriate content.
- Online safety.
- Screen-free mealtimes.
- Balancing screens with physical activity and play.
- Supporting sleep routines.
- Watching and interacting with children rather than leaving them to use screens alone.

We recognise that the impact of screen use depends not only on how long children spend using screens but also what they are doing, why they are doing it, who they are with and what other experiences screen use may be replacing.

Monitoring Screen Use

The setting will periodically review how screens are being used.

Leaders will consider:

- How frequently screens are being used.
- How long children are using them.
- The purpose of screen-based activities.
- Whether children are actively engaged or passively watching.
- Whether adults are interacting with children during screen use.
- Whether technology genuinely enhances children's experiences.
- Whether screen use is displacing play, movement, conversation or outdoor experiences.

Where screen use is found to be unnecessary or excessive, practice will be reviewed.

Staff Training

Staff will be kept informed about current government guidance and the setting's expectations for appropriate screen use.

Online safety and appropriate use of technology will form part of safeguarding discussions and staff induction where relevant.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where:

- Statutory EYFS requirements change.
- Government screen-use guidance is updated.
- New safeguarding or online safety guidance is published.
- The setting introduces new technology.
- A concern or incident indicates that practice should be reviewed.

The leadership team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is understood and implemented consistently.

Key References

- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – effective from 1 September 2026
- Department for Education – Help for Early Years Providers: Screen Use
- Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care – Screen Use by Children Aged Under 5
- Best Start in Life – Screen Time Guidance for Under 5s
- UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines
- Department for Education – Online Safety Guidance for Early Years Practitioners