

Community Pre-schools Policy and Procedure for Screen Time Use

Community pre-schools recognise that digital screens are part of modern life, but that young children learn best through play, movement, conversation, exploration and responsive interaction with adults and other children.

Screen use within the setting will therefore be limited, purposeful, supervised and linked to clear learning, communication or inclusion aims.

This policy takes a precautionary approach. Children under two should not use screens in the setting except in exceptional circumstances, such as a video call with a parent or carer. For children aged two to five, screen use in the setting will be kept to a minimum and will not replace active, social, creative or outdoor learning experiences.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that screen use supports children's learning, development, communication and wellbeing while protecting children from inappropriate content, passive viewing, excessive screen exposure and reduced opportunities for real-world interaction.

This policy applies to all screen-based devices used in the setting, including tablets, computers, laptops, interactive screens, televisions, projectors, smart speakers, cameras, mobile phones and any internet-enabled or app-based device used with or around children.

Key Principles

- Screen use must be intentional, planned and directly linked to learning, communication, inclusion or a specific operational need.
- Screen use must be adult-led and supervised at all times.
- Children should not be left to watch or use screens passively or alone.
- Screen content must be age-appropriate, slow-paced, safe and suitable for early years children.
- Screen use must not take place during meals, rest times or as a routine behaviour management tool.
- Screen use must not replace hands-on, sensory, social, imaginative, physical or outdoor play.
- Children's privacy, dignity and safeguarding must be protected at all times.

Procedure for Using Screens with Children

Before using a screen with children, staff must be able to explain the purpose of the activity and how it supports the child's learning, communication, interests, wellbeing or inclusion. Screen use should be short, focused and followed by opportunities for discussion, play, movement or practical exploration.

1. **Plan the screen-based activity and identify the intended learning or communication intention**
2. Pre-check the content in advance to ensure it is age-appropriate, safe, calm, inclusive and free from adverts, autoplay, external links or unsuitable material.

3. Use the screen with a small group or individual child only where this supports the intended purpose.
4. Stay with the children throughout the activity, talk with them about what they see and encourage active engagement.
5. End the activity promptly and provide a related real-world activity, such as discussion, role play, construction, movement or outdoor exploration.
6. Record any significant or regular use as part of planning, observation or SEND support where appropriate.

Suitable use	Unsuitable use
Short video clips linked to a topic, such as animals, festivals, weather or occupations.	Long periods of television, video streaming or passive viewing.
Video calls with parents, carers or professionals where this supports wellbeing, transition or inclusion.	Use of screens as a reward, punishment, distraction or substitute for adult interaction.
Assistive technology or communication aids for children with SEND.	Fast-paced, social media-style videos, autoplay content, adverts or algorithm-led material.
Adult-supported digital photographs, music, stories or mark-making linked to learning.	Unsupervised access to the internet, apps, games, social media, AI tools or chatbots.

Safeguarding and Online Safety

All screen use must follow the setting's safeguarding, child protection, online safety, mobile phone and camera policies. Staff must only use setting-approved devices and platforms. Personal devices must not be used with children unless this is specifically permitted by the setting's mobile phone and camera policy and authorised by the manager.

Staff must report any concern about inappropriate content, accidental exposure, online contact, device misuse, data protection, images of children or a breach of this policy to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will record the concern and take action in line with safeguarding procedures.

Children with SEND and Communication Needs

Screen-based assistive technologies may be essential for some children with special educational needs and disabilities, including communication aids, visual supports or specialist programmes. These uses are not treated in the same way as recreational screen time and will be planned according to the child's individual needs, support plan and professional advice and consultation with parents/carers

Partnership with Parents and Carers

Community Pre-schools will share this policy with parents and carers so they understand if, when and how screens may be used in the setting. Staff will work sensitively and without judgement with families to promote healthy screen habits, such as avoiding screens during meals, before sleep and as a replacement for conversation, play or shared activities.

Staff Responsibilities

- The Manager is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented, monitored and reviewed.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for responding to safeguarding or online safety concerns linked to screen use.
- All staff are responsible for using screens only in line with this policy and for modelling positive, balanced screen habits around children.
- The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is responsible for supporting appropriate use of assistive technology for children with SEND.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if there are changes to statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements, technology use, setting practice or the needs of children attending the setting. Any incidents, concerns or patterns of screen use will be reviewed by the Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure the policy remains effective.