



Safe and Appropriate Screen Use Policy

 30.9.26

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Review Date	September 2027
First Version Date	September 2026
Version	1

1. Purpose

Birchfield Nursery School recognises that digital technology forms part of children's lives and can, when used carefully and purposefully, support learning, communication, inclusion and access.

However, young children learn most effectively through responsive relationships, conversation, movement, play, exploration and first-hand experiences. Screens must not replace these experiences.

The school therefore takes a **precautionary, intentional and safeguarding-led approach** to children's screen use.

This policy reflects:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026;
- Department for Education *Screen Use* guidance for early years providers, 2026;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), including requirements relating to online safety, filtering and monitoring;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- UK Council for Internet Safety guidance for early years settings;
- data protection legislation and UK GDPR;
- the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety arrangements, Staff Code of Conduct and Mobile Phone/Camera Policy.

2. Our principles

At Birchfield Nursery School:

Real-world experiences come first.

Children should spend the overwhelming majority of their nursery day engaged in play, conversation, physical activity, outdoor learning, stories, songs, creative experiences and interaction with other children and adults.

Screens will only be used when there is a clear educational, developmental, communication or accessibility purpose.

Screen use will never be used simply to occupy children, manage behaviour or provide passive entertainment.

3. Screen-time expectations

Children aged 2–5

Government guidance recommends limiting total screen use for children aged 2–5 to **no more than one hour per day**.

Because children may also access screens at home, Birchfield Nursery School will take a deliberately cautious approach.

There is **no expectation that children will receive daily screen time at nursery**.

Where screens are used, experiences should normally be brief and purposeful. Staff should avoid prolonged periods of screen use and should consider whether the same learning objective could be achieved more effectively without a screen.

The one-hour recommendation is a maximum rather than a target.

Screen-based assistive technology required by children with SEND is not included within these limits where its use is necessary for communication, access, wellbeing or participation.

4. Appropriate use of screens

Screens may be used when they add genuine value to children's learning or development.

Examples may include:

- looking closely at a photograph connected with children's current learning;
- briefly watching footage of something children cannot experience directly;
- accessing music or appropriate audio-visual material;
- video communication with an appropriate person for a planned educational purpose;
- supporting communication or learning for a child with SEND;
- using technology to investigate children's questions;
- revisiting photographs of children's own experiences;
- appropriate interactive activities led by an adult;
- modelling safe and purposeful use of technology.

Where possible, adults will extend screen-based information into **real-world play, discussion, investigation or activity**.

5. What we will not use screens for

Screens must not routinely be used:

- as background entertainment;
- to keep children quiet or occupied;
- as a reward or sanction;
- during meals merely to encourage children to eat;
- instead of adult-led stories, songs and rhymes;
- instead of outdoor or physical activity;
- for extended passive viewing;
- to replace adult-child interaction;
- to replace practical learning experiences;
- for unplanned browsing of the internet;
- to undertake screen-based assessments of children's development.

Children will not independently browse the internet.

6. Adult co-engagement

Children must not access screens or internet-connected content alone or solely with other children.

An appropriate member of staff will actively co-engage with children.

Adults should:

- talk about what children can see;
- ask questions;
- encourage prediction and thinking;
- introduce and explain vocabulary;
- relate content to children's experiences;
- notice children's emotional responses;
- stop content immediately if it becomes unsuitable;
- encourage children to move from the screen into practical activity or discussion.

Passive screen viewing should be avoided.

7. Selecting appropriate content

All digital content must be checked by a member of staff **before it is shown to children**.

Staff must not assume that an app, website, video or programme is appropriate simply because it is described as “educational” or “for children”.

Content should be:

- age and developmentally appropriate;
- purposeful;
- inclusive;
- slow-paced where possible;
- predictable;
- free from inappropriate language or imagery;
- free from advertising;
- free from unnecessary commercialisation;
- free from autoplay;
- free from algorithm-driven recommendations;
- free from unnecessary scrolling;
- consistent with the school’s safeguarding and equality responsibilities.

Fast-paced, highly stimulating content involving frequent cuts, flashing images, excessive movement, overlapping sounds or complex plots should be avoided.

8. Video platforms and internet searches

Staff must not allow children to independently access open video-sharing platforms, search engines or social media.

Where online video content is required, staff must:

1. locate and check the content beforehand;
2. ensure advertisements and inappropriate recommendations cannot appear;
3. use school-approved devices and services;
4. supervise viewing throughout;
5. close the content when the planned activity has finished.

Staff should use downloaded, approved or specifically selected resources wherever this provides greater safeguarding control.

9. Artificial intelligence

In accordance with current DfE early years screen-use guidance, children will **not routinely use generative AI or AI-enabled toys or applications**.

10. Online safety

Online safety is an integral part of safeguarding.

The DSL, Mrs Bancroft has lead responsibility for online-safety safeguarding concerns.

Children's access to technology will be appropriate to their age and developmental level.

Staff will begin to develop children's understanding of simple concepts such as:

- asking an adult before using technology;
- telling an adult if something makes them worried or uncomfortable;
- understanding that photographs belong to real people;
- asking before taking someone's photograph;
- treating others kindly when using technology.

Online safety will be embedded naturally through children's experiences rather than taught through unnecessary additional screen use.

11. Filtering and monitoring

As a maintained nursery school, Birchfield Nursery School will maintain appropriate **filtering and monitoring arrangements** in accordance with KCSIE and DfE expectations.

The school will:

- have appropriate filtering of internet content;
- ensure filtering does not unreasonably restrict legitimate educational activity;
- monitor use of school systems appropriately;
- identify who has responsibility for filtering and monitoring;
- review filtering and monitoring arrangements regularly;
- ensure governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities in relation to online safety;
- ensure staff know how to report concerns about inappropriate content or weaknesses in filtering.

No filtering system removes the need for appropriate adult supervision.

12. School devices

Devices used with children must be school-authorised and appropriately secured.

Where relevant they will have:

- password/PIN protection;
- appropriate filtering;
- appropriate privacy settings;
- restricted access to apps and settings;
- software/security updates;
- appropriate controls preventing unauthorised purchases, downloads or communication.

Children should not normally bring personal internet-enabled devices into nursery.

Any exceptional circumstances will be discussed individually with parents/carers.

13. Mobile phones, cameras and wearable technology

Personal devices capable of taking, storing or transmitting images must only be used in accordance with the school's safeguarding and mobile-phone/device procedures.

Staff must not use personal devices to photograph or record children.

Images or videos of children will only be taken using authorised equipment and for an identified purpose.

The number of photographs and videos taken for assessment or documentation will be **kept proportionate and to a minimum**.

Staff must prioritise interacting with children over documenting their experiences.

14. SEND and assistive technology

We recognise the significant benefits that assistive technology can provide for some children with SEND.

Where screen-based technology supports:

- communication;
- sensory access;
- independence;
- emotional regulation;
- curriculum access;
- participation;
- wellbeing,

its use will be determined according to the individual child's needs.

Such use should not be restricted solely because of general screen-time limits.

Staff will work with parents and relevant professionals to ensure technology is used effectively and appropriately.

15. Physical health and wellbeing

Screen use must not displace:

- physical activity;
- outdoor play;
- sleep or rest;
- conversation;
- social interaction;
- imaginative play;
- books and storytelling;
- creative activity;
- exploration of the natural world.

Staff will consider children's posture, positioning, eyesight and physical comfort when screens are used.

Children will not routinely remain sedentary in front of screens for prolonged periods.

16. Staff use of screens

Staff use of digital devices during contact time must be purposeful and proportionate.

Staff should remain emotionally and physically available to children.

Recording observations, uploading photographs or completing administrative work must not result in adults spending significant periods looking at screens rather than interacting with children.

Where possible, administrative screen-based tasks should be completed away from direct teaching and supervision responsibilities.

17. Safeguarding incidents

Any member of staff who:

- encounters inappropriate or harmful online material;
- becomes aware that a child has accessed inappropriate content;
- observes concerning online behaviour;

- receives information suggesting a child may be at risk online;
- identifies a failure in filtering or monitoring;
- has concerns regarding photographs, videos or digital information about a child,

must report this **immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL** in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Concerns will be recorded and acted upon in the same way as other safeguarding concerns.

Where the concern relates to the conduct of an adult, the school's procedures for allegations and low-level concerns will be followed.

18 Partnership with parents and carers

The school recognises that families make individual decisions about technology within their homes.

Our role is to provide evidence-informed support without judgement.

We will share information with parents about:

- healthy screen habits;
- the importance of adult co-viewing;
- age-appropriate content;
- avoiding screens before bedtime;
- balancing screen use with physical activity, sleep and interaction;
- online safety;
- parental controls;
- avoiding inappropriate, fast-paced or algorithm-driven content.

We will encourage families to talk to us if they would like support managing their child's use of technology.

19. Staff training

All staff will receive appropriate information and training regarding:

- this policy;
- EYFS screen-use expectations;
- online safeguarding;
- safe selection of digital content;

- filtering and monitoring;
- professional boundaries and digital technology;
- reporting online-safety concerns.

Online-safety knowledge will be updated as part of safeguarding training and updates.

20. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body will ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements for technology, online safety, filtering and monitoring are in place and appropriately reviewed.

The Headteacher/DSL will oversee implementation of this policy, respond to safeguarding concerns and ensure staff understand expectations.

Staff are responsible for applying this policy consistently and using professional judgement before introducing any screen-based activity.

21. Monitoring screen use

Leaders will monitor practice through:

- learning walks;
- staff discussion;
- safeguarding monitoring;
- review of curriculum provision;
- consideration of children's experiences across the day;
- review of online-safety incidents;
- review of filtering and monitoring arrangements.

Where screen use is identified as excessive, passive or without a clear educational purpose, leaders will challenge and support staff to adapt provision.

22. Practical staff test: "Why this screen?"

Before using a screen with children, staff should be able to answer:

WHY?

What is the specific learning, communication or developmental purpose?

WHY A SCREEN?

Could this be achieved better through conversation, play, a real object, book, song, outdoor experience or practical activity?

IS IT SAFE?

Has the content been checked in advance and are appropriate filtering/privacy controls in place?

IS IT APPROPRIATE?

Is it suitable for the child's age, development and individual needs?

AM I ENGAGING?

Will an adult actively share, discuss and extend the experience?

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

How will we move the learning away from the screen and into children's real-world play and experiences?

If staff cannot answer these questions satisfactorily, the screen should not be used.

23. Policy statement

At Birchfield Nursery School, technology is a **tool, not a substitute for teaching, relationships or play.**

Our aim is not to remove technology from children's experiences but to ensure that its use is **limited, intentional, safe, developmentally appropriate and educationally justified.**

For our youngest children, the richest curriculum remains one built around responsive adults, language, movement, relationships, books, music, creativity, nature, exploration and play.

