6. Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Procedures

6.9 Online Safety and Screen Use

Purpose

At Pirton Pre School, we recognise that digital technology is part of children's lives and can support learning, communication, creativity and exploration.

However, young children learn best through relationships, conversation, active play, physical activity, practical experiences and exploring the world around them. Technology must therefore complement, rather than replace, these experiences.

This policy sets out how we manage children's use of screens and digital technology in line with the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework from 1 September 2026** and relevant Department for Education guidance on screen use in early years settings.

Key Principle

At Pirton Pre School, technology is a **tool for learning, not a replacement for real-life childhood experiences**.

Screens will only be used when they have a clear and purposeful role in supporting children's learning, development or participation.

Aims

We aim to:

- protect children's health, wellbeing and development;
- provide a balanced approach to technology;
- ensure screen use has a clear purpose and adds value to children's experiences;
- prioritise face-to-face interaction, communication, active play and physical development;
- support children to develop safe and healthy digital habits;

- ensure technology does not unnecessarily replace sleep, physical activity, social interaction, play or learning;
- work in partnership with parents and carers; and
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities when using digital devices.
-

Our Approach

Our approach is based on the principle that **"Screens cannot replace high-quality interactions. Any screen use will be purposeful and intentional."**

Screens will not be used simply to occupy, settle, distract or entertain children. Before using a screen, practitioners will consider:

1. Why is the screen needed?
2. What will the child learn, explore or experience?
3. Could the same outcome be achieved more effectively without a screen?
4. Is the content appropriate for the child's age and stage of development?
5. Will the activity encourage interaction, communication, creativity or problem-solving?
6. Will screen use displace valuable opportunities for play, physical activity or adult interaction?
7.

Children Under Two

Where applicable, screen use should be avoided for children under the age of two.

Children Aged Two to Five

For children aged two to five, the setting will follow the government's recommended approach of **no more than one hour of screen use per day**, taking account of the child's individual circumstances and other screen use.

This is an **upper guide rather than a target**. Children do not need to use screens every day.

The majority of children's experiences at Pirton Pre School will be screen-free and will include:

- imaginative and role play;
- books and storytelling;
- conversation and social interaction;
- physical activity and outdoor learning;
- construction and problem-solving;
- creative activities;
- sensory exploration;
- mathematical and language experiences; and

- real-life, practical learning.
-

Purposeful Educational Use

Digital technology may be used where it provides a clear benefit to children's learning, development or participation.

Examples include:

- taking photographs of children's work and experiences;
- using cameras to support observation and exploration;
- listening to music or stories;
- accessing carefully selected educational resources;
- investigating the natural world;
- creating digital artwork;
- recording children's voices or stories;
- supporting children with additional needs;
- communicating with families where appropriate; and
- researching questions arising from children's interests, with adult support.

Passive or prolonged viewing will not be encouraged.

Where screens are used, practitioners should, wherever possible, **watch, talk, question, model and interact with children**, rather than leaving them to use devices independently.

Content and Online Access

All digital content used with children must be:

- age and developmentally appropriate;
- suitable for the individual child;
- free from inappropriate advertising wherever reasonably possible;
- free from violent, frightening or otherwise unsuitable material;
- consistent with the setting's safeguarding requirements; and
- checked and approved by a member of staff before being shown to children.

Children will not have unrestricted access to YouTube, social media, web browsers or other open internet services.

Staff must not allow children to access content that has not been checked and confirmed as suitable.

Personal Devices

Staff must follow the setting's safeguarding, mobile phone and ICT policies when using digital devices.

Personal devices must not be used to browse, stream or display content to children unless specifically authorised under the setting's policies and procedures.

Any photographs or recordings of children must be made in accordance with the setting's safeguarding, data protection, photography and image procedures and parental consent arrangements.

Photographs, Videos and Children's Work

Digital devices may be used to document children's learning and experiences in accordance with the setting's safeguarding and data protection procedures.

Photographs and videos may be used to:

- support assessment and observation;
- reflect on children's learning;
- communicate with parents and carers; and
- support children's learning and development.

Photographs or videos will only be used for marketing purposes where appropriate parental consent has been obtained.

Communication and Social Interaction

Children's communication and language development depends on responsive relationships and high-quality interaction with adults and other children.
Where appropriate, digital activities should support:

- conversation and listening;
- turn-taking;
- vocabulary development;
- storytelling;
- questioning;
- collaboration; and
- shared attention.

Screens must not be used as a substitute for meaningful adult interaction.

Children with Additional Needs

Digital technology can provide valuable support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Where appropriate, technology may be used to:

- support communication;
- provide visual prompts;
- improve accessibility;
- enable participation;
- support sensory regulation where professionally appropriate; and
- provide alternative ways for children to express themselves.

Any technology used for these purposes will be proportionate, purposeful and reviewed regularly.

Children with additional needs should not be unnecessarily excluded from digital experiences. Equally, technology should not become the default response to an individual child's needs.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for following this policy.

Staff must:

- model healthy and appropriate use of technology;
- avoid unnecessary personal phone use around children;
- actively supervise children's screen use;
- check digital content before showing it to children;
- consider whether screen use provides a genuine benefit;
- maintain children's privacy and confidentiality; and
- report or record safeguarding concerns in accordance with the setting's procedures and speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where appropriate.

The manager will ensure that staff receive appropriate information and training relating to screen use, digital technology and online safety.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

Children may have very different experiences of technology at home. We will work in partnership with parents and carers by:

- sharing our approach to screen use;
- promoting healthy digital habits;

- signposting families to current government guidance;
- listening to parents' questions and concerns;
- taking account of individual children's circumstances; and
- providing consistent messages about balanced and appropriate screen use.

Parents and carers will be encouraged to consider the amount, type and purpose of screen use at home, including how it may affect sleep, physical activity, family interaction and opportunities for play.

Children and Digital Safety

Children will be supported, in an age-appropriate way, to understand that:

- technology can be useful and enjoyable;
- trusted adults can help them use technology safely;
- they should tell a trusted adult if something they see or experience makes them worried or uncomfortable;
- not everything they see on a screen is true or suitable; and
- personal information should be kept safe.

Any safeguarding concern involving digital technology will be managed in accordance with the setting's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Monitoring and Review

The manager will monitor the use of screens and digital technology to ensure that:

- screen use remains purposeful and appropriate;
- children are not spending unnecessary or excessive time using devices;
- staff are following this policy;
- digital content remains suitable;
- technology does not replace high-quality interactions, play or physical activity; and
- individual children's needs and circumstances are considered.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to the **EYFS statutory framework, Department for Education guidance or other relevant legislation or guidance**.