Screen Time Policy

Fringford C of E Primary School

Key Policy Principles

This policy is based on the DfE guidance on screen use for early years providers (7th September 2026 update).

Screen time for children aged 2-5 years should be limited to 1 hour a day, less if possible. This limit applies to children attending our Reception Class, Robins.

Rationale

Evidence shows that screens can have a big impact on children and their development in the early years. Screen use should be avoided for under 2s and limited to up to an hour a day for children aged 2 to 5. At Fringford School we adopt a precautionary approach to using screens by limiting screen use for children and only use it carefully and intentionally, for specific learning and development aims.

Restricting time children spend on screens at home and in early years settings supports healthy child development, which requires sufficient sleep, play, real-world interaction and responsive adult engagement.

1. Overall Screen Time Limits

For Reception Class (during school hours)
Screen time for Reception aged pupils must not exceed one hour of intentional screen use. Teachers must take into account children's likely screen exposure at home when planning their classroom provision around the use of screens. Whenever possible, teachers must avoid the use of screens. All screen use must be educational and adult-led

For Breakfast Club
There must be no screen time during breakfast club. The focus should be on settling activities, social interaction and play.

For After-School Club
Physical activity and social play must be prioritised in After School Club. Reception aged pupils must not use screens at all during this time.

2. When Screens Can Be Used

Acceptable uses
Interactive whiteboards can be used for whole-class phonics teaching. This engagement must be for short bursts, educational and adult-led. Tablets can be used for specific, planned learning activities with adult co-engagement. All educational apps must be vetted beforehand for suitability and must only be used if they support curriculum objectives. Video calls for education workshops (NSPCC, SCARF) can be used when there is no suitable alternative.

Prohibited uses
Screens cannot be used for routine management or to calm children as this impacts on children's ability to learn to self-regulate. Screens should not be used to occupy children or manage their behaviour. Whenever possible, screens must be switched off as they can distract from activities such as social interaction and active play. Screens must not be used for passive viewing i.e. without adult interaction.

3. Content Requirements

All digital content must be checked to ensure it is suitable for early years children, prior to showing it to the children. Content must be slow-paced, repetitive and predictable. It must also be advert-free, as young children cannot discern between advertisements and other content, and free of scrolling and autoplay features, to ensure children are not inadvertently exposed to inappropriate content.

Staff responsibilities
Staff must pre-screen all content before use with children, ensure apps and software are genuinely educational, not just marketed as such. The use of AI must be avoided until better evidence is available about the impact of use with early years children.

4. How Screens Must Be Used

Adult co-engagement and interaction is mandatory
It is important to view screens with children to protect them from harmful content and to support their development. Children must not view screens without any interaction or communication from staff. Staff should use techniques such as commenting, narrating, describing and open-ended questioning to stimulate conversation with children when using screens, prompting children to think, predict, respond or discuss.

Practical considerations
Screens should only be used with children for short periods at a time to protect children's ability to focus and concentrate. Designating spaces must be permanently screen-free (e.g., reading corner, role-play area, outdoor learning space)

5. Special Considerations

Children with SEND
Screen-based assistive technology can be an important tool to help these children and families communicate, take part in everyday activities and create an inclusive learning environment. Professional judgement should be used to determine whether assistive technologies will support children's learning on a case-by-case basis and agreed with school leaders. The time limits do not apply to screen-based assistive technologies for children with SEND. For some children these technologies have essential benefits for communication, well-being and quality of life.

6. Staff Planning Questions

Staff must ask themselves, is screen use strictly necessary? Are there other methods or resources you could use instead?

What is the clear educational rationale for using a screen?

How does it extend and enhance learning, rather than replace the educator's role?

How can you ensure children are interacting in screen use and not passively using or watching it?

Is the content designed for educational purposes and appropriate for early years children?

Are there any safeguarding risks around the device or content you're thinking of using?

7. Devices Covered by this Policy

This guidance applies to all digital devices with screens such as, but not limited to: tablets, laptops, desktop computers, television, toys with screens and interactive whiteboards

Personal devices
Children should be discouraged from bringing their own devices into school.

9. Staff Devices and Assessment

For assessment and communication
Staff device use for assessment and communication within the classroom should be proportionate and timely. Staff should not take prolonged breaks from interaction with children and keep the number of images or videos taken of children to a minimum, including for assessment purposes. Assessment should be based on observation and professional judgement.

Personal mobile phones
- Must comply with your safeguarding policy
- Should not be used in front of children during contact time

10. Monitoring and Review

Responsibility
The EYFS lead teacher is responsible for monitoring implementation of this policy. This policy should be reviewed by governors annually.

Record keeping
Planned screen-based activities must be logged to ensure screen time limits are adhered to.