



BERKHAMPSTEAD SCHOOL

Early Years Screen Use Policy

Policy Statement

At Berkhamstead School, we recognise that young children learn best through warm, responsive relationships, play, exploration and first-hand experiences. We are committed to providing a predominantly screen-free environment where communication, physical activity, creativity and social interaction are at the heart of children's learning and development.

We acknowledge that technology can support children's learning when it is used intentionally, safely and for a clear educational purpose. Decisions about screen use are based on the quality and purpose of the experience rather than simply the amount of time children spend using a screen. Screen use will never replace high-quality adult interactions, active play or meaningful learning experiences. This approach reflects current Department for Education guidance and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any use of digital technology within the school promotes children's learning, development, health, wellbeing and safety whilst supporting practitioners to make informed decisions about when, and if, screens should be used.

Principles

In the Early Years at Berkhamstead School, we promise to:

- provide a learning environment where play, exploration and positive relationships remain the primary means of learning.
- use screens only where there is a clear educational, developmental or wellbeing purpose.
- ensure all screen use is carefully planned, supervised and age appropriate.
- promote healthy digital habits for children, staff and families.
- work in partnership with parents to encourage balanced and healthy screen use both within the nursery and at home.

Screen Use Within Early Years

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Governor Review: (D Cox)

Children spend the majority of their school day engaged in hands-on learning experiences including outdoor play, imaginative play, creative activities, sensory exploration, physical development, storytelling, singing and conversations with teachers and practitioners.

Screens are not used as entertainment or to occupy children during the school day.

Where technology is used, teachers and practitioners will ensure that it:

- supports or enhances children's learning or development;
- has a clear educational purpose, for example as part of our phonics scheme of learning;
- encourages interaction between adults and children;
- complements, rather than replaces, practical experiences;
- is used for short, planned periods only; and
- is appropriate for the children's age and stage of development.

Children Aged Three to Five Years

For children aged three to five years, any screen use will be purposeful, limited and adult-led.

Examples of appropriate screen use include:

- slide show presentations and provocation materials directly linked to teaching, including for ELS phonics and White Rose Maths;
- using applications such as Sketchbook as part of EAD learning (digital art)
- researching children's interests;
- viewing photographs from previous learning experiences, including using Tapestry;
- listening to music to support movement and dance;
- sharing interactive stories alongside physical books;
- viewing short educational clips linked to children's current learning;

Teachers and Practitioners will remain actively involved throughout any screen encounters, encouraging discussion, asking questions and extending children's thinking.

Choosing Appropriate Content

Before using any digital content, practitioners will consider:

- does using a screen genuinely enhance this learning experience?
- could the activity be delivered more effectively without a screen?
- is the content appropriate for the children's age and stage of development?
- will adults remain actively engaged with the children throughout?
- does the activity promote communication, curiosity and learning?

Only carefully selected content will be used. Content must be:

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- paced appropriately for young children;
- free from inappropriate language or images;
- free from advertising wherever possible;
- developmentally appropriate;
- thoroughly checked by practitioners before being shown to children.

Fast-paced videos, social media content, autoplay features, algorithm-driven recommendations, livestreams and AI-powered toys or chatbots will not be used with children.

Screens will not be used during mealtimes, within an hour of sleep, to calm or manage children's behaviour, or during After School or Tea Time Club.

Children with SEND

We recognise that some children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may benefit from assistive technology.

Where technology supports communication, accessibility or learning, it will form part of an agreed support plan developed with parents and, where appropriate, external professionals.

Assistive technology is recognised as different from recreational screen use and will always be used where it supports the child's individual needs.

Staff Responsibilities

All practitioners are responsible for ensuring technology is used safely and appropriately.

Staff will:

- model healthy and responsible use of technology;
- prioritise face-to-face interactions with children;
- ensure screen use never reduces the quality of adult-child interactions;
- supervise all screen-based activities;
- ensure digital observations are completed without compromising supervision of children;
- follow the school's Mobile Phone, Photography, Online Safety and Safeguarding Policies.

Personal mobile phones must never be used where children are present except in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Partnership with Parents

We value working in partnership with parents to promote healthy screen habits.

Where appropriate, practitioners will provide information and guidance on:

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- establishing healthy routines;
- balancing screen use with play, reading and physical activity;
- choosing age-appropriate content;
- promoting screen-free mealtimes and bedtime routines.

Advice will always be offered in a supportive and non-judgemental manner.

Monitoring and Review

The Head of Early Years is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy through observations, supervision and quality assurance processes.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes.

Legislative Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework.
- Department for Education guidance on screen use in early years settings.
- Ofsted Early Years Inspection Framework.
- September 2026 EYFS updates relating to safeguarding, children's welfare and wellbeing.

Berkhampstead School is committed to ensuring that technology is used safely, responsibly and only where it enhances children's learning and development. High-quality interactions, play and nurturing relationships will always remain central to our practice.

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