St Mary's CE Primary School

Early Years Screen Use Policy

Investing in the uniqueness of each individual

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"
Psalms 139 v 14

Date of Next Review: September 2027

Early Years Screen Use Policy

Policy Statement

At St Mary's CE Primary School, we recognise that technology is an increasingly important part of modern life. We are committed to ensuring that any use of screens within our Early Years provision supports children's learning, development and wellbeing.

Our Christian values of Love, Trust and Hope guide our approach. We believe that young children learn best through loving relationships, meaningful conversations, active play, exploration and real-life experiences. Consequently, the only screen regularly used within our Early Years Unit is the interactive whiteboard, which is used by staff to deliver key learning and enhance teaching through carefully planned adult-led experiences. Technology is used sparingly, purposefully and under adult supervision.

This policy has been informed by:

- Department for Education guidance on screen use in early years settings.
- Government guidance on screen use for children under five.
- Best Start in Life guidance for babies, children and families.

Aims

We aim to:

- Promote healthy child development.
- Prioritise play-based, hands-on learning experiences.
- Support communication and language development.
- Encourage physical activity and outdoor learning.
- Ensure technology enhances rather than replaces teaching and learning.
- Work in partnership with parents to encourage healthy screen habits.

Guiding Principles

At St Mary's:

- Children aged 2-5 will have only limited access to screens within the school day.
- Screens will never replace high-quality adult interaction.
- Technology will be used only when it has a clear educational purpose.
- Children will not be left unsupervised when using digital devices.
- Screen-based activities will be balanced with active play, physical development and direct experiences.

Screen Use Within Our Early Years Unit

At St Mary's CE Primary School, screen use within the Early Years Unit is kept to a minimum.

The only screen used regularly with children is the interactive whiteboard. This is used by teaching staff to deliver key learning, enhance teaching and support children's understanding through carefully selected visual resources, stories, photographs, songs and teacher-led activities.

The interactive whiteboard is used as a teaching tool and does not replace active learning, practical experiences, play-based exploration or high-quality adult interaction. Children spend the vast majority of their day engaged in hands-on activities, outdoor learning, discussion, investigation and child-initiated play.

Individual devices such as tablets and laptops are not routinely used by children within the Early Years Unit. Where technology is used, it will always have a clear educational purpose, be supervised by an adult and support learning outcomes that cannot be achieved as effectively through direct experience alone.

Appropriate Use of Screens
Screens may occasionally be used to:

- Share photographs related to children's learning experiences.
- Support discussion and vocabulary development.
- Show short educational clips that enrich understanding of a topic.
- Facilitate virtual experiences or video calls.
- Support observation and assessment by practitioners.
- Provide reasonable adjustments and communication support for children with SEND.
- Display stories, songs, photographs and learning resources through the interactive whiteboard.

In all cases, staff will:

- Have a clear learning intention.
- Keep sessions brief and age appropriate.
- Engage actively with children before, during and after screen use.
- Encourage discussion, questioning and interaction.
- Return children to active learning as soon as possible.

Inappropriate Use of Screens
The following are not permitted within the Early Years provision:

- Background television or videos.
- Unsupervised screen use.
- Social media platforms.
- Fast-paced, highly stimulating online content.
- Algorithm-driven video platforms or autoplay features.
- Use of AI chatbots or similar AI tools directly by children.
- Extended periods of passive viewing.
- The routine use of tablets or individual devices for entertainment purposes.

Screen Use by Age Group

Two-Year-Old Provision
Screen use will be extremely limited and only used in exceptional circumstances where there is a specific educational, communication or wellbeing purpose.

The primary focus will remain on:

- Sensory exploration
- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Play-based learning
- Adult-child interaction

Nursery and Reception
Technology may occasionally be used to support learning but will remain a very small part of the curriculum.

Learning will continue to be centred around:

- Active play
- Exploration
- Problem solving
- Outdoor experiences
- Language-rich interactions
- Storytelling and books

Children with SEND
We recognise that some children may benefit significantly from screen-based assistive technologies.
Communication aids, visual supports and specialist applications may be used where they support a child's individual needs and identified outcomes.
Any use of assistive technology will be balanced with opportunities for interaction, play and physical activity.

Staff Use of Devices
Staff will:

- Model positive technology use.
- Follow the school's safeguarding and mobile phone policies.
- Ensure all digital content is appropriate, safe and age suitable.
- Supervise children at all times when technology is being used.

Partnership with Parents
We will:

- Share information about healthy screen habits.
- Encourage screen-free mealtimes and bedtime routines.
- Support parents in understanding current government guidance.
- Promote activities that encourage communication, reading, play and physical activity.

Monitoring and Review

The Early Years Leader will monitor implementation of this policy to ensure screen use remains purposeful, developmentally appropriate and in line with current guidance. This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if guidance changes.