EYFS Screen Use Policy

Date: September 2026
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Policy Lead: S Jarrett

Our approach

At The Gates Primary School, we recognise that technology can enhance children's learning when it is used carefully and purposefully. However, young children learn best through high-quality interactions, play, communication, physical activity, exploration and first-hand experiences.

In EYFS, **screens will enhance learning, not replace adult interaction or practical, play-based experiences**.

The Department for Education advises that screen use should be **"carefully and intentionally, for specific learning and development aims."**

We will therefore use screens only when there is a clear purpose linked to children's learning and development. Screen use will be kept short, purposeful and interactive, with an adult actively engaging alongside the children.

Screen time at The Gates

The DfE guidance states that for children aged 2–5, **"screen time should be limited to 1 hour a day, less if possible."**

At The Gates, **children's total screen time during the school day will be limited to under one hour and kept as low as reasonably possible**.

This includes the use of:

- Smartboards/interactive whiteboards
- iPads and tablets
- Computers and laptops
- Videos and animations
- Digital games and interactive learning resources.

The DfE guidance includes **interactive whiteboards** within the devices covered by its screen-use guidance.

We will consider children's overall screen exposure across the day, rather than individual activities in isolation.

Screens will not be used simply because they are available. Staff will consider whether the intended learning could be achieved more effectively through a practical, physical or screen-free experience.

How we will use screens

When screens are used at The Gates, we will ensure that:

- There is a clear learning or developmental purpose.
- An adult is actively involved alongside the children.
- Screen activities are short and focused.
- Children are encouraged to talk, think, predict, respond, move and participate rather than passively watch.
- Screen-based learning is balanced with practical, physical and play-based experiences.
- Content is checked by an adult before use and is appropriate for the children's age and stage of development.
- Content is calm and easy to follow and does not contain unnecessary flashing, rapid changes, complex sounds or other overstimulating features.
- Adverts, autoplay and scrolling content are avoided.

- Children do not independently access online video platforms, the internet or AI tools.

The DfE states that **"children should not access or use screens alone or with other children without adult co-engagement."**

At The Gates, this means that **all EYFS screen use will take place alongside an adult who actively interacts with the children**.

Smartboard use

The Smartboard is a useful teaching tool within Reception and will continue to be used to support learning, including during **phonics and mathematics lessons**.

Smartboard use counts towards children's overall screen time and will therefore be **purposeful, interactive and limited to the time needed to support the learning**.

During Smartboard activities, adults will actively teach and interact with children rather than children simply watching the screen. Children will be encouraged to answer questions, talk, move, join in and apply their learning.

Where appropriate, Smartboard teaching will lead into practical learning. For example, a mathematical concept introduced on the Smartboard may then be explored using concrete resources, movement or play.

The DfE states that **"Interactive, screen-free activities are preferable."** It also advises that when screens are used, adults should co-engage with children and prompt them to **"think, predict, respond or discuss."**

What we will not use screens for

At The Gates, screens will **not** be used:

- To keep children occupied or quiet.
- To calm children or manage behaviour.
- As background entertainment.
- During transitions simply to occupy children.
- Instead of stories, songs or rhymes.
- Instead of outdoor play or physical activity.
- Instead of high-quality adult interaction, conversation or play.
- During snack or mealtimes.

Children will not be left sitting and watching or using a screen without an adult actively engaging with them.

This reflects the DfE guidance that screens should not replace **"high quality educator-child interactions"** and should not be used to occupy children, manage behaviour or calm them.

Staff use of screens and digital devices

We recognise that staff need to use digital devices for professional purposes, including assessment, recording learning, accessing school systems and communicating with parents.

At The Gates, **staff use of screens during the school day will be purposeful and proportionate**.

When staff are working directly with children, **interaction, teaching and supervision will take priority over screen-based administrative tasks**.

Staff will:

- Use school-approved devices for observations, photographs and other professional purposes.

- Keep screen-based recording and assessment brief so that it does not unnecessarily interrupt interactions with children.
- Complete longer administrative tasks away from direct teaching and interaction wherever possible.
- Only take and store photographs or videos in accordance with school safeguarding and data protection procedures.
- Not use personal mobile phones or personal devices in the EYFS classroom in accordance with school procedures.

This reflects the DfE expectation that digital device use for assessment and communication with parents is **"proportionate, conducted in short stints"** and should not result in prolonged breaks from interaction with children.

Digital recording will support, rather than replace, staff's professional observation and knowledge of the child.

SEND and assistive technology

We recognise that screen-based assistive technology can provide important benefits for some children with SEND, including supporting communication, participation and independence.

Where assistive technology is required to meet an individual child's needs, we will use professional judgement and work with parents/carers and relevant professionals where appropriate.

The DfE confirms that the recommended screen-time limits **do not apply to screen-based assistive technologies for children with SEND** where these provide essential benefits for communication, wellbeing or quality of life.

Working with families

We will share our approach to screen use with parents and carers and work with families in a supportive and non-judgemental way.

Where appropriate, we will share information about healthy screen habits, recommended limits for young children and the importance of balancing screen use with sleep, physical activity, play, conversation and shared experiences.

The DfE advises that settings should work **"in partnership with families to share good practice to support healthy screen use at home."**

Parents and carers are encouraged to speak to us if they have concerns about their child's screen use.

Staff responsibility

All EYFS staff are responsible for implementing this policy.

Before using a screen, staff will consider:

- Does this have a clear learning purpose?
- Does using a screen add something valuable to the learning?
- Are children actively participating and interacting with an adult?
- Could we achieve this more effectively without a screen?
- Have we considered how much screen time the children have already experienced today?

The DfE provides similar reflection questions, including **"Is the screen use necessary?"** and **"How does it extend and enhance learning, rather than replace the educator's role?"**

The EYFS Lead will monitor screen use as part of the ongoing monitoring of teaching, learning and provision.

Our commitment

At The Gates Primary School:

Screens will support learning, not replace it.

Children will use screens alongside an adult, not independently.

Screen time will be limited to under one hour across the school day and kept as low as possible.

Smartboard use, including phonics and maths teaching, forms part of this screen time.

Play, talk, movement, relationships and first-hand experiences will remain at the heart of our EYFS provision.

Related guidance and policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- The Gates Primary School EYFS Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Mobile Phone/Acceptable Use Policy
- SEND Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Department for Education, *Help for early years providers: Screen use*

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