Screen Use Policy

This policy sets out how Little Owls Day Nursery manages screen use with babies and young children, in line with government guidance[1]. We support children's learning, development, health and well-being by ensuring that any screen use is limited, purposeful, age appropriate and safely supervised.

This policy should be used in conjunction with the Safeguarding children and child protection policy, Online safety policy, Mobile phone and electronic device use policy and Acceptable internet use policy.

This policy applies to all staff, students, volunteers, agency staff, visitors and anyone else working with children at the setting. It covers all screen-based devices used with or around children, including tablets, computers, mobile phones, televisions, interactive whiteboards, smart watches, gaming devices, e-readers and toys with screens.

Our aim is to make sure screen use does not replace the experiences young children need most, such as play, movement, sleep, real-world exploration, communication and responsive adult interaction. We recognise that high quality educator-child interaction is central to children's learning and development.

Our approach to screen use
We take a precautionary approach to screen use and recognise the government advice whereby:

- Children under two years old will only use screens in exceptional circumstances
- Children aged two to five will only use screens for short, planned activities and screen use will be kept well within recommended daily limits.

Staff will consider that children may already use screens at home. For this reason, screen use in the setting will be limited and will not be part of routine daily practice unless there is a clear and agreed reason and when there is a clear purpose, with the activity supporting children's learning, communication, inclusion or well-being.

Screen use will not replace adult interaction, active play, stories, songs, outdoor learning, creative activities or time with other children.

Children with SEND, communication needs or English as an additional language
Some children may benefit from screen-based assistive technology or digital resources that support communication, access, inclusion or well-being. Decisions will be made on an individual basis, using professional judgement and in partnership with parents, carers and relevant professionals.

[1] https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/screen-use

In recognition of this, screen-based assistive technology used by these children is treated differently, when it is being used in order to meet their specific needs.

Planning screen use
Screen use must be planned in advance so staff are clear about why it is being used and how it will support learning or development, having a clear learning, communication or inclusion purpose. Staff will consider whether the same aim could be met through a screen-free activity.

When screens are used the activity will be led by an adult and kept short. Children will not be left to watch or use screens alone or with other children without adult co-engagement. Staff will talk with children, ask questions, invite comments and encourage children to think, predict, respond and take part.

In addition:

- Screens will never be used to occupy children, manage behaviour or calm children as a routine strategy
- Screens will not be used during mealtimes, within an hour prior to a sleep period or be left on in the background
- We identify times of day to protect play, interaction, movement and rest
- We will prioritise screen-free activities wherever possible
- Screens will be switched off when the planned activity ends.

Choosing safe and suitable content
All digital content must be checked by a member of staff before it is used with children:

- We will not rely on an app, programme, video or tool being labelled as educational or child-friendly
- Content must be age appropriate, safe, calm and suitable for the children's stage of development
- We will avoid fast-paced, over-stimulating content, adverts, autoplay, scrolling feeds and algorithm-driven platforms
- We will not use artificial intelligence tools, AI-enabled toys or AI features directly with children unless this has been agreed by the manager and a risk assessment has been completed.

Safeguarding and online safety
Screen use and digital devices are managed in line with other relevant policies and procedures.

Any concerns about online safety, unsuitable content, device use, images or children's welfare will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) without delay and recorded in line with our safeguarding procedures.

Working with parents and carers

We will share this policy with parents so they understand how, why and when screens may be used.

Staff will offer practical, non-judgemental information where parents ask for support with screen use at home. We recognise that screens are part of everyday life and so will focus on positive messaging, such as shared viewing, limiting passive screen use, protecting sleep and mealtimes and offering screen-free alternatives.

Staff training and responsibilities

Leaders will involve staff with knowing how to plan safe and purposeful screen use, how to check content and how to respond to safeguarding or online safety concerns.

The manager or designated safeguarding lead will monitor practice, review any concerns and ensure the policy remains consistent with current statutory requirements and guidance.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
August 2026	*K.Farquhar*	August 2027