



MELISSA'S CHILDCARE

SCREEN USE POLICY

Purpose

We recognise that young children benefit from real-world experiences, play, movement, outdoor learning, books, conversation and responsive interaction with adults.

Screens will therefore be used cautiously, intentionally and only where they provide a clear benefit to children's learning, development, communication or inclusion.

This policy follows the Department for Education's Screen use guidance for early years settings and the EYFS requirement that practitioners have regard to that guidance.

Our Approach to Screen Use

We will take a precautionary approach to screen use.

Screen use will not replace:

- face-to-face interaction;
- physical activity;
- outdoor play;
- imaginative and creative play;
- books and stories;
- conversation;
- social interaction;
- sleep; or
- high-quality adult-child interaction.

Interactive, screen-free activities will normally be preferred.

Screen Time

The Department for Education guidance states:

- For children **under 2**, screen time should be avoided altogether except in exceptional circumstances, such as a video call with parents/carers.
- For children aged **2 to 5**, screen time should be limited to **up to one hour a day, less if possible**.

We will aim to keep screen use as limited as reasonably possible and will consider the child's overall use of screens, including the possibility that they may already have significant screen exposure at home.



These limits do not apply to screen-based assistive technology where it is needed to support a child with SEND.

Purposeful Screen Use

Before using a screen, I will consider:

- Is the screen necessary?
- Is there a suitable screen-free alternative?
- Is there a clear educational or developmental purpose?
- Will the screen enhance rather than replace adult interaction?
- Is the content suitable for the child?
- Is the activity appropriate for the child's individual needs?
- Can the child actively engage rather than simply watch?

Screens will not be used simply to occupy children.

Adult Co-Engagement

Children will not access screens alone.

When screens are used, I or an assistant will actively engage with the child.

This may include:

- commenting;
- narrating;
- describing;
- asking open-ended questions;
- encouraging children to predict;
- discussing what they see;
- encouraging children to respond; and
- linking the screen experience to real-world activities.

Suitable Content

All digital content will be checked before it is shown to children.

Content should be:

- age appropriate;
- safe;
- slow paced;
- repetitive and predictable where appropriate;
- free from inappropriate advertising;



- free from scrolling features;
- free from autoplay;
- free from algorithm-driven content; and
- appropriate for the intended purpose.

Fast-paced, over-stimulating or flashing content will be avoided.

An app, programme or digital resource will not be assumed to be educational or safe simply because it is marketed as being for children.

Internet and Online Safety

Children will not have unrestricted access to the internet.

Online content will be selected and checked by an adult.

Children will not independently browse websites or video platforms.

Appropriate security and safety settings will be used on devices.

Any online safety concern will be dealt with under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Artificial Intelligence

Children's use of AI will be avoided until there is better evidence about its impact on children in the early years.

This includes toys or devices with built-in AI features.

Where assistive technology is needed for a child's communication, inclusion, wellbeing or quality of life, an individual decision will be made based on the child's needs.

Screen Use During the Day

Screens will be used only for short periods at a time.

Screens will not:

- be left on in the background;
- be used during mealtimes;
- be used within one hour of a child's sleep period;
- be used routinely to calm children;
- be used as a behaviour-management tool;
- be used to occupy children during transitions; or
- replace opportunities for active play or interaction.

Screen-free periods and areas may be used to support social interaction and learning.



SEND and Assistive Technology

Some children with SEND or communication needs may benefit significantly from screen-based assistive technology.

The general screen-time limits do not apply to such assistive technology.

I will consider each child's needs individually and will work with parents/carers and relevant professionals where appropriate.

Digital Devices Used by Adults

This policy applies to digital devices used in connection with the setting, including:

- tablets;
- laptops;
- computers;
- mobile phones;
- televisions;
- gaming devices;
- devices or toys with screens;
- e-readers; and
- smart watches.

Adults will use devices proportionately and will avoid prolonged periods of administrative screen use when this would reduce interaction with children.

Digital devices used for assessment will not be used to require a pre-Reception child to complete activities on a screen simply to determine their level of development.

Photographs and Videos

Photographs and videos of children will be kept to the minimum necessary.

Where photographs or videos are taken for appropriate setting purposes, they will be made using approved devices and handled securely in accordance with parental permissions, safeguarding requirements and the setting's confidentiality and privacy procedures.

Images will only be shared with parents/carers through secure methods.

Working with Parents and Carers

I will discuss the setting's approach to screen use with parents/carers.

Communication will be supportive, non-judgemental and respectful of individual family circumstances.



Parents/carers are encouraged to share relevant information about their child's screen use, individual needs or use of assistive technology.

Review

This policy will be reviewed if the EYFS, Department for Education screen-use guidance, technology or the needs of children attending Melissa's Childcare change.

Related policies: Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy; Equality Opportunity Policy; Working in Partnership with Parents; Privacy Notice; Confidentiality Policy.

