

Thomas Coram Centre and Nursery School

Screen use



Thomas Coram Centre
and Nursery School
49 Mecklenburgh Square
London WC1N 2NY



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Reviewed every two years	

At Thomas Coram Centre, we do not routinely use screens and do not consider them a useful tool for learning for the majority of young children.

Evidence shows that screens can have a big impact on children and their development in the early years. Screen use should be avoided for under 2s and limited to up to an hour a day for children aged 2 to 5. We take a precautionary approach to using screens by significantly limiting screen use for children and only use it carefully and intentionally, for specific learning and development aims.

We understand that restricting time children spend on screens at home and in nursery school supports healthy child development, which requires sufficient sleep, play, real-world interaction and responsive adult engagement.

Difference between screen use and screen time

Screen time refers to the amount of time a child spends looking at a screen. Screen use refers to how, why and in what context screens are used. It takes into account the quality and pace of content, purpose and level of engagement.

Screen time advice for children aged 0-5

For children:

- under 2 years - avoid screen time altogether other than in exceptional circumstances such as a video call with parents and carers
- 2-5 years - screen time should be limited to 1 hour a day, we bear in mind that children may already reach these screen time limits at home.

Evidence suggests that too much screentime is associated with poorer cognitive and behavioural abilities in children, such as reduced verbal activity and reduced vocabulary, and can be associated with developmental delays, reduced attention and lower executive function.

The above time limits do not apply to screen-based assistive technologies for children with SEND. For some children these technologies have essential benefits for communication, well-being and quality of life.

Suitable content for early years children and safety considerations

On a very rare occasion, we may use a screen to aid learning for a special event. Before doing so we consider the nature of any content we plan to use on a screen, to ensure it is safe, age appropriate and follows the guidelines below.

As a team, we also ask these questions:

- What is the clear educational rationale for using a screen?
- Is the screen use necessary? Are there other methods or resources you could use instead?
- How does it extend and enhance learning, rather than replace the educator's role?
- How can you ensure children are interacting in screen use and not passively using or watching it? How will you discuss the content with children?
- Is the content designed for educational purposes and appropriate for early years children?
- How can you introduce movement and physical activity?
- Are there any safeguarding risks around the device or content you're thinking of using? Has it been effectively checked?

Screens cannot replace high quality educator-child interactions, as direct human interaction provides a much richer experience for children. A story, nursery rhyme or song on a screen cannot match one told and performed by an engaged adult who makes eye contact with the children, uses different voices and facial expressions, and changes pace, volume and emphasis in response to children's reactions.

Should we ever use a screen, we ensure adults co-engage with children, prompting children to think, predict, respond or discuss, and avoiding activities which provide an automatic response without any effort on the part of the child. we achieve this through using techniques such as commenting, narrating, describing and open-ended questioning to stimulate conversation with children when using screens.

We only use screens with children for short periods at a time, to protect children's ability to focus and concentrate.

All digital content is:

- checked to ensure it is suitable for early years children, prior to showing it to the children
- slow-paced, repetitive and predictable - you should therefore avoid fast-paced, over-stimulating content - this includes content which has a lot of cuts, movement and flashing on screen, complex audio with lots of fast-talking characters or overlapping music and dialogue, or complex plots
- advert-free, as young children cannot discern between advertisements and other content
- free of scrolling and autoplay features, to ensure children are not inadvertently exposed to inappropriate content or able to access content for longer than planned use - this includes algorithm-driven content, such as video platforms

We never allow children to access or use screens alone or with other children without adult co-engagement. It is important to view screens with children to protect them from harmful content and to support their development.

Children with communication needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Some children with SEND or English as an additional language may need a more tailored approach when it comes to screen use. Screen-based assistive technology can be an important tool to help these children and families communicate, take part in everyday activities, and create an inclusive learning environment. We use our professional judgement to determine whether assistive technologies will support children's learning on a case-by-case basis.

Supporting parents and carers with their children's screen use

Guidance for parents and carers on screen use can be found here: [Baby and toddler screen time guidance - Best Start in Life](#)

Personal devices

In accordance with the EYFS framework, personal devices should be used in compliance with our safeguarding policy. At Thomas Coram this means that mobile phones are not used by staff or parents in the classrooms. Smart

watches are not connected to the internet and are only used as watches. Middle Leaders and Senior Leaders have the responsibility to ask staff to show that their device is not connected to the internet whilst they are in the classroom.

Children are not allowed to bring their own devices into the nursery school.

This policy has been written using:

Department for Education-<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/screen-use>