

3.2 ICT and Internet Safety Policy

Heather Playgroup recognises the rapidly changing world of ICT and the role technology plays in our media rich environment. We believe ICT includes all current technologies in the world around young children today; it is therefore not just about computer use but includes everyday technologies such as mobile phones and washing machines, programmable toys and remote controls.

By creating opportunities to investigate, experience technology indoors and outside, children will learn for themselves whilst being taught skills/knowledge to enable them to build on what they know.

Online Safety

- It is important that children attending Heather Playgroup receive consistent messages about the safe use of technology and can recognise and manage the risks posed in both the real and the virtual world.
- Terms such as 'e-safety', 'online', 'communication technologies' and 'digital technologies' refer to fixed and mobile technologies that adults and children may encounter, now and in the future, which allow them access to content and communications that could raise issues or pose risks; the issues are:
 - *Content* – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material
 - *Contact* – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users
 - *Conduct* – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm
 - For ICT equipment to give the child control of what they are doing.
 - To avoid stereotyping and violence
 - To support the involvement of parents.

I.C.T Equipment

- The setting manager ensures that all computers have up-to-date virus protection installed.
- Tablets are only used by educators at Heather Playgroup for the purposes of observation, assessment, and planning and to take photographs for individual children's learning journeys.
- Tablets remain on the premises and are always stored securely when not in use.
- Staff follow the additional guidance provided with the system

Internet access

- Children never have unsupervised access to the internet.
- The setting manager ensures that risk assessments in relation to e-safety are completed.
- Only reputable sites with a focus on early learning are used (e.g. CBeebies).
- Video sharing sites such as YouTube are not accessed due to the risk of inappropriate content.
- Children are taught the following stay safe principles in an age-appropriate way:
 - only go online with a grown up
 - be kind online **and** keep information about me safely
 - only press buttons on the internet to things I understand
 - tell a grown up if something makes me unhappy on the internet
- Staff at Heather Playgroup support children's resilience in relation to issues they may face online, and address issues such as staying safe, appropriate friendships, asking for help if unsure, not keeping secrets as part of social and emotional development in age-appropriate ways.
- Staff report any suspicious or offensive material, including material which may incite racism, bullying or discrimination to the Internet Watch Foundation at www.iwf.org.uk.
- The setting manager ensures staff have access to age-appropriate resources to enable them to assist children to use the internet safely.
- Strategies to minimise risk include:
 - Check apps, websites and search results before using them with children.
 - Children in Early Years should always be supervised when accessing the internet.
 - Ensure safety modes and filters are applied - default settings tend not to ensure a high level of privacy or security. But remember you still need to supervise children closely.
 - Role model safe behaviour and privacy awareness. Talk to children about safe use, for example ask permission before taking a child's picture even if parental consent has been given.
 - Make use of home visits to inform your understanding of how technology is used within the home and the context of the child with regards to technology.
 - Check privacy settings to make sure personal data is not being shared inadvertently or inappropriately. (source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-guidance-for-practitioners>)

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Computers and tablets need to be set at the right height so that the child can sit comfortably without putting strain on back, neck or arms.
- Children should be encouraged to have short turns at the computer or tablet so that they are not staring at the monitor for too long. We use a timer to enable children to self monitor their time and to take turns.
- Ensuring that children have clean hands when using the computer or tablet (being especially aware of sand, water and glue).
- Taking care that no liquids or paints spill onto the keyboard or tablet.
- Teaching awareness of electrical safety and keeping cables and sockets out of reach or covered.
- Keeping magnets away from the computers.
- Allowing only one child to operate the computer/tablet at one time.

USE OF ICT FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE GROUP

- Use ICT tools to improve efficiency of management and communication both within the playgroup and with external communities- e.g. – use e-mail and Family to communicate with parents, committee and other agencies.
- Our web site is regularly updated.
- ICT is often used to produce displays and signs around the group. These will contain a mix of hand written and typed text to provide a rich variety of visual material for children.
- ICT is fundamental in the training programmes for staff.

USE OF FAMILY

Staff are NOT permitted to access Family on their own personal devices when at or away from the setting. If employees are found to be accessing Family outside of the workplace on their personal devices, this could lead to disciplinary action. Staff mobile phones should not be used during sessions when children are present without prior consent and a valid reason. (See below Use of Mobile Phones). Photos of children must not be taken or screensaved on personal mobile phones or tablets.

Cyber Bullying

If staff become aware that a child is the victim of cyber-bullying at home or elsewhere, they discuss this with the parents and refer them to help, such as: NSPCC Tel: 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk or ChildLine Tel: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

USE OF FACEBOOK AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Heather Playgroup has a business listing page on Facebook to pass on information to parents about our activities and events and for marketing and advertising purposes.

- Playgroup will never publish names of children or photos of their faces on Facebook.
- Our Facebook page is accessible to anyone with a Facebook account

- Users of the page and their comments are regularly monitored. Anyone found to be making inappropriate comments will be instantly blocked.
- If Management are in any doubt as to the suitability of a person, they will err on the side of caution and be blocked.

Staff are expected to:

- understand how to manage their security settings to ensure that their information is only available to people they choose to share information with
- ensure Heather Playgroup is not negatively affected by their actions and do not name the setting
- are aware that comments or photographs online may be accessible to anyone and should use their judgement before posting
- are aware that images, such as those on Snapshot may still be accessed by others and a permanent record of them made, for example, by taking a screen shot of the image with a mobile phone
- observe confidentiality and refrain from discussing any issues relating to work
- not share information they would not want children, parents or colleagues to view
- set privacy settings to personal social networking and restrict those who are able to access
- not accept service users/children/parents as friends, as it is a breach of professional conduct.
- report any concerns or breaches to the designated safeguarding lead in their setting
- not engage in personal communication, including on social networking sites, with children and parents with whom they act in a professional capacity. There may be occasions when the educator and family are friendly prior to the child coming to the setting. In this case information is shared with the manager and a risk assessment and agreement in relation to boundaries are agreed

Use/distribution of inappropriate images

- Staff are aware that it is an offence to distribute indecent images and that it is an offence to groom children online. In the event of a concern that a colleague at [setting name] is behaving inappropriately, staff advise the designated safeguarding lead who follows procedure 06.2 Allegations against staff, volunteers or agency staff.

Use of Mobile Phones and Digital Photography Policy

Use of Mobile Phones and Smart watches

Staff may bring their own personal mobile phones and smart watches with cameras into the setting for use in emergencies. **They are stored in the kitchen at all times.** If staff wish to keep their watches on their person, they need to be switched off or put into airplane mode.

Duty Supervisor to carry the Heather Playgroup mobile phone on their person, or stored in a safe place (on tray unit or cupboard in the hall) TO BE USED IN AN EMERGENCY. This enables us to access the register on FAMLY in the event that a fire affects the electrical supply and/or wifi.

Mobile must be kept on silent mode, and not used to check/send/receive personal calls/messages whilst staff member is with the children.

In addition, staff working in the office may bring their phone outside for the purposes of a fire drill.

- Staff are asked not to make personal calls during their working hours. However, in urgent cases, a call may be made or accepted if deemed necessary and by arrangement with the daily Supervisor. This must take place in the kitchen, and staff must make adequate provision for their colleagues to cover supervision of children while they do this.
- The Playgroup landline number should be given to family members to use as an emergency contact number wherever possible
- Parents/carers and visitors do not use their mobile phones on the premises. There is an exception if a visitor's company/organisation operates a policy that requires contact with their office periodically throughout the day **phones still should be stored away from any areas that children access and setting phone number given to visitors so that they are still contactable.** Visitors are advised of a private space where they can use their mobile.
- Staff must not share their personal photos or details with children in the setting. Staff must not use their own mobile phones or smart watches to share any media with the children. Any educational media should only be shown on the playgroups tablets, with the manager's prior permission. Any media must be vetted and watched prior to sharing it with any children.

Digital Photography

- Members of staff do not bring their own cameras or video recorders to the setting.
- Photographs/recordings of children are only taken for valid reasons, e.g. to record learning and development, or for displays, and are only taken on equipment belonging to the setting. Children are given the opportunity to consent to their photograph being taken, even if parent/carer permissions are in place.
- Camera and video use is monitored by the setting manager.
- Where parents/carers request permission to photograph or record their own children at special events, general permission is first gained from all parents/carers for their children to be included. Parents are told they do not have a right to photograph or upload photos of anyone else's children.
- Photographs/recordings of children are only made if relevant permissions are in place.

If photographs are used for publicity, parental consent is gained and safeguarding risks minimised, parents set their permissions for photographs on Family.

Members of staff do not use personal equipment to take photographs of children.

Procedures

- Under the Data Protection Act 1998, the Playgroup must seek parental consent to take photographs and use video recorders. Photographs will be stored on the Playgroup's laptop and tablets, which are password protected. At the end of the academic year, these are deleted.
- The Playgroup tablets, digital cameras and memory cards must not leave the Playgroup unless pre-arranged with the Management team for the purposes of completing assessments (tablets only), or outings.
- Images are deleted from the tablets and laptops on a regular basis once shared on Family.
- Often photographs may contain other children in the background.
- Events such as, Sports day, Outings, Christmas and Fundraising Events may be recorded by video and photographs taken by staff only. These may be shared to parents on Family. Parents agree to not download, screenshot or copy any videos or photographs from the app and agree not to share them to any social media or public site. Parents and carers will be reminded of their agreement at such events verbally before the start of the event.
- On occasion we might like to use photographs of the children taking part in an activity to advertise/promote our Playgroup, however in this instance specific parental permission for these events would be required.
- Children may not bring any digital camera toys/devices to the setting.
- The sharing of any photographs or child details is not allowed on any device unless it is for educational purposes or requested by other educational professionals. Permission must be sought for any of these transactions from the management.

Cameras and mobile phones and smart watches with cameras are prohibited in the toilet area.

Policy Updated September 2025

Review Date September 2026