

POLICY AIM

Our Service will implement responsible behaviour and limit screen time when using technology, respecting the Service, children, and the privacy of families and educators. Educators will exercise appropriate judgement and behave in a professional and ethical manner when using technology. At all times, educators will provide a child safe environment and supervise children when using technology to minimise the opportunity for abuse or other harm to occur (Child Safe Standard 8).

RATIONALE

Digital technologies have become an integral part of many children's daily lives. For this reason, it is important that our educators are not only familiar with the use of digital technologies, but are able to guide children's understanding of, and ability to interact, engage, access and use a range of digital technology in a child safe environment. Technology and media items will only be used as an extension to the daily program assisting in the development of social, physical, emotional, cognitive, language, and creative potential of each child. Digital technology can be helpful in the retelling of stories about our culture, help to celebrate diversity and assist in providing an inclusive and equitable educational program.

SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

- Children
- Educators & Staff
- Families
- Management
- Students
- Volunteers and Visitors

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 1 - EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE

- Element 1.1.1 (Approved learning framework) - *Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.*
- Element 1.1.3 (Program learning opportunities) - *All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.*

RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

RELATED SWEETPEAS POLICIES:

- Child Protection Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Determining Responsible Person Policy
- Development and Education Policy
- Emergency Evacuation Procedure
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Ethical Code of Conduct Policy
- Handling Grievances and Complaints Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Social Media Policy

RELATED EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Regulation 73 Educational Program
- Regulation 76 Information about educational program to be given to parents
- Regulation 155 Interactions with children
- Regulation 156 Relationships in groups
- Regulations 181-184 Confidentiality of records and storage of records

TERMINOLOGY

- **Coding** - process of creating and inputting messages that can be understood by others or a digital device such as a computer robotic toy or app.
- **Digital data** - information that is transmitted digitally, including (but not limited to) text, audio, images and video.

- **Digital technology** - tools, systems and devices that can generate, create, store or process data.
- **Digital documentation** - recording and analysing children's engagement and learning using digital tools (includes photos, text and video and may be communicated via an online program).
- **Educate** - the software chosen by Sweetpeas for digital documentation, accessed via HubHello.
- **Feed Australia** - the software chosen by Sweetpeas for menu creation and recording children's dietary information, accessed via HubHello.
- **HubHello** - the approved provider software chosen by Sweetpeas for managing digital documentation, enrolments and other relevant child and family data.
- **HubWorks** - the software chosen by Sweetpeas to access the Child Care Management System, manage child enrolments and store child and family digital data, accessed via *HubHello*.
- **Responsible Person** - The Responsible Person is either the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor of the service or an appointed educator who has been placed in day-to-day charge of the service (see *Determining Responsible Person Policy*).

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

- **App** - An abbreviation of the term 'Application' - refers to small programs that can be downloaded or installed on mobile phones or tablets.
- **RP** - Responsible Person

IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

Technology, when used appropriately, can be a tool for learning, especially when educators play an active role. The Internet is a magnificent resource for research, communication, and extending programming ideas and interests.

Technology use within our Service aims to encourage children to solve problems and use logical reasoning, leading children to make decisions and choices and assisting them to use computer software competently and safely. Our educators are diligent in ensuring children are only able to access age-appropriate technology on any device provided by the service.

Examples of technology for early childhood education may include:

- Touchscreen devices- tablets (iPads)
- Programs that develop literacy or numeracy skills with ICT such as word processing, desktop publishing
- Internet and information literacy skills
- Robotic toys- such as bee bots
- Scanners and printers
- Interactive whiteboards/data projectors

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF TECHNOLOGY WITHIN OUR SERVICE:

General

- Implement risk management strategies to ensure children are always supervised when using any digital device.
- Digital technologies are used to promote social interactions between children, peers and adults.
- Programs and apps will be chosen to support and promote children's cognitive investment.
- All online devices have appropriate filtering and monitoring in place with safe settings activated.
- All devices are password protected with access for staff only.
- Postural awareness will be promoted when using devices.
- Technology is used to assist in expanding the content of the daily program and appropriate current affairs (e.g., the Olympic games, environmental resources).
- Technology is predominantly used where play-based and 'hands-on' experiences cannot provide the same information (e.g., investigating planets or dinosaurs). It will not replace appropriate experiences nor professional pedagogy.
- Timeframes for 'screen time' according to *Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines* are:
 - children birth to one year should not spend any time in front of a screen
 - children 2 to 5 years of age should be limited to less than one hour per day

- children 5-12 years of age should limit screen time for entertainment to no more than 2 hours a day.
- Children will be taught responsible concepts of digital use and citizenship as children are ‘growing up digital’.
- Only quality developmentally appropriate interactive media will be used.

Landline Phones:

- Staff may only make a personal call with the permission of the Director or the Responsible Person (RP).
- If there is a genuine reason for them to be contacted at work, staff should give the Service phone number as their contact number during work hours (rather than their mobile).
- Staff may use the phone to contact parents, families, allied health services or other work contacts under the direction or authorisation of the Director or Responsible Person, as per Service policies (e.g.: *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*).
- All permanent staff can answer the phones at the service after being employed for at least a few weeks and completing any induction training. When answering the phone, you should: always be polite, state the service name as well as your own name. E.g., “Good morning, Sweetpeas Penrith, Janine speaking”.

In relation to the phone, staff should:

- pass the phone on to a more experienced member of staff or take a written message if they cannot assist with a phone enquiry.
- **never confirm the attendance of a child on the phone.**
- *never* handout any personal information regarding any child or their family over the phone, unless otherwise instructed.
- *never* hand out personal information regarding any member of staff, including their personal numbers, unless otherwise instructed.
- *always* be respectful of others, as well as professional.
- speak to the Director or the Responsible Person before making or receiving a personal phone call.

Personal Devices

PLEASE NOTE: Sweetpeas takes no responsibility for damaged, lost or stolen technology/possessions of a personal nature. These devices/possessions are brought to the centre upon your own choosing and must only be used in accordance with this policy.

‘Use’ of personal devices in the context of this policy refers to: accessing the internet and social media, sending or receiving messages (via any means), reading notifications, accessing files, using the camera, using any apps (including games), and making or receiving calls.

Mobile Phones

- Staff are not to carry their mobile phones on them when they are on-duty. Staff phones are to be stored with their personal belongings or in the designated *mobile phone box* during the day, unless otherwise instructed, or requested (except during designated breaks).
- Mobile phones may be used within the centre during lunch breaks but not used around other staff or children.
- The Director/RP are permitted to carry their mobile phone on their person. This is for emergency and evacuation procedures and for communication with Management (see *Emergency Evacuation Procedure*).
- Management are required to carry their mobile phones for emergency purposes and communication with other Sweetpeas services. They are not to use their phone cameras while in the environment with children.
- In some circumstances the Director/RP may grant permission for a staff member to use their mobile phone during work hours, but this must be done out of the children’s environment.
- Mobile phones should *only* be used as cameras in the service in exceptional circumstances, at the consent of the Director or Management.
 - All photos taken with personal devices **must** be transferred to a Sweetpeas computer/device and permanently deleted from the personal device within 24 hours.
 - The Director or Management may request to sight the staff member’s phone photo gallery to confirm that photos have been permanently deleted.
 - Exceptional circumstances may include technology failure, e.g. when a temporary outage of service-issued electronic devices has occurred.

Smart Watches

- Smart watches may only be used as a watch during work hours.
- Staff are not to have any 'smart' features turned on during work hours. This includes, but is not limited to the uses of personal devices outlines above.
- Staff are encouraged to set up a Work 'profile' or 'Focus mode' on their device to disable or silence all notifications during work hours.
- Staff who use smart watches for personal health requirements (e.g. heart or blood sugar level monitoring) may do so, but must first inform the Director/RP.

Gaming Devices

- Gaming devices such as the Nintendo Switch, Steam Deck and PlayStation Portal are not appropriate for use in the service.
- Staff should not bring these devices to work for use with children and should *only* access them for personal use on their break when away from children.
- If a gaming device (or any other device) is brought to the service by a child, it should be stored in a safe place (e.g. the office) until they are collected by a parent or guardian.

Sweetpeas devices (e.g. computers and iPads):

- Staff are not to access social media sites like Facebook or Instagram from work devices at any time during the centre's hours of operation, unless otherwise authorised by Management or the Director.
 - Pinterest is an exception, as it may be used during programming time for ideas and inspiration.
- If a family member of a child (or any member of the community who is not a Sweetpeas staff member) is given access to a Sweetpeas device (e.g. to fill out an enrolment form), their access must be supervised to ensure no unauthorised access of digital data occurs.

Computers

- The Service desktop computer is to be used primarily for:
 - office administration (e.g. email, *HubWorks*, accounts, etc),
 - program planning,
 - resource searches,
 - research, and
 - digital documentation.
- Any other use of the computer must have the permission of Management or the Director.
- Children may *not* use the administration desktop computer at any time.
- Staff are not to download any software without the permission of the Director or Management.
- The Service laptop computer is to be used primarily for program planning, resource searches, research, accessing *HubHello* services and digital documentation.
- Children may only use the Service laptop in the centre under active supervision.
- Staff are not to share the password for any Sweetpeas computer with any person who is not a Sweetpeas employee.

iPads

- Sweetpeas iPads may be used for:
 - taking photos of children for digital documentation;
 - accessing music streaming services;
 - planned experiences with children;
 - research;
 - observations and program planning on *Educate*;
 - recording children's dietary intake on *Feed Australia*,
 - accessing features of *HubHello*, such as recording activities (e.g. nappy changes and sleep checks) or completing Incident Reports.
- Staff are not to download any apps without the permission of the Director or Management.
- Children may only use the Service iPads in the centre under active supervision.
- The Apple ID and password for any Sweetpeas service devices may only be shared by members of Sweetpeas Management. Any staff members with access to these details must use them responsibly, as directed, and maintain confidentiality.
- Staff are not to share the password for any Sweetpeas iPad with any person who is not a Sweetpeas employee, unless otherwise directed by Management.

Television:

- programs are chosen that are engaging and age appropriate to children: **Only 'G' rated television programs and movies will be viewed at the Service.**
- programs must be carefully selected and be suitable to the needs and developmental levels of each child using or watching various types of technology or media.
- the use of TV will be kept to a minimum. When used:
 - programs depicting violence and/or inappropriate content (including graphic news reports) will not be shown.
 - TV programs or videos will only be shown that have positive messages about relationships, family and life.
 - information about programs planned to be viewed as part of the educational program will be shared with families beforehand to ensure that they approve of the content. Information may include:
 - title
 - synopsis
 - rating
 - length of program
 - all content will be socially and culturally considerate and appropriate.

Social Media:

See the Sweetpeas *Social Media Policy* for information and guidelines regarding social media, including:

- Service social media accounts,
- Privacy of children, families and staff,
- Personal social media accounts, and
- Online interactions.

RESPONSIBILITIES

MANAGEMENT / NOMINATED SUPERVISOR / RESPONSIBLE PERSON WILL:

- provide professional learning to educators and staff in response to the ECA *Statement on young children and digital technology*, for example: Little Scientists workshops on digital technology
- provide professional development, information and resources to educators from the [e-Safety Commissioner- Early Years Program](#).
- provide regular training for all staff on reporting obligations (including mandatory reporting) and child safe practices (see *Child Safe Environment Policy* and *Child Protection Policies*).
- report any breach of child protection legislation to relevant authorities, e.g.: police, Department for Child Protection, regulatory authority through NQA ITS portal (see *Child Safe Environment Policy* and *Child Protection Policies*).
- identify technology training needs of educators for professional development.
- maintain and promote a positive culture that promotes safe, responsible, and respectful use of digital devices and online services.
- reflect on our service's physical environment, layout and design to ensure it supports child safe practices when children are engaged in using technology:
 - ensure risk assessments are completed for all physical and online activities and identify areas where adults may have opportunities to interact with children unsupervised.
 - perform regular audits to identify risks to children's safety and changes in room set-ups that can indicate areas of higher-risk and become supervision 'blind spots'.
 - ensure location of digital technology/equipment allows educators to remain in line-of sight of other staff members when working with children.
 - only permit children to use devices in open areas where staff can monitor children's use.
 - ensure all devices are set up safety- with controls, filters for privacy levels and safe search settings.
 - ensure all devices are password protected with access for staff only.
- ensure the Sweetpeas *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* is always adhered to by educators.
- ensure there is no unauthorised access to the Service's technology facilities (programs, software program etc.).
- ensure all educators have appropriate login details to provide secure usage (see *New Employee Documentation Checklist*).

- ensure all technological devices have current virus protection software installed.
- develop guidelines about how technology will be used within our Service (above).
- provide information to parents about technology use within the Service.
- seek permission from families to use digital documentation including photographs of children via social media and/or other forms of documentation platforms (see *Social Media Policy* and *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*).
- ensure children, educators and parents are aware of our Service's complaints handling process to raise any concerns they may have about the use of digital technologies or any other matter (see *Handling Grievances and Complaints Policy*).
- provide a range of technology devices for educators to utilise- e.g.: iPads, printers
- ensure that no breaches of copyright eventuate if viewing programs by any means.
- discuss with educators terms regarding sharing personal data online; ensure children's personal information where children can be identified such as name, address, age, date of birth etc is *not* shared online.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- comply with current legislation and Service policies.
- keep passwords confidential.
- model appropriate use of digital devices and online services for learning purposes.
- identify and minimise risks to children in physical and online environments.
- only permit children to use devices in open areas of the service to ensure close monitoring and supervision.
- log out of computers and software programs after each use.
- only access and modify files and data for which they have authorisation.
- **respond to and report any breaches and incidents of inappropriate use of digital devices and online services to Management.**
- not harass, slander, intimidate, embarrass, defame, or seek to offend another person, group of people, or organisation via technological devices (see *Ethical Code of Conduct Policy*).
- not make copies of, transmit, steal, or loan copies to other persons of Service documents.
- not use personal mobile devices to take photos at the Service, access social media (Facebook, Instagram or other) or breach children and families' privacy.
- ask permission before taking photos of children on any device so children begin an understanding of how photos of them can be used and where they will be published.
- provide adequate supervision to children when using computers or other technology.
- ensure supervision plans are designed so staff are not alone with a child (where possible).
- ensure they are aware of their mandatory reporting requirements and report any concerns related to child safety including inappropriate use of digital technology to the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor.
- ensure children's personal information where children can be identified such as name, address, age, date of birth etc is *not* shared online.

IN RELATION TO CHILDREN, EDUCATORS WILL:

- consider the developmental levels of children when using technology for early learning.
- support children's natural curiosity for technology within the Service.
- provide children with access to age-appropriate technologies to help develop their computer literacy skills.
- introduce concepts to children about online safety at age-appropriate levels.
- only provide programs or apps that they have viewed and assessed prior to introducing to children.
- build on children's learning and inspire the ongoing and enthusiastic acquisition of knowledge through technology.
- use technology to build on current projects and document children's learning.
- limit the amount of time spent on screens as per recommended screen times.
- support children in turn-taking and learning to share when using digital technologies in collaboration with others.
- provide a child safe environment to children- reminding them if they encounter anything unexpected that makes them feel uncomfortable, scared or upset, they can seek support from staff.
- teach children to 'ask before they tap' or do anything new on a device.

- limit experiences involving screen use to those which have an educational component *or* include movement and gross motor activity.
- discuss with children the role of screen time in their lives and support them in making appropriate choices about their use of screen time for both education and recreation.
- model appropriate screen behaviours and self-regulation to the children.
- encourage productive sedentary experiences for rest and relaxation that are not technology reliant.
- ensure that an appropriate balance between inactive and active time is maintained each day.
- ensure that under no circumstances the screen is used as a reward or to manage challenging behaviours.
- educate and support children to begin to develop skills to critically evaluate sources of information on the internet.

When planning experiences utilising digital technology educators should consider:

- What the EYLF says about technology,
- What technology adds to the learning experience,
- Whether children will engage with the technology as active learners,
- Whether the technology allows for continued social interaction during its use,
- Whether children will be able to transfer learning with technology to other contexts.

The EYLF encourages educators to provide children with the skills, knowledge and techniques required to utilise technology to enhance their learning. EYLF Learning Outcome 5.5 is entirely focused on children's technology use, specifically using digital technologies for children to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking.

IN RELATION TO FAMILIES OUR SERVICE WILL:

- create shared understandings between families and educators about digital technology use, by adults, in front of children.
- provide information regarding online safety to families: [eSafetyparents](#)
- provide families with information about the digital technology used within the Service.
- request written consent from parents/families to collect and share personal information, images or videos of their children online (i.e., Website, Facebook, Instagram or HubHello - see *Enrolment and Orientation Policy* and *Photo Authorisation Form*).
- provide information to parents and families about how to make a complaint and what to expect from our complaints handling processes (see *Handling Grievances and Complaints Policy*).
- provide information and advice to families about the selection of digital media content, apps and games that are appropriate for use by young children.
- provide information about the apps and programs used within the Service.
- support families to understand that negative effects of exposure to disturbing or arousing content and screens before sleep time.

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES

- eSafety Early Years professional learning: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/training-for-professionals/early-years>
- eSafety Parents: Advice for parents and carers to help kids stay safe online: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents>
- Online safety for under 5s booklet: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/children-under-5/online-safety-for-under-5s-booklet>
- STEM professional development: <https://littlescientists.org.au/>
- Sweetpeas Feedback Portal: <https://www.sweetpeaskindergarten.com/feedback>

REFERENCES

- ACECQA - Building upon and strengthening a safe culture for children: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/latest-news/building-upon-and-strengthening-safe-culture-children>
- ACECQA - National Model Code: Taking images in early childhood education and care: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-model-code-taking-images-early-childhood-education-and-care>

- Australian Government, Department of Health. (2014). Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines: <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians/for-infants-toddlers-and-preschoolers-birth-to-5-years>
- Australian Government, e-Safety Commissioner: Online safety for under 5s: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/children-under-5/online-safety-for-under-5s-booklet>
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- Sweetpeas Staff Handbook
- The Australian Council on Children and the Media for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. (2011). *Television and young children: Quality, choice and the role of parents: What the experts and parents say.* <https://apo.org.au/node/101261>

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy implemented under new Management 	July 2017	Cassandra Way (Educator/Admin)
1.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checked links, edited grammar. • Minimal changes. 	July 2018	Cassandra Way (ECT/Admin)
1.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed, no changes needed 	July 2019	Janine Evans (Director)
1.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed iPods and MP3 players as this is outdated technology. • Removed phone book as out of date • Added Twitter, TikTok, Zoom & all other forms of social media 	July 2020	Janine Evans (Director)
1.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed no changes needed 	July 2021	Janine Evans (Director)

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes made. This policy is currently under review as we reflect on children's use of technology and create a clearer Social Media Policy 	July 2022	Janine Evans (Managing Director)
1.6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This policy is currently under review as we reflect on children's use of technology and the new <i>Social Media Policy</i> 	July 2023	Janine Evans (Managing Director)
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cosmetic changes from updated template Updated wording of <i>Aim</i> and <i>Rationale</i> Updated NQS links Updated list of <i>Related Policies</i> Added <i>Terminology</i> and <i>Glossary of Abbreviations</i> sections Updated wording of <i>Implementation and Strategies</i>, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grouped the former policy's strategies into a 'Guidelines for use of technology within our service' section. Added guidelines on answering the phone from <i>Staff Handbook</i> to <i>Landline Phones</i> section Added guidelines for <i>Smart Watches</i> Added references to eSafety advice and Child Safe Standards Removed references to fax Added <i>Responsibilities</i> section Updated <i>References</i> list and checked all links. Updated references to certain roles throughout the policy, e.g. removed references to "Owner" and replaced with "Director" or "Management" Removed sections on <i>Social Networking</i> and the <i>Sweetpeas Facebook Page</i>, as this is now all addressed in the <i>Social Media Policy</i> Policy sent to Cranebrook team for initial review, due to their ongoing reflections on the use of technology with children. 	July 2024	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager) Janine Evans (Managing Director)