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THE ENGLISH SCHOOL

A SECOND CENTURY OF EXCELLENCE

Digital Wellbeing Framework

The English School

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Contents

Introduction 2
Balancing Digital, Offline, and Blended Learning 2
Screen Time and Focus 2
Classroom-Only Device Use: Encouraging Connection and Balance 2
Homework, Evening Routines, and Staff Wellbeing 3
Supporting Healthy Digital Habits at Home 3
Frequently Asked Questions 3
Related Policies 5

Introduction

This Digital Wellbeing Framework sets out the thinking behind The English School's approach to screen time, focus, and healthy digital habits. It is the companion document to the BYOD Policy, which sets out the enforceable rules, responsibilities, and sanctions that govern device use. Where this document refers to a specific rule or expectation, that rule is stated formally in the BYOD Policy; this document explains why it exists.

The School's starting point is simple: technology should serve learning and wellbeing, not the other way around. Used with intention, digital tools open up learning in valuable ways. Used without limits, they can crowd out the focus, rest, and social connection that young people need in order to thrive. This framework sets out how the School tries to strike that balance.

Balancing Digital, Offline, and Blended Learning

Learning at The English School takes many forms. Some activities are best supported digitally: interactive simulations, collaborative documents, adaptive practice platforms, or research using online resources. Others are best done offline: discussion, practical experiments, physical activity, handwriting, and reading from print. Much of what happens in our classrooms is blended, moving between digital and offline modes within a single lesson according to what best serves the learning objective.

The department-by-department overview of digital tools in the BYOD Policy shows the breadth of digital learning across the curriculum. It is equally important to recognise what is deliberately kept offline. Teachers make professional judgements, lesson by lesson, about which mode, digital, offline, or blended, will best support their students, and the School trusts and supports that judgement.

Screen Time and Focus

The BYOD Policy asks teachers to remain conscious of the amount of time devices are used during lessons, ensuring that device use is purposeful, proportionate and balanced with other forms of learning. Some subjects or projects, such as Computer Science or project-based work, may naturally involve more sustained use. This approach exists because sustained screen use can narrow attention over the course of a lesson, and because much of the most valuable learning, such as discussion, collaborative problem-solving and hands-on practice, happens away from a screen.

Devices are also required to be set to Do Not Disturb for the duration of the school day. Notifications are one of the most common sources of lost focus; removing them lets students engage fully with the lesson in front of them, rather than being pulled toward messages or alerts that have nothing to do with their learning.

Classroom-Only Device Use: Encouraging Connection and Balance

The BYOD Policy restricts device use to the classroom environment: devices are not to be used in corridors, communal areas, or during breaks. This is a wellbeing-driven decision. Unstructured time between lessons is valuable time for students to talk to one another, move around, and rest their eyes and minds before the next lesson. Making the classroom the only place where devices are used helps ensure that breaks remain genuinely social, rather than becoming another form of screen time.

Homework, Evening Routines, and Staff Wellbeing

The BYOD Policy also supports healthier evening routines. Where a homework assignment requires a significant amount of screen time, the teacher will state this clearly when setting it on Teams, so that families have a realistic sense of what to expect and can plan the evening accordingly, helping to protect time for rest and sleep.

The expectation that teachers are not required to respond to messages after 18:00 exists for similar reasons. It protects teachers' personal time in the evening, which in turn supports their own wellbeing and their capacity to teach well the following day. It also encourages students to develop independence: to plan ahead, ask questions during the school day, and manage their own time rather than relying on an instant response outside school hours.

Supporting Healthy Digital Habits at Home

The School's approach to digital wellbeing only works well when it is reinforced at home. Parents and guardians are asked to:

- Take an active interest in the applications, games, and social media installed on their child's device.
- Keep notifications from these applications switched off during school hours and homework time, in line with the BYOD Policy.
- Agree reasonable boundaries for device use in the evening and at weekends, and support a consistent bedtime routine.
- Model balanced, purposeful technology use themselves.
- Talk openly with their child about what a healthy balance between digital and offline activity looks like for them.

The specific, enforceable requirements for parents relating to installed software, notifications, and network connectivity (including the requirement that devices have no eSIM or SIM card) are set out in the BYOD Policy.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Since school systems like Sweden's rolled back their digitalization policies after it affected literacy, why is the School introducing BYOD?

Sweden's experience, once held up as a model for education technology before its widely reported policy reversal, is a cautionary example of what happens when digitalization outpaces the evidence base rather than an argument against technology altogether. The School has taken that lesson on board directly: rather than making devices the default mode of learning, this policy adopts a deliberately blended method, asking teachers to remain conscious of how long devices are used in each lesson and restricting devices to the classroom, with no phones or tablets in corridors, communal areas, or during breaks. Most of the school day remains structurally protected for discussion, handwriting, practical work, and offline reading, with screen time used only where it adds genuine value. Decisions on when and how to use devices also sit with individual teachers, supported by ongoing training, rather than being mandated uniformly across all lessons. The aim is to take the benefits technology can offer without repeating the pace and lack of oversight that led other systems to reverse course.

2. Why are teachers asked to be conscious of screen time in lessons?

Sustained periods of screen use can reduce attention, contribute to eye strain, and crowd out the discussion, practical activity, and person-to-person interaction that are central to good teaching.

By remaining conscious of how long devices are used in each lesson, teachers keep technology in its proper place: a tool used with purpose, not a default activity. The expectation itself is set out in the BYOD Policy. Teachers apply it with professional judgement, recognising that some subjects may naturally involve more extended device use.

3. Why can't my child use their tablet at break time?

Breaks are an important part of the school day for rest, movement, and face-to-face social interaction. Restricting device use to the classroom environment encourages students to socialise, be physically active, and switch off from screens between lessons, supporting both social development and overall wellbeing.

4. Why are teachers not expected to respond to messages after 18:00?

Clear boundaries around communication protect staff wellbeing and, in turn, help teachers arrive at school able to give students their full attention. This expectation also models healthy digital habits for students, and encourages students to build independence in managing their own time rather than expecting an immediate response outside school hours.

5. Why do teachers flag homework that needs a lot of screen time?

Knowing in advance when a task requires a significant amount of screen time helps families plan the evening, gives students a realistic sense of what the task involves, and supports a healthy overall balance between device-based and offline activities at home.

6. What if my child's project genuinely needs more device time?

The School recognises that some subjects and specific projects require more sustained device use. Teachers use their professional judgement in these cases, while keeping the overall aim of purposeful, proportionate device use in mind.

7. How can I support healthy digital habits at home?

Families are encouraged to take an active interest in what their child is doing on their device, agree on reasonable boundaries around evening and weekend use, keep notifications from social media and games switched off during school hours and homework time, and model balanced technology use themselves. Open conversation about what a healthy balance looks like is often more effective than restriction alone.

Related Policies

This framework should be read alongside the following School policies and documents:

- Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Use of AI Tools Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy