Hills Grammar

Safe use of Digital Technology and Online Environments Policy

Statement

The Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC) is a child safe service and as such, the importance of keeping children safe around digital technologies and online environments is a part of our everyday practice. This policy outlines the safe, intentional, and responsible use of digital technologies within the ECEC to support children's learning, development, and wellbeing while ensuring their safety and privacy.

Digital technologies, when used appropriately, can enhance educational experiences and support positive relationships between children, educators, and families. The ECEC believes in a balanced approach to technology use. While technology can offer valuable learning opportunities, it should never replace hands-on, play-based learning or human interaction. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the appropriate and safe use of technology within the ECEC.

Rationale

Whilst educators at ECEC recognise the potential benefits of technology for learning and development, we also understand the importance of ensuring children's well-being and safety whilst being cared and educated for at ECEC. ECEC aims to implement the safe, respectful, and purposeful use of technology within our service, while acknowledging the significance of maintaining children's privacy and securing their digital footprints.

This policy is guided by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority's (ACECQA) National Model Code for Taking Images or Videos of Children while Providing Early Childhood Education and Care. We are committed to implementing the principles of the National Model Code to ensure the highest standards of child safety in our use of digital technology.

Strategies

Technology within ECEC

- ECEC educators and staff working on a temporary or ongoing basis, are allocated a work device (laptop) as part of their employment with The Hills Grammar School (THGS). Details around allocations are defined in THGS Digital Equipment Allocation Policy.
- Each room is allocated two ECEC iPads:
    - One iPad is for families to access Hubworks (to sign their child in and out of ECEC).
    - The second iPad is used by educators to take photos/videos of children for the purpose of recording data for Storypark entries. In the event that accessing the iPad enhances children's learning or research, educators will access age-appropriate educational applications to support children's learning and development. Educators remain present, providing vigilant supervision with the children if the iPad is used for learning purposes with the children.
- Each room has an Interactive Whiteboard which is used as an educational and age appropriate research tool.
- Educators and staff are prohibited to use any personal devices (mobile phones, tablets, personal laptops, smartwatches with camera/recording capabilities) to take photos or videos of children, or to

access, store, or transmit any ECEC related information, including children's records or documentation.

- Devices owed by Hills Grammar (iPads, Laptops, Interactive Whiteboards) will be used for all digital activities involving children, including taking photos/videos, documentation, accessing Storypark and accessing educational applications.
- The ECEC owned mobile phones will be taken by educators for communication purposes during routine walks to The Hills Grammar School (THGS) campus or excursions. This device is solely for contact and emergency purposes.

Storage and Deletion

- Any photos of children that are taken within ECEC are taken only on devices owed by Hills Grammar.
- Educators do not use personal devices to take photo or video footage.
- The photos taken on the ECEC iPads are uploaded to the educators ECEC laptops and stored in the secured SharePoint site or uploaded directly to Storypark.
- The shared drive secured SharePoint site is accessible by ECEC educators. It provides a shared space to store ECEC documents and photos.
- Photos are deleted from the iPads after they have been uploaded to the ECEC SharePoint, or to the Storypark app.
- Storypark is password protected and storage is managed within the Storypark app. Information is available within the Technology and Security Specifications information page on Storypark.

Security

- THGS ICT department oversees all ECEC devices and applications are regularly updated with the latest security software, firmware, and enhancements.
- Internet access through the Hills Grammar School's network is restricted to safegaurd staff and children from being exposed to inappropriate content.

Consent

- Written consent is obtained from parents/guardians via the ECEC enrolment form for:
  - Taking photos/videos of their child for documentation and ECEC purposes including sharing photos/videos and learning stories of their child via the Storypark app.
  - Use of their child's image in wider THGS promotional material.
  - Where developmentally appropriate, educators will seek children's permission before taking their photo or video, respecting their right to say no.

Digital Safety and Incident Reporting

- Any suspected or actual digital safety incident, breach of this policy, or unauthorised access/use of children's images or data must be immediately reported to the Nominated Supervisor.
- The Nominated Supervisor will document the incident, investigate, and take appropriate action in line with ECEC / THGS policies and relevant legislative requirements. This may include reporting to the regulatory authority.

- Affected families will be informed promptly and sensitively of any significant breach involving their child's data or images, in consultation with the Approved Provider.

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- Work with staff to implement the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations.
- Support educators in understanding the importance of confidentiality and the appropriate use of technology within ECEC.
- Oversee that the Safe use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Procedures are implemented and all identified actions are taken to minimise the risks to children's health and safety.
- Manage and document any authorised exceptions for the use of personal electronic devices in line with the National Model Code and this policy.
- Promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing that underpins all aspects of the ECEC operations, to reduce risk to children including, the risk of abuse.
- Oversee policies and procedures promote equality, respect and diversity for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Check permissions on each enrolment form and implement these parental permissions for things including but not limited to photography use and media.
- Oversee that the Interactive Whiteboards within each room and the ECEC iPads are used to view age appropriate content.
- Support educators in understanding how to actively supervise children while using digital technologies.
- Cross check each family has provided written consent before being set up and having access to the Storypark App (this is the application used to share the learning journey of the children within ECEC to the ECEC families).
- Oversee that only ECEC educators have log on details to access the Storypark accounts for the purposes of sharing photos and educational content / learning with the families.
- Oversee personal details, including addresses, phone numbers, or health information, will not be shared on Storypark.
- Check the Storypark posts to oversee what is being shared with families is appropriate and for the purposes of sharing the learning within ECEC.
- Provide staff including casuals with information about accessing the Safe use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Procedure.
- Engage in ongoing communication with educators and staff about their responsibilities and any changes to policies, procedures and legislation, particularly as digital technologies evolve quickly.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for educators and staff.
- Support educators and staff to uphold the ECEC culture of child safety and wellbeing, including when accessing digital technologies and online learning environments.
- Support educators, working directly with children to keep personal devices in the staff room or in storerooms.
- When required, work collaboratively with appropriate services and/or professionals to support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program, including their safe access to online learning environments.

Educators will:

- Follow guidelines as set out in this policy that they are prohibited to use any personal devices (mobile phones, tablets, personal laptops, smartwatches with camera/recording capabilities) to take photos or videos of children, or to access, store, or transmit any ECEC related information, including children's records or documentation.
- Implement the Safe use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Procedures and ensure that any permissions for individual children are carried out.
- Implement ECEC's culture of child safety and wellbeing, including when accessing digital technologies and online learning environments.
- Follow the guidelines as set out by the Nominated Supervisor or relevant professionals within The Hills Grammar School in relation to any photographs taken of children within ECEC on the ECEC iPads.
- Seek prior written authorisation from the Nominated Supervisor before using a personal electronic device for limited, essential purposes.
- Maintain that any authorised use of a personal device does not distract from or impede the active supervision of children at any time.
- Review content before displaying it on the Interactive Whiteboard to ensure it is age appropriate and within context of the children's learning.
- Only use the ECEC iPads for educational, documentation, or communication purposes. Casual or non-educational photographs or browsing are not permissible.
- Understand the importance of privacy and confidentiality and not share log on details from the Storypark app.
- Understand and follow the appropriate use of the Storypark App which is only to be used as a communication bridge between educators and families.
- Cross check the appropriateness of photos before uploading them to the Storypark app. This includes checking the backgrounds of the photos.
- When working directly with children, keep personal devices in the staff room or in the storerooms.
- Engage with families periodically to get feedback on their experiences with the use of the Storypark app.
- In regard to technology use, educators will limit the use of technology so children have a balanced mix of physical and interactive play.
- If the children have access to the ECEC iPads or engage in an experience which requires the support of the Interactive Whiteboard, educators will actively supervise around the use of such technology.
- Recognise and respond effectively to children and young people when discussing the use of digital technologies and online environments, considering diverse needs and interests.
- Engage with children to participate in decision making in matters affecting them regarding the safe use of digital technologies and online environments at ECEC.
- Where developmentally appropriate, seek children's permission before taking their photo or video, respecting their right to say no.
- Educate children about the basics of online safety and privacy.
- Seek to attend professional development training around the use of and the correct implementation of technology within Early Childhood.

Families will:

- Provide permission to have access to the online Storypark app and provide permission for their child's photos to be shared on this app.
- Engage with the ECEC educators providing feedback in regard to technology use within ECEC.
- Complete the ECEC enrolment form including but not limited to permission around photos and media use within ECEC and THGS.
- Not use personal devices to take photos or video footage of their child or other children in the ECEC premises.
- Use digital platforms like Storypark respectfully and in accordance with any ECEC guidelines and the Hills Grammar School Code of Conduct.
- Communicate any concerns regarding digital safety or the use of their child's image to the Nominated Supervisor.
- Keep parent log in details private, not sharing with extended family or friends.
- For privacy and confidentiality reasons, not share photos and videos posted on Storypark with extended family or friends.
- Acknowledge ECECs strict policy prohibiting educators from using personal devices, while understanding that exceptions may be granted by leadership for emergencies or essential health and safety reasons.

Links to other policies

ECEC Child Protection Policy

The Hills Grammar School Child Protection Policy

The Hills Grammar School Code of Conduct

ECEC Child Safe Standards Procedure

ECEC Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy

ECEC Code of Conduct

ECEC Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

The Hills Grammar School Acceptable ICT Usage Policy

Statutory Legislation and Considerations

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Guide to the National Quality Standard ACECQA

Sources

Community Early Learning Australia www.cela.org.au

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) www.acecqa.gov.au

Australian Childcare Alliance www.childcarealliance.org.au

NSW Office of the Children's Guardian ocg.nsw.gov.au

Storypark – Technology and Security Specifications

National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care

Review

This policy is reviewed by management, employees and families as required or when legislative requirements change.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.