Digital Technology Policy

EARLSTON AND NEWTOWN
PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Our Rationale for Using Digital Technology

Digital technology is woven into almost every aspect of modern life, from communication and employment to creativity and problem-solving. At Earlston and Newtown Primaries School, we believe that children should not only be familiar with digital tools but should learn to use them thoughtfully, safely and purposefully. Our approach is grounded in the understanding that technology, when used well, enhances learning rather than replaces the rich experiences that define primary education.

We want children to be confident, capable and responsible digital citizens who can thrive in an ever-evolving world.

Digital technology helps us to:

✓ **Prepare learners for an ever-evolving digital world**

Children need confidence using digital tools for learning, communication, creativity, and future employment.

✓ **Enhance learning, teaching and assessment**

Research from the Education Endowment Foundation shows that digital tools can improve the quality of modelling, feedback, and independent practice when used well.

✓ **Improve access to resources and information**

Learners can access texts, videos, audio, translation tools, accessibility features, and personalised supports.

✓ **Support collaboration and communication**

Tools like Showbie allow teachers, children and parents to work together, share ideas, and receive feedback.

✓ **Remove barriers to learning**

Built-in accessibility features (text-to-speech, speech-to-text, adjustable text size, translation tools) help ensure every child can access learning.

✓ **Build digital skills and confidence**

In line with Curriculum for Excellence expectations, learners develop digital literacy, computational thinking, and cyber-safe behaviours.

2. What We Mean by 'Digital Technology'

Digital technology at Earlston and Newtown Primaries is not limited to iPads. It encompasses a broad range of tools that support learning across the curriculum.

Children in ELC to Primary 3 access a bank of **shared iPads**, which are used during planned learning experiences. From Primary 4 onwards, each child receives their **own Inspire iPad**, which remains with them throughout their time in primary and secondary education. These devices are managed centrally by Scottish Borders Council, ensuring that software, security settings and updates are applied consistently and safely.

Alongside iPads, children engage with a range of **programmable devices** such as Bee-Bots, Code-a-Pillars and Spheros, which introduce early coding concepts and computational thinking. Classrooms are equipped with **interactive smartboards** that support modelling, demonstrations and collaborative learning. Children also use **digital cameras, microphones and multimedia apps** to capture and present their learning.

This approach aligns with the ***Inspire Technologies Progression Framework,*** which outlines the skills children develop from Early to Second Level. For example, early experiences include learning to take photographs or videos independently, while later stages involve combining media to create presentations or digital books. These experiences build progressively towards confident, purposeful use of technology.

📚 3. Research informed use of Digital Technology

The use of digital technology in education is supported by a growing body of research. When used thoughtfully, digital tools can enhance learning in several ways.

- They can improve the **clarity of explanations and modelling**, particularly when teachers use multimedia tools to demonstrate concepts visually.
- They can also increase the **amount and quality of practice children undertake**, both in school and at home, supporting long-term retention of key ideas.
- Digital platforms allow teachers to **provide timely, targeted feedback**, and they give children opportunities to reflect on their learning and make improvements.
- Technology also **supports personalisation and accessibility**: learners can access materials in formats that suit their needs, revisit content independently, and use accessibility features to support reading, writing and communication.

However, research also highlights potential risks. These include **distraction**, **over-reliance on screens**, and **exposure to inappropriate content**. There are also concerns about the impact of **excessive screen time on wellbeing**.

Our policy addresses these risks directly through strong safeguarding measures, clear routines, and a balanced approach to digital learning. Technology is used when it adds value — not as a default.

🧠 4. Developing Skills & Understanding

Digital learning at Earlston and Newtown Primaries is rooted in the development of skills that extend far beyond the device itself. Children learn to use technology as a tool for thinking, creating and communicating. This includes the development of meta-skills such as problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and self-management — skills that are essential for life and work.

The **Inspire Progression Framework** builds skills in digital literacy, computing science knowledge and cyber-safe behaviours in a structured and progressive way.

At Early Level, children explore simple patterns, sequences and instructions, and begin to understand how digital devices work. As they move through the school, they learn to create algorithms, use visual programming languages, combine media for presentations, and manage information responsibly.

These skills are not taught in isolation. They are embedded across the curriculum, supporting learning in literacy, numeracy, social studies, expressive arts and beyond. Digital learning is part of how children make sense of the world around them.

🌈 5. Digital Literacy & Wellbeing

Being digitally literate means more than being able to use a device. It involves **understanding how to find information**, how to **judge whether it is reliable**, how **to communicate respectfully**, and how to **stay safe online**. We teach children to recognise the opportunities that digital technology offers, but also the responsibilities that come with it.

Children learn about:

- The importance of strong passwords
- The risks of sharing personal information
- The need to think critically about what they see online.

They explore how to respond if something makes them feel uncomfortable and how to seek help from a trusted adult. These lessons are woven into the Technologies curriculum and reinforced through whole-school activities, assemblies and class discussions.

Digital wellbeing is also a priority. We help children develop healthy habits, including:

- Taking breaks
- Balancing screen time with other activities
- Using technology purposefully rather than passively.

Our aim is to support children to make informed, balanced choices about their digital lives.

🛡️ 6. Safeguarding & Online Safety

Keeping children safe is our highest priority. Safeguarding measures include:

Authority-level protections

- Internet filtering and monitoring
- Managed Apple IDs
- Controlled app installation
- Secure cloud storage

School-level protections

- Teachers use **Apple Classroom** to monitor screens, lock devices, and guide learning
- iPads are **not used during breaks or lunchtimes**
- Regular lessons on **cyber safety and digital citizenship**
- Clear **reporting routes for concerns**
- Devices are used only under **guidance of school staff**

Curriculum-level protections

Online safety is taught explicitly through lessons, stories, videos and practical activities. Children learn how to recognise risks, how to behave responsibly online, and how to seek help if they feel unsafe. These lessons are reinforced regularly and adapted to suit the developmental stage of each class.

📘 7. Earlston and Newtown Primaries iPad Charter

Our iPad Charter sets out the shared expectations that help ensure devices are used safely, respectfully and purposefully.

Pupils will:

- Bring iPads to school charged (50% minimum)
- Follow teacher instructions when using iPads
- Use iPads respectfully and responsibly
- Only access appropriate content
- Report faults or concerns immediately
- Use iPads only for learning during class time
- Keep their device safe at school and at home
- Use strong passwords and keep them private
- Use only school-approved apps and websites

Staff will:

- Use iPads purposefully to enhance learning
- Monitor device use through Apple Classroom
- Teach digital skills, cyber safety, and responsible use
- Provide clear routines and expectations
- Ensure a balanced curriculum with varied learning experiences
- Communicate with parents about digital learning

Parents & Carers will:

- Support responsible use at home
- Ensure devices are charged and cared for
- Report any concerns to school
- Encourage healthy digital habits
- Use parental controls where appropriate

🏠 8. iPads at Home: Guidance for Families

iPads can be a powerful tool for learning at home. They allow children to access class materials, practise skills, complete homework, and explore topics that interest them. Many children benefit from the accessibility features built into the device to support access to learning.

We recognise that parents may have concerns about screen time, online safety or the potential for distraction. These concerns are valid, and we encourage families to establish clear routines and expectations for home use. Tools such as **JAMF Parent**, **Apple Screen Time** and **home broadband filters** can help parents manage access to apps, set time limits and monitor usage.

Information regarding each of these safeguarding tools are included on our school website.

9. Frequently Asked Questions

"Can I opt my child out of digital learning?"

Digital technology is part of how education and the curriculum is delivered in Scottish Borders schools.

Parents do have a legal right to withdraw their child from specific areas such as religious observance and certain elements of sexual health education. However, individual elements of curriculum delivery cannot be opted out of. Digital learning and the use of technology are part of curriculum delivery, and schools are responsible for determining how learning is delivered in line with Curriculum for Excellence and national guidance.

Parents' views are important and will always be listened to. Schools will always listen to concerns, explain how tools are used and take individual circumstances/specific needs into account whenever possible.

Further reading

Scottish Government – Enhancing Learning and Teaching Through Digital Technology: https://www.gov.scot/publications/enhancing-learning-teaching-digital-technology/

SBC Inspire Learning overview: https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/inspirelearning

"Why is the school using iPads?"

Digital technology is used where it supports and enhances learning and teaching. It improves access to learning resources, enables pupils to demonstrate their learning in different ways, supports feedback, and develops digital skills that are part of modern education.

Digital tools also provide a range of built-in accessibility features that support learners to access learning materials in ways that suit their individual needs. These include supports such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text, adjustable text size, visual supports, and multimedia content. These tools help remove barriers to learning and ensure more equitable access for all pupils.

Providing a standard device ensures all learners have consistent and equitable access to these supports and learning resources.

Further reading

Scottish Government – Digital learning and teaching policy: https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/digital-learning-and-teaching/

"Is digital learning replacing traditional teaching methods?"

No. Digital technology is used to enhance learning and teaching, not replace it.

Core teaching approaches such as teacher explanation, discussion, questioning, group work, reading, and written work remain central to classroom practice.

Teachers use professional judgement to select the most appropriate tools and methods to support the learning. Digital tools are used where they add value, for example by improving access to materials, supporting feedback, or enabling pupils to demonstrate their learning in different ways.

Digital technology is one of a range of tools available to support effective teaching.

Further reading

Scottish Government – Digital learning and teaching policy: https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/digital-learning-and-teaching/

"Is my child safe online?"

Yes. All pupil education devices and networks are managed and filtered using education standard safeguarding systems.

Access to inappropriate content is restricted, and activity is monitored in line with safeguarding responsibilities.

Online safety education is also part of the technologies curriculum, helping pupils develop safe and responsible behaviours.

No system can eliminate risk entirely, but Inspire Learning provides a significantly safer environment than unmanaged personal devices and a clear process for schools to follow, should a concern with a website be raised. Please make staff aware of any concerns you or your child have about specific content as soon as possible.

Further reading

SBC Inspire Learning FAQs: https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/schools-learning/inspire-learning-faqs

UK Safer Internet Centre: https://saferinternet.org.uk/

"Is my child's data being shared with companies?"

No pupil data is sold or used for advertising, data is used only for educational purposes.

Scottish Borders Council is the data controller and ensures all digital tools comply with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 requirements.

Educational technology providers operate under contract and may only process data for educational purposes and all products go through a robust Data Protection Impact Assessment with the council Data Protection data team to ensure education is compliant. These assessment are reviewed on a regular basis.

This is standard practice across all Scottish local authorities.

Further reading

Information Commissioner's Office: https://ico.org.uk/

"My child already has a phone or laptop. Why do they need a school device?"

A standardised device ensures:

- equality of access for all pupils

- consistent safeguarding controls
- compatibility with learning platforms
- reliable access to learning resources
- access to built-in accessibility supports

Personal devices cannot provide the same level of safeguarding, accessibility, support, or consistency.

Providing a standard device ensures equitable access to learning for all pupils.

"How much screen time do pupils have? Is there a set amount they are expected to use devices?"

There is no set or required amount of screen time for pupils. Teachers use professional judgement to determine when digital tools support learning.

Device use varies depending on the lesson and subject. Some lessons may involve device use, while others may not use devices at all.

Device screen time reports do not reflect continuous pupil interaction. A device may be open while pupils are engaged in discussion, listening, or completing written work.

Digital devices are one of many tools used to support learning.

Further reading

Scottish Government – Digital learning and teaching policy: https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/digital-learning-and-teaching/

"Are pupils using iPads for games or social time?"

iPads are provided as learning tools.

Apps and content are controlled and managed by a Mobile Management Device system. Non-educational games are not provided as part of the standard suite of apps.

Teachers supervise device use and determine appropriate learning activities.

Devices are used in a structured and purposeful way and not as a reward.

"Can parents refuse the use of specific apps or platforms?"

Approved digital tools form part of the school's learning environment. These tools are subject to safeguarding, procurement, and data protection processes. Individual elements of curriculum delivery cannot be selectively opted out of.

Schools will always listen to concerns and explain how tools are used.

If you have any questions or concerns then please email the school mailbox in the first instance so that we can direct it to the most appropriate member of staff to address.