



Murrumbidgee Regional High School

Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Services Procedure

Policy Background

The NSW Department of Education has a new Students' Use of Mobile Phones in Schools policy which comes into effect across all New South Wales Public High Schools at the beginning of Term 4 2023. Our new Student Mobile Phone Management Plan will impact the way students will use and access their mobile phones during school hours. This policy is being implemented to increase focus in classrooms, remove distractions and promote positive social interactions in the playground.

Purpose

This procedure guides student use of digital devices and online services at our school. Our school acknowledges the educational value of digital devices and online services in supporting and enhancing educational outcomes and student wellbeing. We also recognise they may cause harm if used inappropriately and that we need to support our students to use them in safe and responsible ways.

Scope

This procedure provides a consistent framework for the safe and responsible use of digital devices and online services by students in our school. It sets out the shared responsibilities of school staff, students and parents and carers. It also provides a framework to manage potential risks to student safety and wellbeing.

This procedure covers student use of digital devices and online services in school-related settings, including on school grounds, at school-related activities and outside of school where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students. This procedure covers the use of school and personal digital devices and all online services.

Our School's Approach

Mobile phones are not to be used during school hours unless specifically endorsed by a teacher for learning. Strict guidelines and expectations will be enforced if this is the case. Every student will be assigned a registered personal pouch, similar to being issued a textbook. While the pouch is considered school property, it is each student's responsibility to bring their pouch with them to school every day.

Commencement

- Pouches will be assigned to each student through a whole school roll-out process. Every student will be assigned a personal pouch registered in our school system.
- Students will be provided with information and support about the pouch system before and during the roll-out process.

New enrolments / Signing out

- Once a student's enrolment is confirmed, they will be assigned a pouch.

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- Students who leave the school without signing out must return their pouches. Letters will be sent following school procedures for school property not returned.
- Year 12 students will need to either hand in their pouch or pay the \$10 lost fee before purchasing their Graduation Dinner ticket.

Normal operating procedures

- Students are expected to use the un/locking stations located at key entry points each morning as they enter to unlock their pouch and place the phone inside.
- Student pouches should be closed and sealed at all-times except when adding or removing phones at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Late students will do this process at the Front Office as they sign in.
- Phones remain locked and turned off throughout the day.
- Each student will maintain possession of their phone inside their pouch for the duration of the school day.
- At the end of the day students leave the school via the gate, and once at the exit point, use the unlocking stations to unlock their pouches.
- This process is also to be followed for students catching a bus home. They will unlock their pouches as they leave the gate. Portable 'un/lockers' can be used to speed up this process.
- No unlocked phone is permitted on school grounds during school hours unless part of a specific learning experience.
- KLA staffrooms, Deputy Principal and Principal offices and the front office will be equipped with portable unlocking stations.
- Students may request their phone be unlocked temporarily for **exceptional circumstances**, but the phones must be immediately sealed again before the student returns to the playground or class under staff supervision.
- An Exemption may be given to students for critical health and wellbeing reasons. See below information on **Exemptions**.

Other mobile devices

- Mobile devices not part of the school endorsed technology framework are not permitted at school. This includes earbuds which are also easily lost or stolen and smart watches (unless for medical purposes). When sighted these such devices will be acted on in the same manner as mobile phones.

Recess / Lunch

- Phones are to always remain locked while on school grounds including at recess and lunch.
- When a teacher observes onsite a student's phone before school, during recess or lunch out of the school issued pouch, the teacher will follow the same procedures for '**Consequences: When a phone is sighted**'.

Staff

- Teachers and support staff will have access to their phones for essential educational and health and safety purposes.

Excursions

- Phones are an important safety and communication device when students and staff are offsite.

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- Supervising staff will carry a portable 'un/locker' if warranted in the context of the activity. E.g. students getting picked up or dropped off away from school, recording student/school participation or achievements by a supervising teacher

School Carnivals

- Students will follow normal operating procedures if an event is held on/near school grounds.
- Un/lockers may be taken to an offsite venue if required to ensure phones are in pouches as per the expectations of a normal school day.
- Students are expected to lock their pouch with portable un/lockers prior to the event and unlock the pouch at the conclusion of the event.

Counselling, ALEC and Wellbeing Services

- Unlocking stations will not be provided in the Counsellor's office, Aboriginal Learning and Engagement Centre or other Wellbeing Staff. If there is apparent reason to 'unlock' a phone for student access, then this will be discussed and facilitated by the Principal or Deputy Principal if deemed appropriate.
- The phone then must be locked again under staff supervision before the student returns to the playground or class.

Canteen

- Students are asked to order [online](#), bring money or a keycard to school to avoid the onerous task of canteen staff having to unlock mobile phones for students to use *payWave* or similar phone features such as contactless card readers to purchase items from the canteen.
- Canteens will not have access to unlocking stations.

Exemptions

Exemptions to any part of this procedure may apply for some students in some circumstances. Parents and carers can request an exemption, and these will be considered on a case-by-case basis and granted when required by law or at the principal's discretion.

Students with exemptions will have the following:

- Phone Pouch Exemption Pass (Red Card)
- Flagged on Sentral student profile

If a student is granted an exemption, then the student and parent/carer understand that the phone must remain 'Off and Away' in a pouch unless required for reasons outlined as part of the exemption.

Consequences for inappropriate use

When a phone is sighted by staff

- The teacher will ask the student to take their phone to the front office. The teacher will also document the incident on Sentral.
- Students who return to the classroom will have a mobile phone receipt from the front office showing that they have handed over their phone.
- The phone can be collected at the end of the school day from the office by the student.

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- If the student refuses, the teacher may:
 - *Provide uptake time in line with other strategies to allow the student to meet the schools' expectations and then,*

Either

- *Direct the student again to the front office to have their phone placed in the school safe,*

OR

- *Send another student to a Head Teacher or Deputy Principal or finally the Principal for assistance in collecting the phone.*

Further incidents will result in parents/carers being notified and then having to collect the phone at the end of the school day or another negotiated time.

Note: *if a student refuses to hand over their phone as a second offence, a **Formal Caution** will be issued in line with current procedures and contact home will be made. Suspension could result from further failure to follow school policy.*

Note: *repeated sightings of a student's phone regardless of willingness to hand the phone over will also result in **Formal Caution** and/or a potential suspension.*

1st Offence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is observed with phone out • Teacher records the incident on Sentral • Student directed by teacher to hand their phone into the front office • If a student refuses, they will be redirected after uptake time; continued refusal HT > DP > P • Office issues a blue phone receipt to student who shows the teacher on return to class • Office records the offence on issue of phone receipt • Student collects the phone from the office at the end of the school day
2nd Offence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is observed with phone out • Student to hand in their phone to the front office • Teacher records the incident on Sentral • If a student refuses, they will be redirected after uptake time; continued refusal HT > DP > P • Office issues a blue phone receipt to student who shows the teacher on return to class • Office records the offence on issue of phone receipt • Deputy Principal to contact parent • Formal Caution issued for second offence • Student to collect phone at the end of the school day
3rd Offence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is observed with phone out • Student to hand in their phone to the front office • Teacher records the incident on Sentral • If a student refuses, they will be redirected after uptake time; continued refusal HT > DP > P

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office issues a blue phone receipt to student who shows the teacher on return to class • Office records the offence on issue of phone receipt • Deputy Principal to contact parent • Phone suspension for 1 week (5 school days). Phone to be left at home or handed into the office at the beginning of each day • Parent to collect phone at the end of the school day
4th Offence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is observed with phone out • Student to hand in their phone to the front office • Teacher records the incident on Sentral • If a student refuses, they will be redirected after uptake time; continued refusal HT > DP > P • Office issues a blue phone receipt to student who shows the teacher on return to class • Office records the offence on issue of phone receipt • Deputy Principal to contact parent • Suspension • Parent to collect phone at the end of the school day

Consequences if a pouch is damaged

Damaged or lost pouches

- Students who have lost or damaged their pouch are not to bring their phone to school until they have organised a replacement pouch.
- Students are required to pay a nominal fee of \$10 for the replacement of the damaged or lost pouch. This fee can be discussed with the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Students who need their phone before or after school but have damaged or lost pouches can hand the phone to the front office each morning where it will be kept in the school safe according to the procedures listed above. The phone will be returned to the student at the end of the school day.
- Note: If a student forgets or loses the pouch then the phone will be left at front office.
- Other devices, such as tablets, headphones and smartwatches, pose similar challenges if used inappropriately or the property of the school is damaged. Therefore, the same policy applies to these other devices.
- If the students' phone is observed by staff, then the above procedures will be followed – **see Consequences for inappropriate phone use**
- **A Formal Caution or Suspension may be imposed** for malicious damage to school property.

What happens to confiscated phones?

- Phones are placed in the school safe with the student's name attached.
- Parents/carers will be contacted with a second offence recorded by the student. Phones will generally not be released to the students after a second offence.
- Where contact cannot be made with the parent or carer the phone will be released to the student no earlier than 3.25pm or a pre-organised sign out time.

Teaching using technology

- If no other technology alternative is suitable then teachers can 'borrow' an un/locking station from the library or their staffroom.

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- Students will be instructed to unlock their pouches at the beginning of the activity.
- The teacher must ensure that they leave enough time for all students to relock their devices at the end of the lesson and that the phones are only out of pouches for the duration of the learning activity.

Evacuation/Emergency

- In the event of a serious event or natural disaster, the Principal may decide to have students unlock their phones to ease communication with families.
- All emergency practice procedures e.g. lockdowns and evacuations will be advertised and confirmed on our school Facebook page to avoid alarm and distress.
- Phones will not be unlocked for a practice procedure.

Phone Pouch Inspections

- At points during the year all students' phone pouches will be inspected to ensure they are still functional and are being used as expected.
- Random inspections will occur periodically when students enter the school gate or at other times. These inspections will be conducted by Executive staff.
- Organised inspections will also occur. In this case, students will be given a week's notice prior to the inspection date to prepare.
- The primary focus of the phone pouch inspections will be to ensure mobile phones are in pouches and locked as per normal operating procedures, functionality and damage including inappropriate graffiti. Student's pouches that cannot be quickly unlocked and locked will be either surrendered and billed OR replaced as determined by a nominated staff member.
- A half price amnesty on pouches will be held before the organised inspection to help families meet the school's requirements. This fee may be discussed with the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Parents will be contacted by the Deputy Principal if their child does not have their phone pouch on them.
- A solution to this issue will be determined between school and home e.g. phone remains at home until pouch replaced.

Responsibilities and obligations

For students

- Be safe and responsible users of digital devices and online services and support their peers to be the same.
- Respect and follow school rules and procedures and the decisions made by staff to support improved teaching, learning and wellbeing across our school.
- Communicate respectfully and collaboratively with peers, school staff and the school community and behave in the ways described in the Behaviour Code for Students.
- Be a respectful, responsible, learner.

For parents and carers

- Recognise the role they play in educating their children and modelling the behaviours that underpin the safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services.
- Support implementation of the school procedure, including its approach to resolving issues.

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- Take responsibility for their child’s use of digital devices and online services at home such as use of online services with age and content restrictions.
- Communicate with school staff and the school community respectfully and collaboratively as outlined in the 2018 School Community Charter.
- Switch off or put their digital devices on silent when at official school functions, during meetings and when assisting at school events.

For the Principal and teachers

- Deliver learning experiences that encourage safe and responsible use of digital devices and online services. This includes:
 - Establishing agreed classroom expectations for using digital devices and online services, in line with this procedure and departmental policy.
 - Identifying strategies to ensure that all students can engage in classroom activities, including strategies to accommodate students without a digital device.
 - Reading and abiding by the Terms of Service for any online services they use in teaching, including those limiting use by age.
 - Educating students about online privacy, intellectual property, copyright, digital literacy and other online safety related issues.
- Model appropriate use of digital devices and online services in line with school and departmental policy.
- Respond to and report any breaches and incidents of inappropriate use of digital devices and online services as required by school procedures, departmental policy and any statutory and regulatory requirements. This includes:
 - Reporting the creation, possession or distribution of indecent or offensive material to the Incident Support and Report hotline as required by the Incident Notification and Response Policy and Procedures and consider any mandatory reporting requirements.
 - Working with the department and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (if necessary) to resolve cases of serious online bullying and image-based abuse.
 - Following the school’s behaviour support and management plan when responding to any incident of inappropriate student behaviour relating to the use of digital devices or online services.
- If feasible and particularly as issues emerge, support parents and carers to understand strategies that promote their children’s safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services.
- Participate in professional development related to appropriate use of digital devices and online services.

For non-teaching staff, volunteers and contractors

- Be aware of the department’s policy, this procedure and act in line with the conduct described.
- Report any inappropriate use of digital devices and online services to the Principal, school executive or school staff they are working with.

Communicating this procedure to the school community

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- Students will be informed about this procedure through whole school assemblies, year meetings, Principal Addresses and our school website.
- Parents and carers will be advised in writing and through regular on-line communication. The Digital Device and Online Services Procedure can be accessed electronically via the school's website and in hardcopy at the school's administration office. Procedure information will also be shared with parents/carers via direct email, P&C meetings and our school website.

Complaints

If a student, parent or carer has a complaint under this procedure, they should first follow our school's complaint process. If the issue cannot be resolved, please refer to the department's guide for students/parents/ carers about making a complaint about our schools.

Review

The Principal or delegated staff will review this procedure annually.

Relevant information: Confiscation of student property

Legal Issues Bulletins 8, 35 and 56

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