

School policy

# Students Using Mobile Phones

Note that this is a ministerial policy formally issued by the Minister for Education under section 5.2.1(2)(b) of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

## Purpose of this policy

This policy outlines the requirements of the Minister for Education relating to students using mobile phones during school hours.

## Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, a **mobile phone** is a telephone with access to a cellular (telecommunication) system, with or without a physical connection to a network.

## Summary – Critical information

- From Term 1 2020, students who choose to bring mobile phones to school must have them switched off and securely stored during school hours.
- Exceptions to the policy may be applied if certain conditions are met. Exceptions can be granted by the principal, or by a teacher. Exceptions must be documented.
- Where students bring a mobile phone to school, the school must provide secure storage.
- Schools are required to develop a local Students Using Mobile Phones policy, which must include how this Ministerial policy will be implemented.
- Schools will manage non-compliance with their local mobile phone policy in accordance with their existing student engagement policies.

## Rationale

The Victorian Government takes the safe and responsible use of digital technologies, student safety and wellbeing, and the development of social skills and positive behaviour, very seriously. On this basis, the Hon. James Merlino MP, Minister for Education, announced that a new mobile phone policy would take effect from Term 1 2020.

Whilst the Victorian Government acknowledges that we live in a technology-rich world where mobile phones are an important communication tool, research has found that mobile phones can be disruptive in classrooms and open to misuse at school. The unregulated presence of mobile phones in classrooms can undermine students' capacity to think, learn, remember, pay attention and regulate emotion.

At recess and lunchtime, opportunities for students to communicate with each other face-to-face or be involved in physical activity are also valued, rather than students being focused on a mobile phone, particularly when they are using it to engage with social media.

This new policy acknowledges that technology is increasingly affecting how students learn and communicate. Therefore, when a student has been given explicit permission to access and use such devices to enhance learning by the classroom teacher, mobile phones will be permitted for that specific purpose. For a small number of students with particular health and wellbeing needs, an exception to the policy may also be granted.

This policy will remove a major distraction from our classrooms, so that teachers can teach, and students can learn in a more focused, positive and supported environment.

## Policy

From Term 1 2020, students who choose to bring mobile phones to school must have them switched off and securely stored during school hours.

Schools are required to develop a local Students Using Mobile Phones policy which must include how this Ministerial policy will be implemented.

A downloadable policy template for Victorian Government schools is available on the Department's intranet at the [School Policy Templates Portal](#) . Schools can adapt the template to suit their local circumstances provided that it is consistent with this Ministerial policy.

## Exceptions

Exceptions to the policy:

- may be applied during school hours if certain conditions are met
- can be granted by the principal, or by the teacher, in accordance with this policy and the school's local policy on mobile phones
- must be documented, noting that, to avoid administrative burden on schools, this requirement can be met by including exceptions in documents that schools already regularly develop/use (see table below for suggested ways to document).

Where an exception is granted, the student can only use the mobile phone for the purpose for which it was granted.

## There are three categories of exceptions:

### 1. Learning-related exceptions

Specific exception	Suggested documentation
For specific learning activities (class-based exception)	Unit of work, learning sequence
For students for whom a reasonable adjustment to a learning program is needed because of a disability and/or learning difficulty	Individual Learning Plan, Individual Education Plan

### 2. Health and wellbeing-related exceptions

Specific exception	Suggested documentation
Students with a health condition	Student Health Support Plan
Students who are Young Carers	A localised student record

### 3. Exceptions related to managing risk when students are offsite

Specific exception	Suggested documentation
Travelling to and from excursions	Risk assessment planning documentation
Students on excursions and camps	Risk assessment planning documentation
When students are offsite (not on school grounds) and unsupervised with parental permission	Risk assessment planning documentation
Students with a dual enrolment or who need to undertake intercampus travel	Risk assessment planning documentation

## Exclusions

In the following circumstances, the new mobile phone policy does not apply:

Description	Rationale
<b>Out-of-School-Hours Care (OSHC)</b>	Policy not applicable, as attendance falls outside of school hours.
<b>Out-of-school-hours events</b>	Policy not applicable, as attendance falls outside of school hours.
<b>Travelling to and from school</b>	Policy is not applicable when travel falls outside of school hours.
<b>Wearable devices</b>	All notifications must be switched off.
<b>iPads and all other personal devices</b>	All notifications must be switched off.
<b>Students undertaking workplace learning activities e.g. work experience</b>	The policy is not applicable for students on work experience. Instead, students are expected to comply with a workplace's policies.
<b>Students who are undertaking VET</b>	The policy is not applicable for students undertaking VET offsite (as opposed to on school grounds). Instead, students are expected to comply with a TAFE or registered training organisation's policies.

## Secure storage

Mobile phones owned by students are brought to schools at the owner's risk. Please refer to the Department's [Personal Goods](#) policy.

Where students bring a mobile phone to school, the school must provide secure storage. Secure storage is storage that cannot be readily accessed by those without permission to do so.

The principal is responsible for determining the appropriate arrangements for secure storage. Examples of secure storage include student lockers that are lockable or a lockable cupboard stored in an administrative office.

## Enforcement

Schools will enforce the policy under their existing student engagement policies, for example, through detention or a loss of school-based privileges, where students fail to comply with the local school policy on mobile phones, including if they refuse to relinquish their phones to school staff when asked.

Consistent with Ministerial Order 1125, suspensions are to be reserved for serious misuses of a mobile phone in schools (e.g. to cyberbully).

Further information on managing personal items can be found within the Department's [Ban, Search and Seize Harmful Items](#) policy.

Reporting of some incidents involving mobile phones to a relevant authority may be necessary under the Department's [Reporting and Managing Emergencies and Incidents](#) policy.

## Related policies

- [Ban, Search and Seize Harmful Items](#)
- [Student Engagement](#)
- [Reporting and Managing Emergencies and Incidents](#)
- [Personal Goods](#)

## Related legislation

- Education and Training and Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)

### Policy last updated

This mobile phone policy was approved by the Minister of Education on 7 October 2019.

This policy is scheduled for review in December 2020.

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Last Update: 08 October 2019

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