

Frequently Asked Questions for Families – Use of mobile phones by students at school

Who does the new mobile phone policy apply to?

The Policy on the *Use of Mobile Phones by Students at School* applies to all Tasmanian Government School students.

When will the policy take effect?

Schools will be required to implement the new policy from the commencement of Term 2, 2020.

Why has this policy been developed?

It is widely acknowledged that when used effectively as a tool to enhance learning, personal mobile devices (including mobile phones) can play an important role in education. We also know that mobile phones and technology, are a central part of life. However, we have heard through consultation that mobile phones cause distraction from learning and impact the development of strong relationships at school.

The Department is committed to ensuring the wellbeing and engagement in learning of all Tasmanian learners. The decision to restrict the use of mobile phones by students during the school day will support schools to minimise distraction from learning and encourage healthy and positive personal interactions.

Can students still bring a mobile phone to school?

Students can bring a mobile phone to school, but it must be switched off and stored appropriately (as per school policy, with storage options determined in consultation with the School Association) during the school day – *Off and away all day*. Parents/carers can contact their children through the school office.

Who is responsible for my child's mobile phone when at school?

Mobile phones brought to school are not covered by the school's insurance if they are lost, stolen or damaged.

Why is the new policy important and what is the evidence-base for it?

While electronic devices have a place in learning, we also need to acknowledge the issues that can occur when their use is not restricted. This policy will help reduce distraction in the classroom and encourage greater student interaction in the schoolyard.

Will there be exemptions for use?

The new mobile phone policy allows for some approved exemptions. For example, where a mobile phone is used to manage a health condition or to support classroom learning under direct teacher instruction.

Teachers can allow a classroom-based learning exemption particularly if your child's school is a Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) school.

All other exemptions are approved by the school principal or another appointed staff member. Further information about exemptions can be provided by your child's school.

What about students in Years 11 and 12 or at college?

Under the new mobile phone policy schools/colleges, in consultation with their School Association, may opt out of the restriction for Years 11 and 12 students. This is in recognition of the increasing independence and responsibilities of students in Years 11 and 12. For example, students may have carer or work responsibilities outside of school.

How do I contact my child in an emergency during the school day?

Parents/carers can contact their child through their school office.

What will be the consequences for non-compliance with this policy?

Students who use their mobile phone at school without an approved exemption will be treated in a manner consistent with the school's existing Respectful Student Behaviour Policy. For example, for repeated non-compliance the Principal may ask that the student not bring their mobile phone to school.

Does the new policy include other mobile devices, e.g. smart watches?

The definition applied to this policy is; a mobile device with access to a cellular (telecommunications) system, with or without a physical connection to a network. This includes smart watches, tablets and associated listening accessories, such as but not limited to, headphones and earbuds.

What if I have additional questions about the policy?

The Policy on the *Use of Mobile Phones by Students at School* is available on the Department's website. For more specific information about your school's mobile phone policy please contact your school directly.

What if I have additional questions about how to keep my child safe online?

The Department of Education believes students should learn in a safe, supportive and respectful school community. This includes participating safely in technology-based learning and using technology responsibly. For more information about [Cyber Safety Resources](#) please visit the Department of Education website.