

Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Services

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 that the use of digital devices may cause harm if used inappropriately and that we need to support our students to use them in safe, responsible and respectful ways.

Scope

This procedure provides a consistent framework for the safe, responsible and respectful 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-provided and personal digital devices and all online services.

Our school's approach – Off and Away

Phones are to be kept in students' bags at all times. Any student found using their phone during school hours will have their phone confiscated by a staff member. The confiscated phone will be stored in the office where the student can collect at the end of the day. Parents/carers will be informed about their child's phone being confiscated. If any student has their phone confiscated 3 times in a term they will be asked not to bring a phone to school after a formal meeting with parents/carers. The school is only liable and responsible for confiscated phones. The school will not be liable for any phones that are damaged or stolen from student bags. The school will however, investigate breaches of our school's expectations in relation to interfering with or stealing property that belongs to others. At 3pm each day, students are permitted to take their phones out of their bag and check messages from parents/carers whilst making their way out of the school grounds. School expectations are routinely revisited at morning assemblies and through parent communication channels. The school would like to take a supportive approach to phones being off and away without it feeling overly punitive.

Exemptions

An exemption from parts of this policy or the school procedure can be requested from the principal by parents, carers, school counsellors and other student support staff, and, if required, students themselves. This may cover times when or places where use would otherwise be restricted. Except where required by law, the school principal has discretion to consider and approve exemptions and to choose which parts of the school procedure the exemptions applies. The exemption may be ongoing or for a certain time period.

Consequences for inappropriate use

- An individual student's digital device may be confiscated by a staff member if used outside the stipulations of this procedure
- Confiscated devices are handed in to the school office and can be collected at the end the day
- A student who has had their device confiscated 3 times in a term will be asked not to bring it to school and a formal meeting will be scheduled with the students' parents/carers
- A student who is asked not to bring their phone to school due to breaches of these procedures may have this reviewed by the principal in consultation with parents/cares after two full school terms

Contact between students and parents and carers during the school day

Should a student need to contact a parent or carer during the school day, they must approach the administration office and ask for permission to use the school's phone. During school hours, parents and carers are expected to only contact their children via the school office.

Responsibilities and obligations:

Students

- Be safe, responsible and respectful users of digital devices and online services, and support their peers to be the same
- Respect and follow school expectations and procedures and the decisions made by staff, knowing that other schools may have different arrangements
- Communicate respectfully and collaboratively with peers, school staff and the school community and behave in the ways described in the Behaviour Code for Student.

Parents/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
- 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 (<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/school-community-charter>)
- Switch off or put their digital devices on silent when at official school functions, during meetings and when assisting in the classroom.

Principal and Teachers

- Deliver learning experiences that encourage safe, responsible and respectful 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 are able to 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; and 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 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 e-Safety Commissioner (if necessary) to resolve cases of serious online bullying and image-based abuse; and following the school's wellbeing procedures 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/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
- Switch off or put their digital devices on silent when at official school functions, during meetings with parents and during staff meetings and professional learning activities.

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
- Model appropriate use of digital devices and online services in line with departmental policy.

Communication of these procedures to the school community

Students:

- Students will be taught and reminded of the school's expectations for digital devices and their use in their class at the beginning of every school year
- Students will be reminded of the school procedures regularly and as required through whole-school assemblies
- Students preferences can be explored or reviewed via Student Representatives Council meetings

Parents/Carers:

- Parents and carers will be provided with a copy of these procedures at the point of enrolment via the Parent Information pack
- These procedures can be accessed electronically via the school's website and in hardcopy at the school's administration office
- Regular reminders of the school's procedures will also occur through the school newsletter as required

Complaints

If a student or a parent/carer has a complaint related to these procedures, they should first follow our school's complaints process seeking to resolve any issues informally with the school directly. If the issue cannot be resolved, please refer to the Department's guide for making a formal complaint <https://education.nsw.gov.au/your-feedback>

Review

The principal or delegated staff will review this procedure annually.

*Reviewed by David Holland
Principal
9 October, 2023*

Appendix: Key terms

Digital citizenship refers to the skills and knowledge a person needs to effectively use digital technologies in a positive way so they can participate in society, communicate with others, and create and consume digital content.

Digital devices are electronic devices that can receive, store, process and share digital information and connect to applications (apps), websites and other online services. They include desktop computers, laptops, tablets, smartwatches, smartphones and other devices.

Educational purpose is any use approved by school staff that supports student learning, wellbeing and educational outcomes.

General capabilities are the broad collection of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions described within the Australian curriculum and NSW syllabus.

Image-based abuse occurs when intimate, nude or sexual images are distributed, or threatened to be distributed, without the consent of those pictured. This includes real, altered and drawn pictures and videos. This is a crime in NSW.

Online bullying involves using technology such as the internet or mobile devices to bully someone. Bullying behaviour has three key features. It involves the intentional misuse of power in a relationship. It is ongoing and repeated, and it involves behaviours that can cause harm. Bullying behaviour can also involve intimidation, victimisation and harassment, including that based on sex, race, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

Online safety is the safe, responsible and respectful use of digital media, devices, other technology and online services.

Online services are any software, website or application that can gather, process or communicate information. This includes digital classrooms, chat and messaging, online games, virtual reality, social media and other online spaces.

Reasonable adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to participate in education and training on the same basis as other students.

School-related settings include school grounds, school-related activities and outside of school where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students. This connection may exist in situations where: there is discussion about school taking place outside of school hours; a student is wearing their school uniform but is not on school premises; a relationship between parties commenced at school; students are online in digital classrooms; and where online contact has flow on consequences at school and duty of care requires the school to respond once an incident is reported.

School staff refers to school personnel who have some level of responsibility for implementing policy and the school digital devices and online service procedure. This includes principals, senior staff, teachers, non-teaching staff, school administrative staff, volunteers and contracted staff engaged by schools.