

MOBILE PHONE & DEVICE POLICY



POLICY UPDATED November 2023

Rationale

While mobile phones and other such devices have significant advantages for use in the broader community, their use in schools is highly problematic. In schools, mobile phones can be significant distractors to learning and they can also pose significant risk to the safety of students through unfiltered access to the internet. There has been significant research around the impacts on adolescents of extended exposure to screen time.

Expectations

Students *may not* use mobile phones or similar devices while on school grounds at any times. In addition, school staff are not to see or hear student devices of this kind at school.

Students are expected to hand their phone in to Home Group teachers during roll call. Teachers are to record the students that hand phones in each day. Phones handed in to teachers will be stored in sealed containers until the end of the day when they will be returned to students.

This policy applies to all times students who are at school and on school grounds including during and between classes and at all break times such as recess and lunch.

Please note: 'school grounds' extends to school excursions, sports carnivals and other events off the school site, where an approved school activity takes place.

Contact between students while they are at school and their parents/carers should occur through the school office on 8676 2388. Office staff will happily pass on messages to students.

Procedures

- Students who choose to use their mobile phones for any reason will first be issued with a warning. Students will be required to give the phone/device to a staff member and it will be securely stored in the school office until the completion of the school day when they can be collected by students.
- Students who choose to use their mobile phones for any purpose for a second time within a calendar year, will be issued with a warning of internal suspension. Students are required to give the phone/device to a staff member and it will be securely stored in the school office so that the parent/carer of the student may collect the phone at their earliest convenience.
- Students who choose to use their mobile phones for any purpose for a third time within a calendar year, will be internally suspended for continued disobedience consistent with our school policy. Students are required to give the phone/device to a staff member and it will be securely stored in the school office so that the parent/carer of the student may collect the phone at their earliest convenience.
- Home group teachers are to monitor students adherence to this policy. Periodically these teachers are to check with parents if students who are not handing phones up have a

phone they bring to school. Parents are supportive of this policy and together we can ensure that it is implemented consistently.

Definitions

A Mobile Phone or similar device includes, but is not limited to:

- mobile phones
- tablet computers less than 9.7"
- smart watches
- music and video players
- still and video cameras
- voice recorders
- instant messaging services
- personal digital assistants
- handheld games

and various other functions, commonly found within these devices as well as any device accessing the internet through any means.

It is up to teacher discretion if music is allowed to be listened to through personal headphones by students.

Staff

Apart from exceptional situations or specific teaching purposes, mobile phones should not be used during teaching time or whilst engaged in school responsibilities such as yard duty.

It is reasonable for a staff member to:

- Use their phone to contact Leadership whilst on Yard Duty or offsite.
- Photograph notes or student work during class time, sport, excursions, camps or rehearsals, and email students, once photos are uploaded, the photos must be deleted from personal devices

Why have we as a school community made this decision?

Mental health

Amount of screen time has implications for mental health. A study from the University of Bristol (2010) found that higher screen time was linked to lower mental health scores. Even if a student is engaged in high levels of physical activity, the amount of time spent on technology has an impact on psychological well-being.

Academic results

Extra screen time can impact on a student's grades - a 2015 study by Cambridge University found that spending more than 4 hours of leisure-based screen time per day had a detrimental effect on students' grades. With each additional hour, students' grades decreased (Corde,r Atkin, Bamber, Brage, Dunn, Ekelund, Owens, van Sluijs, & Goodyer, 2015). Homework and reading had positive impact on secondary students' results.

Cognitive Function

The proximity of digital devices has an impact on cognitive function - this includes the ability to focus - as part of the brain is actively working to not pick up or use the phone (Ward, Duke, Gneezy & Bos, 2017). This University of Texas at Austin study also found that people who are most dependent on their smartphones perform worse on tasks compared with their less dependent peers.

Eye Health

The number of students with short sightedness has almost doubled in the last 5 years, with more than 30% of Australian 17 year olds short sighted. Electronic devices can all cause tired eyes and digital eye strain otherwise known as 'computer vision syndrome' (Optometry Australia). The blue light emitted from LED devices is currently being researched to examine its impact on sleep cycles. There is plenty of evidence supporting the importance of a good night's sleep for well-being, learning and physical health.

Other

The current recommendation for daily screen time is 2 hours for children over the age of 2, although some organisations are now focused on strategies for managing technology rather than specific time limits.

Face-to-face communication is very important for developing social interaction skills that include conversational skills, reading body language (including facial expressions) and developing the ability to repair conversations in real time. If students are engaging in screen time during break time, there are 'lost opportunities' for important social interactions, even if the technology-based activities they are engaging in are creative and social. These opportunities also include engaging in the many extra-curricular activities offered by the school during break times as well as time outside which is known to be beneficial for mental health.

Optometry Australia recommends 'green time' time to balance blue light screen time.

At Cummins Area School we acknowledge that Mobile phones and devices are an integral part of modern life and will continue to be so for our students. We are aware that as educators we play a significant role in assisting children to manoeuvre the online world and as such will continue to address issues such as cyber bullying, e- safety and phone etiquette in our classes, particularly through our Pastoral Care programs.