



Personal Use of Electronic Devices Policy

This policy promotes enhanced learning, safety, and wellbeing of students through the management of any risk of harm and distraction from the use of digital technology accessed via a mobile phone, smart watch, or other personal electronic device. This policy outlines the agreed upon procedures in managing students' use of these devices at Kirrawee High School.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'mobile phones and other personal electronic devices' includes smart watches and all other electronic devices (including iPads and other branded tablets), as well as any associated listening accessories – such as, but not limited to, headphones, AirPods, and ear buds.

In NSW Public Schools, Secondary School Principals, in consultation with their communities, have discretion to make decisions about restricting or permitting student use of digital devices and online services in all school-related settings, including at recess, lunch and during class. We recognise that digital devices and online services are an important part of everyday life, shaping the way children and young people learn, communicate, work and play. Learning environments, at school and at home, should support students to develop technological, social, and emotional competencies. This support should maximise the benefits and minimise the risks of digital environments and prepare students for life beyond school.

The aim of this policy is to provide:

- a safe learning environment which promotes the absence of inappropriate mobile phone use (including cyberbullying) and/or distraction
- greater opportunities for students' social interaction and physical activity during recess and lunchtimes

1. 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 are significant distractors to learning and have been found to negatively impact a student's cognitive load. They can also pose a significant risk to the safety and wellbeing of students through unfiltered/ unsupervised access to the internet and social networking platforms.

The use of technology is important, but the risks and benefits of its use need to be managed. A summary of research used to inform this policy is attached in Appendix 1.

2. Student Expectations

- 2.1. **Students may not use mobile phones and other personal electronic devices while on school grounds at any time.** 'School grounds' extends to school excursions and other approved school activities and events occurring either at the school or off site, unless otherwise advised.
- 2.2. Mobile phones are to be **'off and away all day'**, from the time students enter the school grounds in the morning until they are in the designated bus line area or have left school grounds after 3:00pm. This includes in the playground before school and at break times.





- 2.3. Students must switch their Smart Watches to 'aeroplane mode' for the duration of the school day if they are worn. Kirrawee High School strongly discourages student use of smart watches at school.
- 2.4. **BYO or school issued laptops are NOT included in the ban.** However, **students will be discouraged from accessing them before school or during break time in the playground.** Students who wish to use laptops at these times must do so in the library or COLA or in a classroom under the supervision of a teacher.
- 2.5. **Laptops and tablets should not be used for gaming at school** unless the game is for educational purposes and the student has been instructed to do so by a teacher as part of a class learning activity.
- 2.6. Teachers may request or allow students to use listening accessories with their laptops as required for learning activities.
- 2.7. Students will hand their mobile phone or electronic device immediately to Reception when instructed by a member of staff to do so. Failure to do so may incur more severe consequences.
- 2.8. Students must take full responsibility for any mobile phone or similar device brought to school. The school or staff will not be responsible for their loss, theft, or damage. **Students who bring them to school, do so at their own risk.**

3. Exceptions/Accommodations

A small number of exceptions will be made. These exceptions will only be available for:

3.1 Managing a health condition

Health related exemptions can be sought by parents/carers by contacting the Principal.

In the case of exemption for mental health issues such as anxiety, a letter from a medical professional will be required. This letter must state when and how the mobile phone is to be used and should demonstrate that access to a mobile phone is the only viable treatment or support option. Please note that students who require the use of mood regulation apps etc. will be supported by the school to access these on school issued devices.

Students with insulin monitors or other health devices linked to their phone can carry their phone in their pocket and may check their phone as required to respond to alerts or alarms. The school must be informed by families of students to whom this applies.

3.2 A teacher directed / supervised learning activity

Teachers can grant a classroom-based learning exception for specific purposes for a specific time. For example, when creating digital film or taking photos for use in an assignment or class activity. Teachers giving such permission will provide notice as required and will supervise student use of the device for this purpose.

3.3 Purchasing at the canteen

Students will be able to use their mobile phones to pay for food/drink at the canteen. Students may only remove and use their devices **at the counter**. Devices must be returned to their bag immediately once they are used to pay.





4. Parent or Caregiver expectations

- 4.1. Any messages that need to be passed on to students from their parents and/or carers during the school day should be directed through the school's Reception rather than via the student's device. For acceptable reasons only, students will be permitted to use a phone in the Front Office to contact their parents.
- 4.2. Understand that the school takes no responsibility for loss or damage to phones or personal electronic devices.
- 4.3. Work collaboratively with the school to help reinforce Kirrawee High School's *Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy* with their child/ren
- 4.4. In emergencies, parents will need to contact their children through the school office.

5. Improper use of mobile phones or other personal electronic devices

Improper use of mobile phones or other personal electronic devices will result in students being directed by staff to hand their device to Reception (including laptops). It is appropriate to confiscate devices from students when:

- 5.1 Students have failed to meet the school's expectations relating to appropriate use of mobile phones or other personal electronic devices
- 5.2 Students are suspected to have bullied, threatened, or harassed other students or staff via a device.
- 5.3 The device has been used to interfere with the safety and wellbeing of staff and students or the operation of the school.

Further disciplinary action will follow if students:

- 5.4 Are caught using their device in class or in the playground contrary to our expectations (see section 2).
- 5.5 Use their phone to hotspot a laptop or computer.
- 5.6 Use their device to bully, intimidate, or otherwise harass other people through any voice call, text message, photographic, video, or other data transfer system available on the device.
- 5.7 Have, or are suspected of having, material on their phone that poses a risk to their own safety and/or wellbeing or to that of other students or staff.
- 5.8 Use digital devices to disrupt the learning environment or interfere with the operation of the school.
- 5.9 Use or are suspected of using devices to record images, video, or sound without permission/consent.

6. Consequences may include:

- 6.1 Confiscation of the device. There is to be no argument when requested to hand in the device to Reception. Such behaviour may incur further disciplinary action.
- 6.2 A detention or other appropriate disciplinary measure as determined by the school's discipline policy.
- 6.3 Withdrawing the student's privilege of carrying a phone at school.
- 6.4 Suspension in cases of repeated breach of policy where other disciplinary action has not redirected or minimised the behaviour of concern.





7. Discipline – phones and accessories

- 7.1 In the instance that a student is found with their phone out of their bag, or inappropriately using devices connected to their phone, they will be required to take their phone to Reception. Staff at Reception will record the incident as a Mobile Phone Breach. In these instances, the phone will be returned to the student at the end of the day.
- 7.2 When a student refuses to hand their phone into the office – they will be sent to the HT, or reported to the HT as appropriate, for follow up:
- i. Students refusing to hand phones into the office will receive after school detention.
 - ii. Ongoing defiance will result in Deputy Principal or Principal intervention.
- 7.3 Continued breach of policy may result in:
- Parent contact
 - Mobile Phone Monitoring
 - Formal Caution to Suspend
 - Suspension

8. Discipline – laptops

- 8.1 Students caught using their laptop inappropriately will be asked to hand their laptop to the office. Students requiring a laptop will then need to borrow a device from the library.
- 8.2 Student refusal to hand in their laptop will be managed as per points 7.2 and 7.3 in Discipline – phones and accessories.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's policy review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School P&C on 24th October 2022





Appendix

1. Research - Mobile phone use in the classroom

2015 [How smart is it to allow students to use mobile phones at school?](#) reports on a study of mobile phone bans in England. The bans led to:

- Improvements in student achievement
- An increase in test scores for students aged 16 by an amount equal to adding five extra days to the school year.

Lower-achieving students made the greatest improvements.

[Mobile phones in the classroom: A helpful or harmful hindrance?](#) outlines recent research. Phones can be a distraction and their removal from the classroom can see an improvement in student performance. Students who did not use smartphones in a lecture wrote 62 per cent more information in their notes and recalled more information than peers who were using their phones.

2018 ['Schools need to react quickly': Education expert urges smartphone ban](#) discusses smartphone use in schools. According to Finnish expert Dr Sahlberg, smartphone distraction is one of the main reasons why Australia is sliding down [Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#) rankings.

2. Research - Cognition and smartphone use

[Smartphones and Cognition: A Review of Research Exploring the Links between Mobile Technology Habits and Cognitive Functioning](#) is a review of academic research on mobile phones. The review looked for evidence of effects of smartphone use on cognition. It reported that habitual smartphone use may have a negative and lasting impact on users' ability to:

- think,
- remember
- pay attention
- regulate emotion.

2017 [The Mere Presence of Your Smartphone Reduces Brain Power, Study Shows](#)
The research finds it doesn't matter whether a smartphone is on or off or lying face up or face down on a desk - having a smartphone within sight or within easy reach reduces a person's ability to focus and perform tasks, because part of their brain is actively working to not pick up or use the phone.





3. Research - Smartphones use by children and young people and wellbeing

[Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide-Related Outcomes, and Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescents After 2010 and Links to Increased New Media Screen Time](#) shows that, on average, teenagers are spending six hours per day:

- using the internet
- texting friends
- using social media.

The surveys explore the links between the use of smartphones, particularly social media, and increases in depression, anxiety and reduced happiness.

2018 [Dopamine, Smartphones & You: A battle for your time](#), a Harvard University blog discusses our desire to connect and seek validation through technologies and how this can lead to anxiety, poor sleep and unsuccessful social interactions. The blog explains how mobile phone content can influence our 'dopamine pathways' and lead to a battle for more and more of the users' time.

[The Social Dilemma](#) is a Netflix documentary-drama hybrid that examines the various ways social media and social networking companies have manipulated human psychology to rewire the human brain and what it means for society in general. One of the most striking sections of the documentary is the one that touches on the vulnerability of **teenagers** who use platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and multiple others every single day and have been moulded by social media's influences. This section of the film is highlighted by statistics on depression, anxiety, and even suicide rates of teenagers that correlate with the rise of social media.

As always there is a contrary view so please also check out this short ABC RN evaluation https://youtu.be/9y_KiBxKePI

[The evidence is clear: Students learn better without mobile phones in class](#), March 2021

Studies have shown mobile phone use can have a damaging impact on the brain and its cognitive functions. Research on banning mobile phones in schools indicate that when use is limited or removed completely, there is a corresponding uplift in academic outcomes, engagement at school and overall wellbeing. In a Spanish study, [Banning Mobile Phones at Schools: Effects on Bullying and Academic Performance](#), December 2020, Beneito and Vincente-Chirivella found that when schools banned mobile phones there was:

- A decrease in incidences of bullying by 12-18%
- Educational outcomes of students increased, specifically in Maths and Science

[Banning mobile phones in schools can improve students' academic performance. This is how we know](#), Louis-Philippe Beland, 2021

Psychological studies have shown that multitasking, often associated with phone use, has a significant negative impact on learning, attention, and the ability to complete tasks. Present evidence has made links between phone use and decreased learning.

[Unhappy and addicted to your phone? – Higher mobile phone use is associated with lower well-being](#),

April 2019, Sara Alida Volkmer

Research on the use of mobile phones and corresponding impacts on mental health and wellbeing found:

- Mobile phone use is negatively correlated with well-being, life satisfaction, and mindfulness

