

STUDENTS USING MOBILE PHONES POLICY SCRIPTS FOR PARENTS:

Policy

I can't find a copy of the Students Using Mobile Phones POLICY anywhere?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy can be found within the School Policy and Advisory Guide*. See www.education.vic.gov.au (search: mobile phones). Each school is required to develop their own local mobile phone policy, which includes all elements of the Students Using Mobile Phones policy. If you would like a copy of the local policy, please contact your child's school.
Why do we NEED this policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy was put in place to provide a safe environment to learn without inappropriate mobile phone use (including cyberbullying) or distractions, and greater opportunities for social interaction and physical activity during recess and lunchtimes. The policy has been informed by research which 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. Refer parents to research at www.education.vic.gov.au (search: mobile phones).
Shouldn't we TEACH students to be responsible users of technologies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology is important, but there needs to be a balance between the benefits and risks. The Victorian Curriculum acknowledges this and therefore affords rich learning opportunities to assist students to develop digital literacy skills at school. Where there is a genuine educational need to have mobile phones in the classroom, teachers can instruct their students to bring their phones to class.

Secure storage

I am CONCERNED about the SECURITY or STANDARD of STORAGE provided at my child's school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile phones owned by students are brought to school at the owner's risk, like any other personal item. Please refer to the Department's Personal Goods policy, which states that 'private property brought to school by students is not insured by the school or covered by school insurance, and is not the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training or school if that property is lost, stolen or damaged'. See www.education.vic.gov.au (search: Personal Goods policy). The principal is responsible for determining the appropriate arrangements for secure storage. Secure storage is defined as storage that cannot be readily accessed by those without permission to do so. If you don't believe that the storage provided is
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	<p>appropriate, I would encourage you to have a discussion with the school principal in the first instance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst the school must provide secure storage for students' mobile phones, it is the students' responsibility to ensure they securely store their devices when directed to do so, e.g. lock their lockers, not share their combination lock details, hand their phone to the front office if instructed to do so, etc.
<p>What happens if my child's mobile phone is STOLEN or DAMAGED while in storage? Who is responsible?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile phones owned by students are brought to schools at the owner's risk, like any other personal item. Please refer to the Department's Personal Goods policy at www.education.vic.gov.au (search: Personal Goods policy). The Department's Personal Goods policy states that 'private property brought to school by students is not insured by the school or covered by school insurance, and is not the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training or school if that property is lost, stolen or damaged'. • Whilst the school must provide secure storage for students' mobile phones, it is the students' responsibility to ensure they securely store their devices when directed to do so, e.g. lock their lockers, not share their combination lock details, hand their phone to the front office if instructed to do so, etc. • If a student places a mobile phone in storage provided by the school, and as long as that storage is secured, liability rests with the phone owner if that phone is stolen, damaged, etc. The Personal Goods policy applies. • If the student is instructed to hand over their mobile phone to a staff member or to the school office because, for example, there is a breach of the policy during school hours, then liability for the secure storage of that phone passes to the school. However, the Personal Goods policy still applies.

Exceptions and exemptions to the policy

<p>I need to CONTACT my child on a regular basis. Why can't my child have the phone on them but switched to silent?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is acknowledged that parents from time to time may need to communicate with their child. The front office is the most appropriate way to facilitate this during school hours. This allows your child and the other children in their class to enjoy a more productive learning environment, free from disruptions. • In line with the Students Using Mobile Phones policy, students who bring a mobile phone to school must turn it off and store it securely during the school day. However, the policy allows students to use their phones before and after the school day, e.g. to confirm after school pick up arrangements.
<p>My child has a LEARNING DIFFICULTY and needs the mobile phone for their learning or communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals can consider requests for exceptions from the policy when the student's need for a mobile phone during the day is formally documented as part of an existing school process or support, e.g. an Individual Education/Learning Plan or Student Health Support Plan.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where an exception is granted, the student can only use the mobile phone for the purpose for which it was granted. See Managing Exceptions and Exclusions at www.education.vic.gov.au (search: mobile phones).
I believe that access to EXCEPTIONS from the policy may lead to an increase in bullying of my child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are well placed to support students and families who may be concerned about bullying. Information related to bullying should be included in the school's Student Engagement Policy: see www.education.vic.gov.au (search: student engagement). See also Student Safety – bullying guidance at www.education.vic.gov.au (search: Bullying). You are best to discuss these issues with the school's principal or wellbeing officer in the first instance. The school's approach to managing exceptions should take into account that granting an exception may draw attention to the child (e.g. cause other students to question why the child has an exception, which may be because of a disability). As per the Students Using Mobile Phones policy, students who are granted exceptions may only use their mobile phones for the specific purpose for which it was granted.
The Ministerial policy is about mobile phones so why are WEARABLE DEVICES banned at my child's school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new policy only applies to mobile phones use. However, schools do have the discretion in their local policy to include wearable devices and other personally-owned technologies (e.g. iPads). If wearable devices and other personally-owned technologies that are not part of BYOD programs are permitted in the school's local policy, notifications must be switched off.
Can I provide the school with a NOTE REQUESTING AN EXCEPTION to the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A parent's note is insufficient evidence of a need for an exception to be granted for an individual student. Principals can only consider requests for exceptions from the policy when the student's need for a mobile phone during the day is formally documented as part of an existing school process or support, e.g. an Individual Education/Learning Plan or Student Health Support Plan.
The principal has REFUSED my request for an EXCEPTION . How can I challenge this decision?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the first instance, you should liaise with the school to understand the reasoning behind the decision and whether your request is allowable under the new policy. Only then can we (the regional office) liaise with the principal on your behalf to establish options for a resolution.
My child is in YEAR 12 and old enough to manage their phone responsibly. Why can't they be exempt from the policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new mobile phone policy includes all year levels. If schools were to exempt a particular cohort, this would breach the policy. The research which informed this new policy found that issues of inattention, distractions and reduced opportunities for socialisation (at lunch and recess) were not age-bound and affected students of all year levels. Refer parent to: www.education.vic.gov.au (search: parents mobile phones in schools)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where there is a genuine educational need to have mobile phones in the classroom, teachers can instruct their students to bring their phones to class.
Why should VET students be given preference under this policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students undertaking VET offsite (as opposed to on school grounds) may be granted an exception due to travel requirements or because they may not be in a position to return to the school at the end of the school day to collect their phones. These students will still need to adhere to the mobile phone policy of their VET provider. See Managing Exceptions and Exclusions section within the policy, at www.education.vic.gov (search: mobile phones).

Non-compliance / Non-support for the policy

My child will NOT COMPLY with this policy and I am supportive of this. What will happen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Students Using Mobile Phones Policy 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 and is not optional. Research which has informed the development of this policy shows that the unregulated presence of mobile phones in classrooms can undermine students' capacity to think, remember, pay attention and regulate emotion. See Summary of Research Articles for more information, at www.education.vic.gov.au (search: mobile phones in schools). A number of schools in Victoria who have already implemented similar policies have reported positive impacts on learning and wellbeing. Non-compliance will be managed through the school's local mobile phone policy and in accordance with the school's existing student engagement policy(ies), for example, through a detention or a loss of school-based privileges. Parents and students are encouraged to work together with the school so that the benefits of this policy can be realised.
Can a school ' CONFISCATE ' my child's phone?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per the Department's Banning, Searching and Seizing of Harmful Items policy, where staff have concerns about students using mobile phones to disrupt lessons or distract students in class, they can instruct the student to hand over the mobile phone. If the student refuses to hand over the item, schools can implement the relevant disciplinary provision in accordance with the student engagement policy. See www.education.vic.gov.au (search: Ban, Search and Seize Harmful Items) for more information. If the student is instructed to hand over their mobile phone to a staff member or to the school office because, for example, there is a breach of the policy during school hours, then liability for the secure storage of that phone passes to the school. The Personal Goods

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Cyberbullying and supporting safe behaviour online

<p>My child is being CYBERBULLIED OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS? What is the school doing about this?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are required to promote and reinforce positive behaviours through their student engagement policy(ies). A range of bullying related programs and supports are available to schools via the Department. See Victorian Anti Bullying and Mental Health Initiative at www.education.vic.gov.au (search: Victorian Anti Bullying and Mental Health Initiative) and Bully Stoppers at www.education.vic.gov.au (search: Bully Stoppers). As part of the schools' student engagement policy(ies), students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities which include not partaking in bullying and/or cyberbullying. If parents have particular concerns about their child being cyberbullied by other students at the school, they are encouraged to liaise with the child's teacher or school's principal. A guide on cyberbullying for parents and carers is also available at www.esafety.gov.au (search: Cyberbullying).
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