

New mobile phone policy from term 1 2024

Dear parents and carers,

From term 1, 2024, a new policy will be in place regarding the way student mobile phones are used across ACT public schools.

This follows an extensive engagement process with feedback received from over 3,200 staff, community, students, and stakeholders.

Through the engagement we heard that there is strong and consistent support for the minimisation of student mobile phone use in ACT public schools.

What will change?

Changes for students P-10

Students in Years P-10 at ACT public schools may not use or access personal communications devices at school, including recess and lunch, or during school authorised events.

- Students are strongly encouraged to leave their phones and other personal devices at home.
- It is acknowledged that some students will need their phones or other personal devices immediately before and after school to help them get to and from school safely.

Changes for students in year 11 and 12

For Year 11 and 12 students, mobile phones and other personal communications devices must be silenced and put away during class and any teaching event or instruction delivered by a teacher or school staff member.

The following applies to students in Year 11 and 12 only:

- A device is 'put away' when it is secured out of sight in a safe place. The device must not be on a student's person, on the student's desk or in the student's work area.
- Students may not access their device or use technology connected to the device via physical wires, wireless tethering, Bluetooth, or hotspot during these times. This includes but is not limited to headphones, speakers, and Chromebooks.
- Students may use their devices during class time if the teacher leading the class/activity has explicitly permitted students to do so for educational purposes.
- Students may use their devices at other times while at school, such as at lunch or other break times.

- Students must not film, photograph or share images or footage of other students, teachers, school staff or visitors to the school unless permitted to do so by the individual being recorded.

Special considerations and exemptions

An exemption can be requested and must be approved by the school principal or delegate.

An exemption can be requested if a student needs their device/assistive technology:

- to manage or monitor a medical condition.
- to help meet caring or family responsibilities.

An exemption application form must be completed and is available on the Education Directorate website. An exemption request will only be approved if sufficient supporting evidence is provided, for example, from a treating general practitioner.

A transition period up to the end of term 1, 2024 will be available for schools to implement the change, and for those families needing to provide exemptions and the necessary documentation to the school. Each ACT public school will implement this policy aligning with their unique circumstances.

Your school will let you know how this policy will work at your school ahead of the start of term 1 2024.

Thank you for your participation in the engagement process. The Education Directorate understands it will take some time to embed the new policy in our schools but believe it will lead to positive outcomes for both students and staff.

To read more, including the full policy, exemption information, and frequently asked questions visit: www.education.act.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-publications.

For information about supporting your child to manage their screen time at home visit: www.esafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/screen-time.

Katy Haire
Director General
Education Directorate
6 December 2023