

Mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use in NT Government schools – policy

Department of Education and Training

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1. Policy

Students are not permitted to use mobile phones or personal digital devices in Northern Territory (NT) Government schools during the school day, including break times, or when involved in activities facilitated by the school.

The Department of Education and Training (department) ensures schools comply with NT and national legislation, including requirements for child safety and social media use.

Under the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth), effective 10 December 2025, individuals under 16 years of age are prohibited from holding accounts on specified social media platforms. Schools must incorporate this requirement into their digital citizenship education and promote safe, lawful online behaviour.

Exemptions to this policy may be granted to support students with medical or disability needs. Reasons for exemptions must be appropriately evidenced, approved by the principal and documented in accordance with school procedures.

2. Purpose

The aim of this policy is to:

- eliminate disruption to educational programs through the receipt and transmission of phone calls or messages
- eliminate privacy concerns related to photographs or recording conversations without the knowledge of those being recorded
- provide a safe environment to learn without inappropriate use of, or distractions from, mobile phones and personal digital devices, such as cyberbullying, threats of violence, or accessing inappropriate materials via the internet
- provide greater opportunities for social interaction and physical activity during school break times.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students attending NT Government schools.

3.1. Out of scope

This policy does not apply to Outside of School Hours Care services run by external providers.

For policy requirements for Early childhood education and care settings please refer to the [Safe use of digital technology in early childhood education and care settings](#) policy.

This policy does not apply to personal portable devices that align to a schools Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program.

4. Policy requirements

Under this policy:

- Students in preschool to Year 6 are not permitted to have mobile phones or personal digital devices in their possession during the school day.

- Students from Year 7 to 12 are permitted to remain in possession of mobile phones or personal digital devices during the school day. However, mobile phones or personal digital devices must be turned off and put away all day and stored securely.

5. Communication

Schools, under the guidance of principals, must adopt a consistent and transparent approach when communicating procedures for student use of mobile phones and personal digital devices.

Existing mechanisms, such as the school website or application, newsletters, student assemblies, open days, and other principal-approved forums, should be used to promote this policy and the school's local procedure on student mobile phones and personal digital devices.

6. Local school procedures and decisions

Schools are required to apply all policy relevant to their setting and ensure their procedures are appropriately contextualised. To support this schools are required to use and adapt the: Mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use procedure template.

Students in preschool to Year 6 are not permitted to have mobile phones or personal digital devices in their possession during the school day. Each school must establish designated collection points and document this in the school's mobile phones and personal digital devices procedure.

Schools must determine and implement safe storage arrangements for mobile phones and personal digital devices and document this in their local procedure.

Students in Years 7 to 12 who choose to bring mobile phones or personal digital devices to school must ensure they are turned off and put away all day and stored securely.

Consequences for non-compliance with the procedure are to be in line with the school's whole school approach to student wellbeing and positive behaviour.

7. Exemptions

Exemptions to this policy may be applied when specific conditions are met. Approval for an exemption can be granted by the principal, in line with this policy and each school's mobile phone and personal digital devices – student use procedure.

Exemptions may be granted for students who have documented medical and/or disability requirements, which may include:

- students with a documented health condition or disability recorded in a student health care plan or education adjustment plan
- students requiring access to a device for medical monitoring or communication related to their health or wellbeing
- students who are identified as young carers, with this status documented in a localised student record.

Exemption applications need to be supported by advice from a medical practitioner and approved use needs to be clearly documented on the mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use exemption form.

Exemptions can be approved for up to 12 months, with extensions possible after a review.

When an exemption is approved, mobile phone or personal digital device use should be discrete and may only be used for the purpose for which the exemption was granted.

8. Offsite activities

Limited use of mobile phones may be granted for students engaging in offsite activities as part of a specific risk management strategy documented in excursion and risk assessment planning. Use must be limited to the purpose identified in the risk management plan.

Students participating in workplace learning activities including work experience, apprenticeship/traineeships and VET courses conducted offsite must comply with the policies and procedures of the host workplace or training organisation.

9. Roles and responsibilities

9.1. Teaching and Learning Services

Teaching and Learning Services, as the policy owner, is responsible for:

- communicating this policy to principals, teachers, parents and students
- reviewing this policy to ensure accuracy and compliance with legislation.

9.2. Principals

Principals must:

- implement the mobile phones and personal digital devices– student use in NT Government schools – policy, in their educational environment
- develop a contextualised mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use procedure, on the appropriate template
- ensure that all educational settings, early years, primary and secondary, have the correct policy implemented
- ensure their mobile phones and personal digital devices - student use procedure complies with this policy, remains consistent with the Department's relevant policies, and has been clearly communicated and accessible to all students, staff, and families
- consider and approve requests for exemptions from the policy from parents or individual students due to exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis and document the approval on the exemption form
- manage breaches of the mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use procedure in accordance with the student wellbeing and positive behaviour approach
- model the behaviours that align with the department's mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use in NT Government schools - policy to ensure a consistent approach
- support families to understand the importance of promoting safe, responsible, and respectful use of mobile phones and personal digital devices to their children.

9.3. Teachers

Teachers must:

- model the behaviours of the department’s mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use in NT Government schools - policy to ensure a consistent approach in the educational environment
- ensure students who are granted exemptions are monitored for appropriate use for the specified purpose, storing mobile phones away after the exempted activity has concluded
- support parents to understand the procedures and for promoting responsible and respectful use of student mobile phones and personal digital devices
- communicate the school’s Mobile phone and personal digital devices – student use procedure to students and actively support them to follow the procedure.

9.4. Students in primary schools

Students in primary schools must:

- ensure they comply with the school’s mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use procedure and follow all reasonable directions from school staff
- ensure they are not involved in cyberbullying, including online or through electronic communications, such as threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating behaviours.

9.5. Students in secondary schools

Students in secondary schools must:

- ensure they comply with the school’s mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use procedure and follow all reasonable directions from school staff
- ensure all mobile phones and personal digital devices are turned off and put away all day and stored securely
- ensure that, when an exemption is granted, mobile phones and personal digital devices are used only for the approved purpose and in a safe, responsible, and respectful manner that upholds the rights of others, including their peers’ right to learn without disruption or risk
- ensure they are not involved in cyberbullying, including online or through electronic communications, such as threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating behaviours

9.6. Parents

Parents must:

- support the implementation of the mobile phones and personal digital devices - student use procedures and ensure their child complies
- request an exemption, if required, and provide the school with appropriate documentation to support the request
- if an exemption is granted, support their child to use a mobile phone or personal digital device in accordance with the approved procedure, ensuring safe, responsible, and respectful use
- use the school’s formal communication channels to contact the school or their child during school hours, including for early collection
- recognise their role in promoting safe, responsible, and respectful use of mobile phones and personal digital device

10. Definitions

Table 1 - Definitions of key terms

Term	Definition
Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)	A personal computing device, such as a laptop or 2-in-1, with a screen size of 13 inches or greater, capable of supporting the school's digital learning requirements, including internet access, productivity applications, and secure storage.
Educational environments	All school premises, such as school buildings and school grounds, and during school excursions, camps, extracurricular activities, and other school organised functions.
Education adjustment plan	A plan co-developed by the educator, learner and family for learners with a disability or with additional needs. The EAP documents strategies, adjustments, interventions and other supports that will be provided to address the learner's complex needs and those identified in the Abilities based learning and education support (ABLES) curriculum assessment.
Mobile phones and personal digital devices	Includes but are not limited to, mobile phones, smart watches, smart glasses or similar smart devices and all other devices with access to a cellular (telecommunication) system, with or without a physical connection to a network.
Off and put away	The device must be switched off, not accessed, seen, or heard at any time during school hours and includes break times.
Parent	A child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for that child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary law or tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis
Respectful relationship education	Supports schools and early childhood settings to promote and model respect, positive attitudes and behaviours and teaches our children and young people how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence.
School community	All school staff, families, students, and persons who have direct involvement or interest in the school.
School day	The period during which a student is required to attend school, including all scheduled classes, breaks, and any school-organised activities occurring between the official start and end times of the school's daily timetable.
VET	Competency based training that enables students to acquire workplace skills through nationally recognised training as part of an industry developed training package or accredited course. VET qualifications are recognised nationally and internationally and are recognised within the NTCET.

11. Related legislation, policy, resources and documents

11.1. Legislation

Information Act 2002 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/INFORMATION-ACT-2002>

Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 (Cth) - <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2024A00127/asmade/text>

Surveillance Devices Act 2007 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/SURVEILLANCE-DEVICES-ACT-2007>

11.2. Policy

Excursions policy - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/4262>

Respectful relationships education - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/teaching-and-learning/teaching-and-learning-services/respectful-relationships>

School fees and voluntary contributions – policy and guidelines - <https://education.nt.gov.au/school-fees-and-voluntary-contributions-policy-and-guideline.pdf>

Student wellbeing and positive behaviour related policies - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/behaviour-and-wellbeing>

Safe use of digital technology in early childhood education and care settings – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/early-childhood-education-and-care/safe-use-of-digital-technology-in-early-childhood-education-and-care-settings>

11.3. Resources and further reading

Australian Cyber Security Centre – <https://www.cyber.gov.au/protect-yourself/resources-protect-yourself/personal-cyber-security-guides>

Australian Federal Police program Think U Know - <https://www.thinkuknow.org.au/>

Australian Government program - Bullying no way - <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

Australian Government eSafety Commissioner - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

11.4. Templates

Mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use – exemption form - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/3562>

Mobile phones and personal digital devices – student use – procedure template - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/3562>

Acronyms	Full form
ABLES	Abilities based learning and education support
Department	Northern Territory Department of Education and Training
EAP	Education adjustment plan
NT	Northern Territory
NTCET	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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