Mobile Phones and Personal Electronic Devices – Student Use

On Tuesday 20 October, a ministerial order was released which covers what schools must include in their local policy to comply with new legislation restricting personal electronic devices in schools.

The Victorian Parliament this year made changes to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to restrict personal electronic devices in all school sectors.

The changes build on the ministerial policy introduced in 2020 to ban student mobile phone use in Victorian public schools, with limited exceptions.

Under changes to the Act, all schools in Victoria, not just public schools, must have a policy restricting student use of personal electronic devices whilst the students are at school. This extends to smart glasses and wearable devices such as smart watches and headphones. This will become a minimum standard for school registration.

By the start of Term 1, 2027 (Thursday 28 January) schools must have in place a local policy restricting student use of electronic personal devices whilst students are at school.

I am alerting you to these changes now so that you can begin a conversation with your children at home.

We will begin to work on our new policy during this term in time for it to come into play by the start of the 2027 school year.

I will communicate more detailed information to you as we proceed with the development of the new policy which will replace our Mobile Phone policy.

Staff Outside of Work hours

Parents/carers and students are reminded that regular work hours for staff are 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. Staff are not available to respond to e-mails outside of regular work hours.

You are at liberty to send an e-mail at your convenience but please be aware that it will not be responded to immediately. However, your e-mail will be responded to within 48 hours from the first workday that it is received.

Thank you for your understanding.

Should you require immediate assistance with a matter of concern, please contact these external services:

Telephone or Webchat support for young people 1800 55 1800
https://kidshelpline.com.au/

Parents/Carers support 13 22 89
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/parentline-service

Mobile phone Policy

The school Mobile Phone Policy remains in place and requires students to switch off their phone from the sound of the first warning bell for the day and store their phones away securely until they leave the school at the end of the day. Students are not to access their phones at any time throughout the day including breaks. The same expectations apply for the use of headphone and Air pods. Unless requested by a teacher to support learning, these must also be stored securely for the school day. A process for addressing a breach of the policy is in place and all students are well aware of their role in this process.

Parents/carers must not expect to communicate with their children during the day via their mobile phone. Should there be the need to get in touch with your child during the day for an emergency, please contact the general office otherwise please confine any communication for the times when student can access their phones. A small number of students have Mobile Phone or Headphone exemptions; these are generally for medical reasons supported by relevant documentation.

Our Mobile Phone policy is up for review, and we will certainly communicate with you any changes, if any that may be made to the policy.

Privacy

Our school collects and uses student and parent personal information for standard school functions or where permitted by law, as stated in the Schools' privacy policy and the Schools' privacy collection notice.

Our Photographing, Filming and Recording Students policy https://www.elthamhs.vic.edu.au/policies-child-safety/ describes how we collect and use photographs, video and recordings of students. The policy also explains when parent consent is required and how it can be provided and withdrawn.

We ask parents to also review the guidance we provide through the Digital Technologies policy and the Acceptable Use Agreement (both found at https://www.elthamhs.vic.edu.au/policies-child-safety/) on how we use Learning technologies safely at the school and what parents can do to further protect their child's information. If after reviewing the guidance, you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school.

For more information about privacy, refer to: Schools' privacy policy: information for parents. This information is also available in eleven community languages:

- Amharic
- Arabic
- Chinese
- Dari
- Gujarati
- Mandarin
- Somali
- Sudanese
- Turkish
- Urdu
- Vietnamese

Please take time to remind yourself of our school's privacy collection notice, available in the "*Policies*" section of the school website https://www.elthamhs.vic.edu.au/policies-child-safety/

Student Accident Insurance

Parents/guardians are reminded that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development does not provide personal accident insurance for students. Likewise, the school does not have a whole-school policy for personal accident insurance for students. Parents and guardians are responsible for paying the cost of medical treatment for injured students, including transport costs. Reasonably low-cost accident insurance policies are available from some commercial insurers. These cover a range of medical expenses not covered by Medicare or private health insurance. Parents/guardians may wish to purchase such a policy for individual students.

Student Exchange Organisations approved by the VRQA and therefore DET

The following is a 2025 update of the Student Exchange organisations approved by the VRQA to provide student exchange programs in Victoria. The list may change each year, so it is important that you check the current list rather than relying on old information.

Name of organisation	**Website**
AFX Student Exchange Australia	www.afxstudentexchange.com
AIX Australian International Exchange	www.aix-experience.au
Association of German Teachers of Victoria	www.agtv.vic.edu.au
Australian Institute of International Understanding	www.aiiu.com.au
Rotary Youth Exchange Victoria	www.ryea.org.au
Scholarships for Australian German Student Exchange	www.sagse.org.au
Southern Cross Cultural Exchange	www.scce.com.au
Student Exchange Australia New Zealand Ltd	www.studentexchange.org.au
Students of the World Ltd	www.studentsoftheworld.com.au
World Education Program Australia Ltd	www.wep.org.au
Youth For Understanding International Student exchange	www.yfu.com.au

Each year we are asked about student exchange programs that provide a reciprocal benefit. It is important that if you wish to engage in reciprocal exchange that you utilise the services of one of the organisations on this list. The school will not be able to enrol overseas exchange students coming through organisations not on this list because they would not be approved by the Department of Education and Training.

If you need further information, please do not hesitate to call Kate Scalzo on 9430 5111 or e-mail Kate.Scalzo@education.vic.gov.au

School Drop off and Pick Up Times

I remind all parents and guardians, and inform new parents and carers to the school, that student safety is always the primary consideration including both drop off time and pick up times.

Whilst traffic seems to flow smoothly through the circular driveway of the school at the start of the day, there seems to be greater congestion at pick up time in the afternoon.

The circular driveway is to be used purely for drop off and pick up.

There is very little parking available within the school grounds between the following time (8:00 – 10:00am and 2:00 – 4:00pm). "*No Standing Anytime*" signs are located within the school, and it is important that parents/guardians adhere to these. Furthermore, double parking is illegal in the street and within the school grounds, it causes further congestion, which in turn impinges on student safety.

We will be enforcing the use of the circular driveway purely for drop off and pick up of students.

As you move into the circular driveway, if your child is not at the front of the school you will need to exit the driveway and re-enter. You may need to do this more than once. Alternatively, it is advisable that you organise with your child another location for pick up.

As always, we will continue to expect everyone to abide by road and safety laws and procedures as they move through the driveway. The same applies at the Ely Street end of the school. Staff parking on the street is now minimal and this means that there is space for drop off and pick up. Please do not park in residents' driveways. No parents are to drive into the school driveway or park in it or across it. This is the only avenue that students have to get to and from the school buses and we must be vigilant for their safety.

Subsequently, it is imperative that everyone behaves in a lawful and safe way out in Withers Way, Susan Street, Bell Street and Ely Street. We have informed the traffic division of the Shire of Nillumbik of the school's strategy, and it is possible that the Ranger's office may act against people who disregard road and safety laws out in the streets. Likewise, the police will patrol the area at these peak times, and they will not hesitate to reprimand and fine if necessary.

I trust that you will understand the need for this direction, and I ask you for your continued support to ensure the safety of our kids.

If you do use the drop off and pick up zone on Withers Way, can you please direct your children to cross the road at the school crossing both on arrival and on their departure from school. We certainly do not want students crossing the road in front of oncoming cars and placing themselves at risk.

Thank you for your support with this matter.