

Mulgoa Public School Policy for Student use of Digital Devices and Online Services

This policy provides advice to NSW public school communities in managing students' use of digital devices and online services. It promotes the learning, safety and wellbeing of students and the management of any risk of harm and distraction from the use of digital technology.

1. Policy statement

- 1.1 This policy covers student use of digital devices (personal or school provided) and online services in school-related settings, specifically on school grounds, at school-related activities and outside of school where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students.
- 1.2 The use of digital devices by primary school students must be restricted during class, at recess and at lunch unless approved by a teacher or principal for an educational purpose, where use forms part of a reasonable adjustment for student learning and wellbeing or where an exemption has been granted for other reasons.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 Every school is required to consider the needs of their students and their school community when developing their school procedure, including the need to make reasonable adjustments and to consider exemptions for individual students.
- 1.5 An exemption from parts of this policy or the school procedure can be requested from the principal by parents, carers, school counsellors and other student support staff, and, if required, students themselves.
- 1.6 All school principals, in consultation with their school communities, can make decisions about participation in and implementation of a bring your own device program.
- 1.7 Every school is required to complete a school digital devices and online services procedure (procedure) that aligns with this policy, accepted school practices and requirements.
- 1.8 Students, parents, carers, and school staff are to be consulted in the development of their school procedure. Students may be represented by their Student Representative Council and parents and carers by the school's Parents & Citizens association as appropriate.
- 1.9 Incidents of inappropriate use of digital devices and online services should be managed and reported in accordance with each school's procedures, departmental policy and any statutory and regulatory obligations so that action can be taken to manage the incident, prevent any further incidents and provide support where required.
- 1.10 If a student, parent or carer has any complaints relating to this policy, they should first follow the school's complaints process. If the issue cannot be resolved, please refer to the guide for students/ parents/ carers about making a complaint about our schools. The Department's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures also provide information and links to other resources to support staff in managing complaints effectively.

2. Audience and applicability

2.1 This policy directly applies to all NSW public schools and students.

3. Context

3.1 The Department provides guidelines, procedures and safe and secure technology-related resources, equipment and infrastructure to help protect students from harm and create environments where students can benefit from using technology.

3.2 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.

3.3 Student use of digital devices and online services in schools is intended to enhance learning, wellbeing and educational attainment. Digital devices and online services can help students develop the skills needed for digital literacy, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal relationships and collaboration.

3.4 For some students, the use of digital devices and online services allows them to fulfil additional roles and responsibilities they have within the family that may intersect with their school life.

3.5 Digital devices and online services may form part of the reasonable adjustments provided to a student to enable them to participate in school on the same basis as their peers.

3.6 Digital devices and online services may cause harm if used inappropriately, such as to bully or intimidate others or gain access to and share inappropriate content.

3.7 The Department does what it reasonably can to provide safe and secure access to school resources, equipment and infrastructure, including internet connectivity, for students at school.

3.8 This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant departmental policies, procedures and guidelines.

4. Responsibilities and delegations

Students' safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services is the shared responsibility of students, parents, carers and school staff.

4.1 Students:

- use digital devices and online services in safe, responsible and respectful ways, as described in their school procedures and the Behaviour Code for Students, and support their peers to do the same.

4.2 Parents and carers:

- recognise the role they play in educating their children and modelling the behaviours that underpin the safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services;
- support implementation of the school procedure, including its approach to resolving issues;
- take responsibility for their child's use of digital devices and online services at home; and

- communicate with school staff and the school community respectfully and collaboratively, as outlined in the 2018 School Community Charter.

4.3 Teachers:

- model appropriate use of digital devices and online services in line with departmental policy;
- establish strategies and practices consistent with their school's procedures and deliver learning experiences to encourage appropriate use of digital devices and online services;
- respond to and report any breaches and incidents of inappropriate use of digital devices and online services as required by school procedures, departmental policy and any statutory and regulatory requirements;
- support parents and carers to understand the strategies that can be employed to promote their children's safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services;
- participate in professional development related to this policy.

4.4 Non-teaching staff, including volunteers and contracted staff engaged by schools:

- be aware of the policy and act in line with the conduct described in it;
- report any inappropriate use of digital devices and online services to the principal, school executive or school staff they are working with.

4.5 Principals:

- maintain a positive school culture which includes and promotes safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services;
- develop and implement a school procedure in consultation with school staff, students, parents and carers;
- inform staff, including new and casual staff, about school-based procedures;
- model appropriate use of digital devices and online services in line with departmental policy;
- respond to and report any breaches and incidents of inappropriate use of digital devices and online services as required by school procedures, departmental policy and any statutory and regulatory requirements;
- support parents and carers to understand the strategies that can be employed to promote their children's safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services;
- provide teachers and other school staff with support and professional development in appropriate use of digital devices and online services and implementation of their school procedure;
- monitor and periodically review the suitability of their school procedure.

4.6 Directors, Educational Leadership:

- support principals to comply with this policy.

5. Monitoring and review

5.1 The Director, Learning Design & Development (Educational Services) and Director IT Service Operations and Security (Information Technology Directorate) are responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and reviewing its effectiveness at least every three years.

6. Policy contact officers

6.1 Director, Learning Design & Development and Director, IT Service Operations and Security.

7. Implementation date

7.1 1 January 2020.

Mulgoa Public School Procedures for Student use of Digital Devices and Online Services

Purpose

This procedure guides student use of digital devices and online services at our school. Our school acknowledges the educational value of digital devices and online services in supporting and enhancing educational outcomes and student wellbeing. We also recognise they may cause harm if used inappropriately and that we need to support our students to use them in safe, responsible and respectful ways.

Scope

This procedure provides a consistent framework for the safe, responsible and respectful use of digital devices and online services by students in our school. It sets out the shared responsibilities of school staff, students and parents and carers. It also provides a framework to manage potential risks to student safety and wellbeing. This procedure covers student use of digital devices and online services in school-related settings, including on school grounds, at school-related activities and outside of school where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students. This procedure covers the use of school-provided and personal digital devices and all online services.

Our School's Approach

Each day, students' hand in their phones into the office. The school takes responsibility and liability for these devices. Students can collect their devices from the office at the end of each day.

Exemptions

An exemption from parts of this policy or the school procedure can be requested from the principal by parents, carers, school counsellors and other student support staff, and, if required, students themselves. This may cover times when or places where use would otherwise be restricted. Except where required by law, the school principal has discretion to consider and approve exemptions and to choose which parts of the school procedure the exemptions applies. The exemption may be ongoing or for a certain time period.

Consequences for inappropriate use

- The teacher or principal arranges a meeting with the student's parent or carer.
- The student's digital device is confiscated by a staff member.
- Confiscated devices are handed in to the school office and can be collected at the end the day.

Contact between students and parents and carers during the school day

Should a student need to contact a parent or carer during the school day, they must approach the administration office and ask for permission to use the school's phone. During school hours, parents and carers are expected to only contact their children via the school office.

Responsibilities and obligations

For students

- Respect and follow school rules and procedures and the decisions made by staff, knowing that other schools may have different arrangements.

For parents and carers

- Support implementation of the school procedure, including its approach to resolving issues.

For the principal and teachers

- Respond to and report any breaches and incidents of inappropriate use of digital devices and online services as required by school procedures, departmental policy and any statutory and regulatory requirements. This includes: reporting the creation, possession or distribution of indecent or offensive material to the Incident Support and Report hotline as required by the Incident Notification and Response Policy and Procedures and consider any mandatory reporting requirements; working with the department and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (if necessary) to resolve cases of serious online bullying and image-based abuse; and following the school's behaviour management plan when responding to any incident of inappropriate student behaviour relating to the use of digital devices or online services.

For non-teaching staff, volunteers and contractors

- Be aware of the department's policy, this procedure and act in line with the conduct described.
- Report any inappropriate use of digital devices and online services to the principal, school executive or school staff they are working with.

Communicating this procedure to the school community

Students:

- Classroom teachers will inform their students about this new procedure.

Parents and carers:

- Parents and carers will be advised via the school newsletter.

Complaints

If a student, parent or carer has a complaint under this procedure, they should first follow our school's complaints process. If the issue cannot be resolved, please refer to the Department's guide for making a complaint about our schools (<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/complaints-compliments-and-suggestions>).

Review

The principal or delegated staff will review this procedure annually.

Appendix 1: Key terms

- Bring your own device is an optional program where parents and carers can provide personal digital devices for use at school. Any decision to adopt a bring your own device program is made by the principal in consultation with a school community. All digital devices used in schools are covered by the Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Services policy. Schools retain discretion to determine the specifications of personal devices to be used at school.
- Digital citizenship refers to the skills and knowledge a person needs to effectively use digital technologies in a positive way so they can participate in society, communicate with others, and create and consume digital content.
- Online bullying involves using technology such as the internet or mobile devices to bully someone. Bullying behaviour has three key features. It involves the intentional misuse of power in a relationship. It is ongoing and repeated, and it involves behaviours that can cause harm. Bullying behaviour can also involve intimidation, victimisation and harassment, including that based on sex, race, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.
- School-related settings include school grounds, school-related activities and outside of school where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students. This connection may exist in situations where: there is discussion about school taking place outside of school hours; a student is wearing their school uniform but is not on school premises; a relationship between parties commenced at school; students are online in digital classrooms; and where online contact has flow on consequences at school and duty of care requires the school to respond once an incident is reported.

Appendix 2: What is safe, responsible and respectful student behaviour?

Be SAFE

- Protect your personal information, including your name, address, school, email address, telephone number, pictures of you and other personal details.
- Only use your own usernames and passwords, and never share them with others.
- Ask a teacher or other responsible adult for help if anyone online asks for your personal information, wants to meet you or offers you money or gifts.
- Let a teacher or other responsible adult know immediately if you find anything online that is suspicious, harmful, inappropriate or makes you uncomfortable.
- Never hack, disable or bypass any hardware or software security, including any virus protection, spam and filter settings.

Be RESPONSIBLE

- Follow all school rules and instructions from school staff, including when using digital devices and online services.
- Use online services in responsible and age-appropriate ways: only use online services in the ways agreed to with your teacher; only access appropriate content and websites, including when using the school's filtered network and personal, unfiltered networks; and do not use online services to buy or sell things online, to gamble or to do anything that breaks the law.
- Understand that everything done on the school's network is monitored and can be used in investigations, court proceedings or for other legal reasons.

Be RESPECTFUL

- Respect and protect the privacy, safety and wellbeing of others.
- Do not share anyone else's personal information.
- Get permission before you take a photo or video of someone, including from the person and from a teacher.
- Do not harass or bully other students, school staff or anyone, this includes cyberbullying using a digital device or online service.
- Do not send or share messages or content that could cause harm, including things that might be: inappropriate, offensive or abusive; upsetting or embarrassing to another person or group; considered bullying; private or confidential; and/or a virus or other harmful software.