

4 December 2023

Mobile phones are 'Away for the Day' from 2024

Dear Parents/Caregivers

As you are undoubtedly aware, from the beginning of Term 1 2024 all Queensland state school students must keep their mobile phones switched off and 'away for the day' during school hours.

The Background

- An independent review conducted by Ms Cheryl Vardon AO, Former Queensland Family and Children's Commissioner, occurred in May to June 2023. The Review:
 - heard from principals, school staff, students, families, experts and interested members of the community
 - considered available research and current approaches to student mobile phone use across Australia.
- The guiding principles of this review were to make recommendations for:
 1. Protecting learning environments from unnecessary distractions.
 2. Safeguarding the wellbeing of all students.
 3. Supporting school community needs.

The Review Outcome

On 6 June 2023, the Education Ministers agreed on a national commitment to ban, restrict or manage the use of mobile phones and other personal electronic devices by students in government schools. The agreement included the need to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability, learning difficulties or medical needs.

Revised Queensland Department of Education policy

- From Term 1 2024, mobile phones and certain wearable devices (eg smartwatches) will need to be 'away for the day'.
- Exemptions will be available for specific circumstances, including reasons related to disability, health and wellbeing.
- Students who choose to bring mobile phones to school must have them switched off and securely stored during school hours.
- Students who choose to bring a wearable device to school must switch off all notifications for the day (place in flight mode). Schools will need to also control access to connected headphones / ear pods.
- Each school will make a local decision about how mobile phones are stored during school hours. This could include student lockers; lockable pouches; the student's school bag; a locked cupboard in the classroom.

'Away for the Day' will not apply to:

- Student travel to and from school (outside school hours)
- Students who attend offsite TAFE, Vocational Education or work experience (must abide by workplace policies).

What this will mean for our students:

In line with the Queensland Department of Education 'Away for the Day' policy, Nerang State High School does not permit the use of mobile phones and associated electronic devices (including headphones, smart watches, gaming consoles and speakers). Mobile phones and these devices are not necessary for learning and provide a distraction for students and teachers and are proven to prevent learning in many situations. Nerang SHS is a BYOD school; laptops are the identified technology device for use.

What this will mean for our students cont..

If a parent needs to urgently contact a student during the school day, they are able to contact the office and a message will be given to the student. It is understood that students may need a mobile phone before or after school for safety reasons, and for this purpose, they will be able to use their phone prior to entry and once they are dismissed from class at 3.00pm.

Mobile phones and associated electronic devices must be switched off and stored in the students' bag at all times. This applies while on school grounds or while attending school events, including before school, during class times and at breaks. Exemptions can be applied for in cases supported by a documented medical reason.‡

If a mobile phone (or associated electronic device) is sighted or heard:

- the student will be required to hand it in to the Administration Office, where it will be stored securely until 3:00pm.
- For a second offence (in a Term), the student will be referred to the relevant Dean and will be required to store their phone at the Office for the duration of the day for a 1-week period.
- For further repeated offences, on each occasion the device will be lodged at the Office and a parent/caregiver will be contacted to collect the device from the school at a mutually convenient time.

Failure to submit a phone to the Administration Office as directed can result in an external school suspension. This serious consequence will be the result of the student's failure to comply with school rules and behaviour which impacts on the good order and management of the school.

Parents/Guardians wishing to urgently contact their children, or vice versa, are required to do so through the school office on 5503 7830.

Students who choose to bring mobile phones or associated electronic devices to school, do so at their own risk and are responsible for ensuring that these items are kept secure and stored in their bag. The school and school staff will not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage to technology devices nor will they investigate loss or damage.

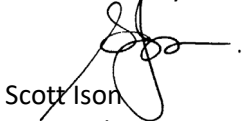
Starting 2024:

As a lead-in to this new policy, during the first week of 2024 we will be providing constant reminders to our students, but not enforcing the requirement for students to hand their phones in to the Admin Office. Week 2 will see the full enforcement of the policy.

We do understand that some children will struggle to make this change, but in those schools that have instituted 'phone bans' in recent years, the feedback is that the positive change in the children is worth any minor inconveniences that resulted from the change.

The Christmas break will allow the students to prepare for being without continual access to their phones. Spend some time talking through any plans needed in regard to carrying their debit card, phoning you after 3.00pm for pickup, making employers aware, and so on. Remember they will be able to access any text messages you send when they depart class at 3.00pm.

Yours sincerely



Scott Ison
Principal - Nerang State High School

Away for the Day - Frequently Asked Questions

Will students be allowed to bring their phone to school?

Yes, but the phone (and earphones, speakers, etc) must be stored in the student's bag from the time of school entry until they are released from class at the end of the day.

Why are students being asked to put my phone away for the day?

This approach is being implemented in all Queensland state schools to help:

- reduce distractions in the classroom
- increase and improve face-to-face conversations and interactions between students
- promote student health and wellbeing
- reduce the potential for student exposure to negative impacts of the digital world, such as cyberbullying.

A Phone that does not have a data plan and cannot connect to the internet. Can it still be used?

No. Any phone that has the ability to connect to telecommunication networks or the internet must be switched off and away for the day.

Can students take their phone with them when travelling to and from school?

Yes, students are allowed to bring their mobile phone or wearable device to school. Students will be able to use their phone outside of school hours to support safe travel, and to make contact with parents, friends and part-time employers.

Will there be exemptions?

Yes, individual medical circumstances are considered and an exemption for restricted use will be given where it is supported by a current Health Plan or a treating doctors' medical certificate. A typical example is one where a mobile phone is used to manage and monitor a health condition like diabetes.

An exemption for restricted use can be applied for by a written request plus the details requested in the 'Application for Exemption' form long with providing a treating doctors' medical assessment. This will be available on the school website or from the Administration office. Students with existing Department of Education Health Plans need not apply.

If a student forgets their lunch, how will they contact home?

Students will not be able to contact parents using their phone during school hours. However, they can contact their parents through existing school processes, such as phoning them from the school office.

How will the student contact their parents in the event of an emergency?

If a student becomes unwell or experience an issue during the school day, it is important that they report to a staff member in the first instance. Staff will follow appropriate school processes and make contact with parents.

In the event of an emergency at school, the school will follow their Emergency Response Plan to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff, which includes making contact with parents and carers.

The student has a part-time job. How will the employer contact them?

Students can bring their mobile phones to school; however, they must be switched off and put 'away for the day' during school hours. It is important that the employer is notified that the student will not be able to receive or respond to messages and calls during school hours. After school hours, students will be able to check for messages from their employers.

The student currently uses their phone / wearable device to make school payments. Can it still be used?

No, you students will need to carry the debit card associated with making payments from their account for canteen, uniform shop and office payments.

Can the student use their phone while on an excursion?

Mobile phones and wearable devices are not to be used during school activities, such as representative sport, camps and excursions. In limited cases there may be an exception made by the principal. If this is the case, this information will be included in the excursion permission form.