

Freeling P-6 School

DIGITAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICE POLICY

(use of mobile phones and personal devices)



Purpose

This policy provides direction to students, staff and families about managing mobile phones and other digital devices that students choose to bring to school. Digital devices include, but are not limited to, smartwatches, tablets or laptops that are not part of a separate Bring Your Own Device arrangement. This policy applies while students are at school, or attending an authorised school activity such as an excursion, during school hours.

With the widespread and increasing ownership of mobile phones and other devices among students, it is critical that schools, in partnership with families, provide clear guidance for students to become informed, safe, respectful, and responsible digital citizens. It is the department's position that access to personal devices during school hours must be managed so that students can be fully present in their learning and in their interactions with their teachers and peers. The aim of this policy is to help promote: safe environments with reduced negative impacts of inappropriate use of devices at school, such as cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and critical incidents that involve mobile phones classroom environments where teachers can teach, and students can learn, free from distractions caused by personal use of devices use of breaks as quality time away from screens, encouraging physical activity and play and meaningful face-to-face connections with peers.

RATIONALE

Digital telecommunication devices are important modern-day communication tools. They can easily be improperly used, lost, damaged or stolen and must therefore be effectively managed by students, parents and staff.

The school office remains the appropriate point of contact during the school day. We will ensure your child is reached quickly and assisted in an appropriate way.

Mobile phone use for primary school students

The department's position is that primary aged students cannot use their mobile phones and personal devices at school during school hours. The department and the school recognise that there are legitimate reasons for students to bring a mobile phone or personal device to school. This may include:

- to ensure their safety while travelling
- so that parents can contact them outside of school hours.

During the school day students are not permitted to access or use their mobile phones or other personal devices. Students must switch off or mute their devices before storing them at the beginning of the school day. They will not be able to access their device until the end of the school day.

Student use of personal devices at school

All students are required to keep their personal devices 'off and away' between the start and end of each school day and while they are attending authorised school activities of-site, such as camps and excursions. Students may only access their personal devices during these times if they have received an approved exemption from their school to use the device for a specific, agreed reason. Access refers to both physical access, including wearing any wearable technology that fits the definition of personal devices in this policy, and remote access, such as connecting other technology to the personal device's hotspot or using headphones that are paired to the personal device.

Exceptional circumstances (all schools)

Individual students may have exceptional circumstances that require a longer-term (or indefinite) exemption from the requirements of the policy, including where: the device is used to monitor or help manage a health condition, the device is a negotiated adjustment to a learning program for a student with disability or learning difficulties, the device is used for translation in the classroom by a student with English as an additional language.

Safe and responsible use of devices

While this policy is specific to managing student use of personal devices while they are at school, we know that most children and young people are also using digital technologies at home (and by extension, internet-based services including social media and gaming). Therefore, it is essential that schools and families work in partnership to support students to develop the skills needed to live and work in an increasingly digital world safely, responsibly, and respectfully. This includes recognising how and when it is appropriate to use devices for personal and recreational purposes, and the importance of also going 'offline' each day to participate in physical activity and play, get quality sleep, be fully present in face-to-face social situations, and spend time doing other enjoyable things like reading, creative arts, and being outdoors. Research shows that balancing screen time with these other important activities is critical to promoting physical and mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, and healthy development for children and young people. Adults, including school staff and parents, can support students to make positive choices by modelling responsible and respectful use of personal devices and helping children and young people develop the tools to self-manage their behaviour.

Storage of personal devices

- Personal telecommunication devices are brought to school at entirely the owner's risk. If a student brings a device to school, it is their own responsibility.

Students:

- are not to have telecommunication devices in their possession during school hours
- will pass their devices to their classroom teacher or the front office at the beginning of the school day to be stored
- will ensure that their devices are turned to silent or off
- will collect their devices from their classroom teacher or the office at the end of the day.

If the student does not comply

If a student is found to not be following this policy staff will:

- confiscate the device with student agreeance and securely store it until the end of the school day. If the student does not agree to the confiscation, the Behaviour Management policy will be followed
- communicate with parents or caregivers about the incident
- reinforce the procedures of this policy.

Roles and responsibilities

Principal

The Principal will make sure:

- the school's local policy has been endorsed or ratified by governing council and is clearly communicated and accessible to all students, staff, and families
- there is a process for regular review of the school's local policy

- secure storage is provided for student personal devices that are handed in to school staff
- processes are in place for monitoring internet and school network use by all members of the school community
- they enforce the policy and responses to instances of non-compliance
- approved exemptions are documented and relevant staff, including temporary relief teachers, are informed about students with an exemption
- Model appropriate use of mobile phones and support families to understand the importance of promoting safe, responsible and respectful use of mobile phones to their children
- Report and respond to incidents of inappropriate use of personal devices in line with department policy and procedures and any legislative requirements.

School staff

School staff will:

- deliver learning opportunities and maintain a safe and productive learning environment
- take steps to minimise distractions from the non-educational use of personal devices in the learning environment
- respond to instances of non-compliance in line with the school's policy
- report and respond to incidents of inappropriate use of personal devices in line with department policy and procedures and any legal requirements
- ensure students who are given permission to access their personal device use it appropriately and only for the specified purpose, and store their personal devices away after the exempted activity has concluded
- where applicable, approve temporary exemptions in line with the requirements of this policy
- make sure that any student personal devices handed in for their care are stored in a secure location and are returned to the student (or their parent) by the end of the same school day
- model appropriate use of mobile phones and support families to understand the importance of promoting safe, responsible, and respectful use of mobile phones to their children
- use mobile phones for work related/emergency purposes only when students are under their care.

Students

Students will:

- comply with the requirements of this policy and follow all reasonable directions from the principal and school staff
- switch all personal devices off, or into flight mode, on arrival at school each day and hand to the class teacher for secure storage
- if permitted to use a mobile phone or personal device at school in line with a policy exemption, do so in a safe, responsible, and respectful way and support peers to do the same
- communicate respectfully with others and do not use a mobile phone or other personal device to bully, harass, or threaten another person
- respect others' rights to privacy and do not take photos, film, or audio records of other people without their knowledge or permission.

Parents

Parents will:

- support the implementation of this policy, including the consequences for non-compliance with the policy
- encourage their children not to bring a personal device to school unless necessary
- understand that the department does not provide insurance for accidental loss or damage to personal property that is brought onto school grounds, however, claims may be met under

the department's public liability insurance where the loss or damage is attributable to a negligent act or omission on the part of the school

- use the school's formal communication channels in all instances to communicate with the school or to contact their child during school hours (including where a student requires early collection from school)
- encourage their child to always report to a school staff member in the first instance if they become unwell or experience an issue at school
- recognise the important role they play in supporting their child to use their mobile phone (or other personal device) in a safe, responsible, and respectful way
- use the school's formal communication channels in all instances to communicate with the school (including where a student requires early collection from school)
- encourage their child to always report to a school staff member in the first instance if they become unwell or experience an issue at school
- recognise the important role they play in supporting their child to use their mobile phone (or other personal device) in a safe, responsible and respectful way.

Communication and review

Staff will contact parents and care givers if students are found to not be following this policy.

Documented Processes

This policy was developed with reference to the following documents:

The Department for Education mobile communication devices policy

The Department for Education 'Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with young people'

Monitoring and review

This policy has been developed in accordance with the DfE Policies and in consultation with Freeling Primary School Staff and Governing Council. This policy has been approved by the Governing Council and will be reviewed every year.