

Mobile Phone and Personal Electronic Devices Policy

From 1 January 2023, Northern Territory Government Department of Education has directed that student mobile phones are not permitted to be used in Northern Territory government schools. Exemptions apply for teacher directed educational purposes or medical reasons.

1. Policy statement

The use of electronic devices (refer 2. Scope) for all Darwin High School students is not permitted from the time students enter the school grounds (e.g. exiting bus, drop off) and for the duration of the school day (incl. homework centre and other after-hours learning activities), unless under the direct instruction of a teacher or staff member.

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, videoing 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 smart watches, 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
- Darwin High School acknowledges that mobile phones may be used as a safety measure out of school hours for children who travel alone, on public transport to school. Parent/guardians are reminded that they can provide messages to their child by contacting the school. This remains a vital and appropriate point of contact and can ensure your child is reached quickly and assisted appropriately. Students have access to a phone in Student Services.

Under no circumstances are students permitted to record, distribute or upload images, sound or videos of other individuals on school grounds or during school excursions without their consent unless it is part of a teacher sanctioned learning activity and permission has been given by the participants. Any student who uses their mobile phone to photograph or record events will be considered to have committed a serious breach of discipline (major behaviour). Please refer to the [DHS School Wide Positive Behaviour Handbook](#) for more information regarding major/minor behaviours and possible consequences.

Students are responsible for the security of their electronic devices while at school. Darwin High School will not accept any liability for the loss, damage or theft of an electronic device. Surrendered devices will be securely stored once handed to Student Services.

Please note that changes to the policy can be made at the principal's discretion.

2. Scope

For the purpose of this policy, 'device' includes mobile phones, smart watches and all other devices that allow electronically based distractions (including iPads/tablets, smart watches, gaming devices, in-ear and over-ear headphones). Smart watches will need to be switched to flight mode while students are at school. This is consistent with the Department of Education's (the department) Student use of mobile phones in government schools policy.

Laptops are able to be used throughout the school day. Recognising the recording/SIM capabilities iPads/tablets possess, these devices can only be used in the classroom with a keyboard attached.

Students undertaking workplace learning activities outside of Darwin High School (e.g. work experience, VET course) must comply with the policies of the individual workplace or training organisation.

3. Procedures

Condition of use during school hours:

1. Students must have their devices switched off and in their school bag before entering the school grounds and for the duration of the school day.
2. Smart watches must be placed on flight mode so phone calls and messages cannot be sent or received during the school day.
3. Mobile phones not in school bags are required to be stored at Student Services.
4. Darwin High School staff can give students permission to access their mobile phone, for a specified purpose, i.e. a phone interview. The mobile phone/devices must be stored away after the exempted activity has concluded. The staff member will monitor the use during this specified time.
5. A variation will be granted to those students who have a diagnosed medical condition as part of a school-approved, documented health care plan or education adjustment plan.
6. The canteen will only accept payments with physical bank cards, cash or through the online ordering system. Mobile phones and smart watches can not be used as a payment method.
7. Parent/guardians are reminded that they can provide messages to their child by contacting the school on 8999 1222. The office staff will ensure your child is contacted promptly.
8. Devices must remain off and away for the duration of a school excursion. Students can only use devices during excursions for educational purposes where teacher permission has been provided.

Condition of use outside school hours:

- After 2:30pm students are permitted to use their device once they have left designated learning areas (e.g. classrooms, library) and exited buildings.
- Students are also able to use mobile phones/smart watches for payment of purchases at Student Services/Finance.
- Students participating in school events/activities (including Homework Centre) are permitted to use their devices where permission from school staff/teacher has been provided.

3. Non-compliance

Consequences for unacceptable use of devices, or failure to comply with expectations outlined in this policy will be dealt with by the following:

- **First breach:** the student hands the device in at the Student Services where it stays and is stored securely for the rest of the day, with the student to collect it at the end of the school day.
- **Second breach:** the student hands the device in at the Student Services where it stays and is stored securely for the rest of the day, with the student to collect it at the end of the school day. Parents/carers are notified via Compass that should another breach occur, a parent/carer will need to collect the device from the Student Services.
- **Third breach:** the student hands the device in at Student Services where it is stored securely, and a parent/carer will need to collect the device from Student Services after 2.30pm. Parents/carers are notified via Compass that a third breach has occurred, and a parent/carer will need to collect the device from the Student Services.
- **Fourth breach:** the student hands the device in at Student Services where it is stored securely, and a parent/carer will need to make arrangements for a meeting with the relevant Year Level Coordinator or Assistant Principal and collect the device. Parents/carers are notified via Compass that a fourth breach has occurred, and a parent/carer will need to meet with the relevant Year Coordinator or Assistant Principal and collect the device from the Student Services.

Whenever a student hands their device in at Student Services, a receipt of the device will be recorded in Compass. Any uncollected devices will be stored in a secure storeroom. This policy, and procedures relating to it will reset at the beginning of each school year.

4. Consequences (instant major behaviour)

4.1 Refusal to surrender device or failure to present to Student Services

- Where students have refused to hand over their device or fail to present to Student Services the student will be referred to the Year Level Coordinator or Assistant Principal.

4.2 Recording, distributing or uploading of images, sound or videos

- Personal electronic devices must not be used to invade the privacy of others or breach the law. Students who use a mobile phone or other personal electronic device either by a direct phone call, text message, posting or other function to bully, harass, threaten, abuse, vilify or embarrass other students, staff or community members constitutes a major behaviour and will be investigated by the principal. Disciplinary action will be applied in line with school procedures and Police contact will be made where necessary.

While this policy does not cover student access to social media sites out of school hours, the school will however, report these incidents to Police or the Office of the E-Safety Commissioner if they are unsafe interactions and/or if they adversely impact the learning and behaviour of students at school.

5. Exemptions

It is acknowledged that mobile devices can be powerful education tools when used responsibly. Many teachers and students at DHS use devices in ways that support educational outcomes, including accessing information and resources, taking photos or videos of learning activities, playing educational games, and collaborating with other students. For some students, mobile phones and their applications are critical for monitoring their health condition.

Students may be granted an exemption to use their mobile phone and smart watch during the school day:

- to monitor a health condition as part of a school approved documented health care plan
- for a particular educational purpose under the direct instruction of a teacher
- with permission of a teacher for a specific purpose
- in the event of an emergency (calling 000).

Students with additional needs who may require devices to enable access to learning require confirmation from their doctor. E.g. where a student requires noise-cancelling headphones to support their engagement in learning, the student will be required to provide confirmation from their doctor including any relevant reports e.g. cognitive assessments.

Students who wish to apply for an exemption must complete the Mobile phone and electronic device exemption request form and include medical evidence. Once completed, the signed form must be submitted to the relevant year level Assistant Principal.

Requests will be reviewed by the Darwin High School Executive Team. If approved, students can only use devices for the reasons approved by the Executive team, recognising that SACE rules must be adhered to at all times (e.g. during supervised tests and exams).

Approved exemptions will be reviewed annually. If necessary, a member of the executive team will contact the family to assess if the exemption is still required.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Refer to the department's [Student use of mobile phones in government schools'](#) policy.

7. Definitions

Banned devices include mobile phones, iPads and other tablet devices, handheld gaming devices, smart watches (must be in flight mode), in-ear and over-ear headphones.

Policy and procedure scheduled for review: December 2026