



## **Parent FAQs – Mobile Device Policy (2026)**

### **Purpose and Overview**

#### **Why is Westminster introducing this new policy?**

This decision supports our commitment to creating a focused, connected and healthy learning environment. Research shows that constant access to personal mobile devices increases distraction, anxiety and social disengagement among students. This change encourages stronger face-to-face interactions, improved concentration and balanced digital habits.

#### **How does this policy support Westminster’s wellbeing and learning framework?**

The policy supports the School’s Capability Compass by encouraging focus, creativity, resilience and connection — essential skills for lifelong wellbeing and success. It forms part of Westminster’s broader commitment to purposeful learning and balanced digital engagement.

#### **How was the policy developed?**

The policy was shaped through consultation with staff and parents, and informed by leading research, including The Anxious Generation (Haidt) and Digital Minimalism (Newport). It also supports Australia’s upcoming Social Media Minimum Age legislation.

#### **When does the policy take effect?**

The policy will be in place at the start of the 2026 school year.

### **Practical Details**

#### **When does the policy apply?**

The policy applies once students arrive at School until 3.30 pm. This includes lessons, recess, lunch and all School-based activities, including co-curricular sessions and study periods.

#### **What must students do with their phones during the school day?**

Students must store their phones in their locked School lockers upon arrival until 3.30 pm. Phones must not be carried in pockets or bags during this time. Devices are brought to School at the student’s own risk. Families are encouraged to ensure phones are clearly labelled and protected by durable cases.

#### **Will this policy apply to all year levels?**

Yes. The policy applies across the Senior School. The Prep School will continue to manage digital devices through age-appropriate guidelines as part of its wellbeing program in 2026.

**Will students still use laptops or iPads for learning?**

Yes. The policy applies to personal mobile and digital devices such as phones, smartwatches and tablets. Devices provided or approved by the School for learning will continue to be used in lessons as directed by teachers.

**Can students use smartwatches to check the time?**

Smartwatches are considered connected digital devices under this policy but may be worn if they are turned to Airplane or Do Not Disturb mode (i.e. Not connected to the internet or phone network).

**Can students use phones for payments or music at lunch?**

No. Students must use a physical bank card for School or canteen purchases.

**What happens if my child misplaces their physical card?**

If a student misplaces or forgets their bank card, emergency lunches and food can be arranged through the Senior School Office. Staff will assist to ensure no student goes without food. Students will be informed of this process during the policy rollout. Parents will be charged in the next billing cycle.

## **Communication and Emergencies**

**How can parents contact students during the day?**

Parents and carers can:

- Email their child directly
- Phone the Senior School Office (8276 0251) for urgent messages — staff will relay these to students
- Students may use the Senior School Office phone to contact home if required

**What if my child needs their phone for an urgent matter?**

If there is an emergency, parents should contact the Senior School Office. Staff will ensure students receive urgent information quickly and safely.

**Are there medical exemptions?**

Yes. The Deputy Principal / Head of Senior School may approve exemptions for specific medical reasons. For example, students who require phones for diabetes management will not be affected.

#### **What about travel to and from School?**

Students may use their phones before arriving and after leaving School. This allows families to manage travel safety and communication outside School hours. Once on campus, devices must be switched off and placed in lockers until 3.30 pm.

### **Implementation and Consequences**

#### **What happens if a student uses or carries a phone during the day?**

If a student is found with a phone (including at their locker or in their pocket):

1. The phone will be taken to the Senior School Office for the remainder of the day.
2. The student will be issued an after-school community service.
3. Parents will be notified by email.
4. A repeated breach may result in further community service, daily phone hand-in or a requirement for parents to collect the phone from School.

#### **What if a student forgets to store their phone or accidentally leaves it in their bag?**

If reported early or identified by staff, the device will be stored in the Senior School Office for the day. Repeated forgetfulness will be treated as non-compliance.

#### **Will students be allowed to use phones during camps or excursions?**

No. Consistent with current practice, mobile phones and personal digital devices are not permitted on camps or excursions. These experiences are designed to promote connection, independence and reflection without digital distractions. In limited cases, restricted permission may be granted for specific activities and will be clearly communicated in the Consent2Go information.

#### **How will the School ensure consistency in enforcement?**

Staff will receive training and clear guidelines before Term 1, 2026. Heads of House and Year will monitor implementation and support staff in managing any challenges to ensure fairness across all students.

## Supporting Students and Families

### What are the expected benefits for students?

Improved classroom focus and learning outcomes

- Reduced distractions and digital dependency
- Stronger peer relationships and in-person communication
- Healthier wellbeing and balance in technology use
- Greater sense of presence and participation in School life

### How can families support this change at home?

Parents are encouraged to:

- Discuss the purpose of the policy with their child
- Discuss the upcoming Government ban on social media for children under 16 (see Social media age restrictions | eSafety Commissioner)
- Set consistent technology boundaries at home (e.g. no devices at meals or bedtime)
- Model balanced digital habits as a family

The School will also share digital wellbeing resources and programs such as WaitMate to help families establish healthy routines.

### What if families disagree with the policy?

We recognise that digital use varies between households. However, this policy reflects the School's duty of care, community feedback and national direction. Families are encouraged to contact the Deputy Principal or Head of Senior School to discuss any concerns or seek clarification.

### Will the policy be reviewed?

Yes. Westminster will review the policy during its first year of operation and share updates with families through Westminster Weekly and the website.

## Contact

### Who can I contact for further questions?

Senior School Office – 8276 0251 (daily communication queries)

- Deputy Principal / Head of Senior School – [awhiteman@westminster.sa.edu.au](mailto:awhiteman@westminster.sa.edu.au)
- [help@westminster.sa.edu.au](mailto:help@westminster.sa.edu.au) – for general assistance