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6<sup>th</sup> September 2023

### **UPDATED MOBILE PHONE PROCEDURE – TERM 4**

Dear students, parents/carers and community,

This is an important announcement around the new NSW Department of Education '*Students' Use of Mobile Phones in Schools Policy*' that is being implemented in school from 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 being the start of Term 4. You may have heard about the changes regarding mobile phone use in NSW high schools to support student engagement and improve social wellbeing of students. It is also to support and reduce issues around negative social media use and technology abuse in schools.

Mount Annan High School acknowledges the educational value of technology in supporting and enhancing educational outcomes and student wellbeing. We also recognise mobile phones may cause harm if used inappropriately. We are committed to supporting our students to use them in safe, responsible and respectful ways to enhance student learning and engagement.

After careful consideration with our key stakeholders including the Student Representative Council (SRC), P&C, staff and executive teams, we have decided to proceed by using the strategy of keeping '**mobile phones turned off and kept out of sight**', to reduce the distractions to students in the classroom.

To support our community it is important that you are aware of the changes which are outlined below.

#### **Mobile Phone Use In School**

The mobile phone ban will apply during all school hours, including break times such as during lunch and recess, as well as while students are on school-organised excursions. Students will be permitted to use their mobile phone prior to the roll call bell, but from 8.50am to after 3.00pm, students are not permitted to use their mobile phone or associated devices.

This strategy does not prevent students from carrying their phones while travelling to and from school. It has been agreed that to support students and to model consistent mobile phone behaviours, mobile phones will not be used for educational purposes. Other options including laptops and desktop computers will be used to support learning needs.

#### **Technology that falls within the scope of this policy and school management procedure**

For the purpose of clarity, even though the policy implies mobile phones, this policy and our school procedure applies to the following:

- Mobile Phones
- Airpods
- Headphones
- Smartwatches
- iPod and/or music devices
- Gaming devices
- Speakers
- Associated devices to a mobile phone

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### **Canteen and Medical Exemption**

There are limited mobile phone exemptions to this new strategy. Students can use their mobile to pay for food at the canteen window only, but we are encouraging the use of an eftpos/Debit card or to pre-order their recess or lunch to avoid student temptation of mobile phone use. We appreciate that students will have varying levels of self-control with this change, which is why we will support students with interventions starting from Week 8 of Term 3 with this new process prior to the new strategy commencing in Term 4.

A medical exemption is limited to certain medical circumstances and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Examples where exemptions will be provided include where a student uses their mobile phone to monitor and check their sugar levels as a diabetic or where hearing aids or cochlear implants are used directly through a mobile phone to control sound or students who require the use of assistive technologies. Students who use mobile phones and headphones/air pods to self-regulate will **not** be provided an exemption.

Individual student requests for exemption will initially be managed by the year group Deputy Principal and assessed by the school, for medical and learning needs. Should a person be dissatisfied with an outcome of their application, they can appeal to the Principal.

### **Contacting students**

Mount Annan High School understands there will always be emergencies when parents need to get in contact with students or vice versa during the school day. We ask parents to please keep this to a minimum, with the exception of emergencies, to avoid disturbing the students' learning. Parents and carers can make contact with the school through the school office (02) 4648 0111 and students will also be able to contact parents or carers through the school office if urgent. Students will be able to access their messages on their devices at end of the day.

### **Overall Aim**

The new strategy is being implemented to increase focus in classrooms, remove distractions and also promote positive social interaction, while reducing the potential for online bullying.

We look forward to working with you and the students, to make sure everyone is aware of the changes, and will continue to provide information updates directly to you via students, on our school website and through our social media channels.

We understand that there will be some challenges in the beginning as we all adapt to this new process but as a community and team, we will work to achieve a mobile phone-free space that is positive.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school directly on (02) 4648 0111 and speak to Natalie Cavaleri, Deputy Principal, for assistance.

Yours faithfully,



**Ken Bates**  
Principal