

FROM THE HEAD OF CAMPUS
Natalie McLennan

Friday 29 November, 2024

Dear Woodleigh Parents,

During the year we did a deep dive into research and statistics of mobile phone usage and the effects amongst teens, and we conducted parent, students and staff surveys as you know. The results we gathered speak for themselves and its really clear that now is the time to rethink our current policy at Woodleigh.

Research and community feedback highlighted several critical issues associated with phone use in schools, including distraction, dependency, impacts on mental health, diminished social skills and valuable class time lost to managing phone-related disruptions.

While parents and teachers strongly support a cultural shift for the benefit of students, unsurprisingly, student survey responses showed different feedback. As the first generation to grow up immersed in digital technology, students' reliance on phones is deeply ingrained in their routines and social lives. We understand this adjustment may take time and we are mindful of our process to make it successful for everyone.

The updated policy is not hugely different from Woodleigh's current policy; the changes though, are designed to carefully support your children and our staff to create new habits with a consistent and practical framework.

What is the updated policy?

Beginning in **Term 1, 2025**, Woodleigh will adopt a *Gate-to-Gate mobile phone ban*, meaning that once students enter the school gates until they leave:

- **Phones must be turned off** and securely stored in locked student lockers.
- Phones **will not be accessed** during recess, lunch, other breaks or after-school activities (including after-school supervision on Wednesdays).

What is considered a breach of the policy?

Students who have their phone outside their locker are in breach of the policy.

The first time a student has their mobile phone it will be confiscated and securely stored in the Staff Workroom until 3:45 PM. A member of the leadership team will oversee its return at the end of the day.

The second time a student has their mobile phone it will be confiscated and Parents will be required to collect the phone from Reception.

The third time a student has their mobile phone it will be confiscated and Parents must collect both the phone and the student from school.

Exceptions include camps or specific learning activities, which will be clearly communicated in advance.

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What is my role as a Parent?

This new 'Gate-to-Gate' approach is a really important step in the wellbeing of our students, and we ask that Parents support this approach and discuss it at home. It may be worth spending some allocated time periods during the holiday break without phones as a way of easing into the change.

Practical Considerations for Parents

Emergency communication protocols will be shared regularly to ensure clarity and peace of mind. Consistency and clarity will be the foundation of this transition.

There will be plenty of questions about how this will work for your family, so here are some standout considerations. For any questions not answered below I invite you to contact me, via [Head of Campus Email](#).

For Parents

Communicating with your child/ren: Urgent messages can be relayed through the school's main reception to Homestead or tutors.

Canteen payment options: Phone will no longer be accepted as a form of payment.

- Student Cards can be used to tap for canteen payments by downloading the FlexiSchools App [here](#). Using your child's student number, create an account that can be topped up manually or automatically. Students either tap their cards for payment, or place lunch orders via the App.
- Alternatively, students can use a physical age-appropriate debit/bank card. The summer holiday could be a good time to organise one.

Safety of confiscated phones: Staff have established protocols for securely handling confiscated phones, including lockable storage boxes and incident checklists.

For Students

Communicating with parents: Students can check-in to reception and use school-provided phone in the main reception.

Lockers: Lockers will be inspected and secured by our maintenance team before Term 1 2025, to ensure compliance with the new approach.

Student Cards: For any student without a student card please order [here](#).

Note: If any student refuses to cooperate with the new approach, parents will be called and asked to collect their child and their child's phone.

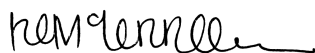
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The adjustment period will not be without its hurdles. For some students, recess and lunchtime might be difficult to manage initially, particularly if they have nothing to do. We will encourage alternative engagement opportunities where possible but expect some resistance from students and concerns from families regarding communication during emergencies.

Everyone's commitment to handling our new 'Gate-to-Gate' approach with fairness and understanding will make all the difference. The long-term benefits we anticipate are increased focus and engagement in classrooms, healthier social interactions among students and a reduction in phone-related disruptions to teaching.

Thank you all for your patience and support as we prepare to introduce this important change.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie McLennan
Head of Senior Campus
Deputy Principal Woodleigh School