

Preston South Primary School

Personal Electronic Devices (PED) – Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

Following School Council approval, Preston South Primary School has adopted a strengthened **“Off and Away”** approach to Personal Electronic Devices (PEDs) during school hours.

This update builds on the Department of Education Mobile Phones — Student Use Mobile Phones Policy and reflects our commitment to:

- Protecting student privacy
 - Minimising classroom disruption
 - Upholding Child Safe Standards
 - Supporting student wellbeing and focus
 - Maintaining a safe and respectful workplace for staff, free from unauthorised recording, digital misuse, or online harm
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1. What is considered a Personal Electronic Device (PED)?

A PED is any personal device capable of:

- Capturing images or video
- Storing data
- Connecting to the internet
- Sending or receiving messages
- Making calls

This includes:

- Mobile phones
- Smartwatches (including 4G/5G, GPS, messaging-enabled devices)
- “Kids’ watches” or Space Watches (even with School Mode)
- Digital cameras
- Handheld gaming devices

If a device can connect, record, message, or transmit — it falls under this policy.

2. What does “Off and Away” mean?

All connected devices must:

- Be switched off
- Be handed into the school office upon arrival
- Be stored securely during school hours
- Be collected at the end of the day

This applies during class time, recess and lunch.

3. Why can't devices simply be placed in 'School Mode'?

While School Mode may disable notifications, it does not eliminate:

- Access to previously stored photos or videos
- Camera functionality
- Potential bypassing of parental controls
- Classroom distraction
- Privacy risks in sensitive areas (toilets, change rooms)

Requiring staff to continually assess what each device can or cannot do creates unnecessary burden and inconsistency. Our aim is clarity and fairness for all.

4. What about wearable activity trackers?

We recognise that **non-connected activity trackers** (e.g. basic step counters without messaging, camera, GPS or internet capability) can be positive health-promoting tools.

For some students, particularly those who benefit from visual time cues or self-monitoring, these devices may support independence and wellbeing.

However:

- Devices must be non-connected
- Devices must not have messaging, camera, call or internet functions
- If a device creates disruption or confusion, staff may require it to be removed

To avoid placing teachers in a position of constantly monitoring device capability, the school will:

- Enforce clear restrictions on connected devices immediately; and
- Conduct a short, time-bound review of non-connected devices to develop clear criteria informed by staff feedback and classroom impact.

This ensures decisions remain practical and sustainable.

5. What about safety before and after school?

Students may use their device for travel safety.

However, once on school grounds:

- The device must be handed into the office immediately.

During the school day, the office remains the safest and most reliable communication point.

6. What if I need to contact my child urgently?

Please contact the school office.

Relying on a watch notification or message is less reliable than the school's direct internal communication systems.

7. Are there exceptions?

Yes — consistent with Department guidelines

Exceptions may be granted for:

- Documented medical needs (e.g. Continuous Glucose Monitoring)
- Approved learning adjustments
- Specific off-site risk management

All exceptions must be formally documented and approved by the Principal.

8. What happens if a device is used during school hours?

If a student is found using or in possession of a connected device:

- The device will be confiscated
- Stored securely in the office
- Released to a parent/carer

This ensures the policy is clear, consistent and respected.

9. Why is the school strengthening this policy?

Our focus is:

- Protecting privacy
- Reducing distraction

- Supporting deep learning
- Promoting student wellbeing
- Ensuring staff are not placed in daily enforcement dilemmas