

Phones away for the day Whānau FAQs



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What are the new phone regulations?

From the start of Term 2 2024, your school must make sure ākonga | students do not use or access their phone while they are attending school unless it is required for learning purposes, health reasons or you have been directed by a teacher or the principal. Phones away for the day includes during lunch time and breaks, and when you are on a school course or visit outside the school grounds.

Your school might already have rules in place so that ākonga | students do not use their phones during the day. For these schools the rule will continue as normal.

If your school doesn't have a rule or policy in place or needs to adjust a rule or policy to meet the requirements of the new regulation, they will be working with you and your community during Term 1 on how they will implement the regulation.

Every school will have flexibility in how they apply the 'student phones away for the day' regulations. This will depend on the culture of the school community, learners and their whānau.

But, why?

The intention of having ākonga | student phones away for the day is to improve engagement and achievement through minimising distractions during learning time and increasing social interaction while they are attending school.

Fifty percent of New Zealand ākonga | students report they're distracted by devices at school.

Having phones away for the day (including break times) also gives ākonga | students more opportunity to interact in-person and space to 'disconnect' from social media, which may lessen the possibilities for online bullying and harassment.

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What do the regulations apply to?

Do the regulations include devices e.g., tablets, and smart watches?

The rules must apply to ākongā | student phones. Most schools have existing digital technology rules or policies around the appropriate use of laptops and tablets. Your school may choose their own standards about the management of wearable devices like smart watches.

What happens if my whānau needs to contact me, or I need to contact them during the school day?

Your school will have processes if it is necessary for you to contact your whānau during the day, like through the office and for older ākongā | students through your school email address. You may also like to discuss with your whānau a plan for minimising the need for contact during the school day.

If they are implementing a new rule you might want to discuss how processes will work with school leaders. This might include how to inform ākongā | students of messages while minimising disruption and protecting privacy.

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What happens if I want to contact my whānau in an emergency?

As part of their rules or policies, your school will need to decide how they will manage ākongā | student phone use during emergencies that occur during the school day, for example evacuations or lockdowns. You or your whānau might like to discuss how phones will be managed in emergencies with your school principal or leadership.

What will happen if I use my phone outside of the school's expectations?

Your school will decide how to manage expectations and any issues that arise. You or your whānau can talk to your teachers or school leadership team around ways to manage these expectations.

Schools can decide what consequences you might face if you breach the rules. Schools that currently restrict phones follow their usual school approaches to behaviour management to give effect to these expectations including the use of restorative practices in some cases.

Where will I store my phone during the day?

Your school, in consultation with you and your community, will make decisions about how and where your phones will be stored during the school day. Examples of school approaches to phone storage include, but are not limited to:

- › in your **school bag**
- › in a **lockable pouch**
- › in your **lockers**
- › in a **secure location**, such as a locked cupboard.

*Schools can decide what **consequences** you might face if you breach the rules*

Can I get an exemption?

The new regulations apply to ākonga | students in all state schools. However, there are exemptions within the regulations for certain schools, students, and circumstances:

- › Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu will be eligible for an exemption due to its reliance on devices for distance education.
- › Students may use phones for educational purposes if their teacher decides it is necessary as part of their schoolwork.
- › Students who require their phone for health purposes, such as monitoring insulin levels, will be exempt.
- › Students who are aided by their phones to address barriers to accessing and participation in learning, will be exempt.
- › In special circumstances, the principal can provide an exemption if deemed necessary given a student's situation (for example, the student is a parent).

What if I need my phone to address barriers to learning?

Ākonga | Students who are aided by their phones to address barriers to accessing and participation in learning will be granted an exemption. How the school manages and records these exemptions is up to each school to decide, in consultation with their community.

How do I get an exemption?

Exemptions for ākonga | students will need to be agreed by the school and each school will have their own process for deciding on and managing these exemptions. Your school can provide information to you and your whānau about how they will implement exemptions. You may need to provide evidence to support your request, and the school may offer alternative solutions that don't require a phone.

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Schools can decide on the process for managing exemptions. However, if you or your whānau have concerns you can raise these with the principal

What if I am refused an exemption?

Schools can decide on the process for managing exemptions. However, if you or your whānau have concerns you can raise these with the principal.

If you or your whānau are not happy with the principal's decisions or reasonings, your school can provide you with their complaints process. The first step is raising your complaint with the principal and then with the School Board.

If you are not happy with the response from the school, you can contact your local Ministry office for support.

My child has an exemption but doesn't want to be singled out as different, what should I do?

You could discuss with your child's teacher or principal your concerns and work together to reduce any increased visibility of ākonga | students with exemptions.

How do I know my school rule is fair?

What about my human rights?

The regulations for student phones to be away for the day in schools engages the right to freedom of expression in section 14 of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. Some human rights are recognised as absolute rights that can't be limited and others, like the right to freedom of expression, can be limited if the limitation is justified. In introducing these regulations, the government has considered that the limit on freedom of expression is justified in order to improve student engagement and achievement.

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Can teachers and other adults use their phones?

The regulations only apply to ākonga | students. Schools can decide if restrictions on staff using phones is helpful.

What about breakages or damage to a phone that is handed in or confiscated?

Schools will have their own processes in place to manage the storage and safety of phones if they must be handed in. Schools must take reasonable care of phones in their possession. Youth Law provides advice on obligations if a phone is lost or broken.

What happens if I am unhappy with how my school is applying the phone rule?

If you or your caregivers are not satisfied with the school's process of dealing with your complaint you may contact your local Ministry of Education office.

 [Local Ministry offices](#)

Or you can contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

 [Office of the Ombudsman](#)

Youth Law also has an informative website for young people to understand their rights.

 [Youth Law](#)

