

Mernda Hills Christian College

Digital Technologies Policy



Document Control

Revision Number	Review Date	Implementation Date	Description of Changes	Prepared By	Approved By
Mernda Hills Christian College					
0	May 2023	Jan 2024	New Policy	Exec Leaders	Exec Leaders
1	Jun 2025		- Merged Family Media Plan into this policy - General review	Exec Leaders	

Rationale

Mernda Hills Christian College, as part of Adventist Schools Victoria, is committed to providing a Child Safe environment for all students in accordance with our values. This includes policies on how digital technology is safely used in learning and teaching to achieve a range of education outcomes, as well as for communication at school and with the wider community. In line with this, the College is also committed to assisting our parent community in ensuring a safe digital environment for their children in their home.

Aims

To ensure students and staff are informed regarding the safe and appropriate practices relating to the use of the internet, computers and mobile technologies. In addition, to provide guidance for families about how to best support their children to engage safely with digital technology outside of the College environment.

Implementation

Part A - Student use of Technology

Devices

College students use specific devices for their learning at the College - see Mernda Hills Device Information for more details. No other devices are permitted to be used at school unless an exemption has been granted.

Student Behaviour

Students using technology are expected to display College values and abide by the behaviours and expectations outlined in the Student Code of Conduct, and the IT Acceptable Use Agreement in all situations.

These behaviours include:

- respecting the privacy of themselves and others, including not sharing personal login details with anyone except the system administrator or teacher if required
- using appropriate language
- using technology for educational purposes only
- treat technology with respect and be responsible for looking after it
- view appropriate content online
- abide by copyright laws and procedures by not plagiarising
- not interfering with network and school security systems
- keeping devices used at school free from unauthorised programs, including games

If students are asked to use the camera or video function of their technology, they must:

- only record content when it is part of a lesson
- seek permission from individuals (including teachers) involved before taking content
- seek written permission from individuals involved before publishing or sending content to anyone else or to any online space
- seek written permission from the College before uploading any content to public online sites

Students are responsible for everything done using their accounts and on their devices.

Students who feel uncomfortable or unsafe online, or believe another student needs support, are encouraged to seek help from a trusted adult - whether that is at home or at school. This includes if a student accidentally accesses what they believe to be inappropriate content online, so that we can

support them and tighten our security settings. Open communication between parents, teachers and students is the best way to keep students safe online.

ICT Acceptable Use Agreement - Students

By enrolling at Mernda Hills Christian College, every student agrees to abide by this policy and the *ICT Acceptable Use Agreement - Students*. The policy and agreements apply to all excursions, camps and extra-curricular activities.

A student not wishing to abide by this policy, or willfully acting in contraction with the *Student Code of Conduct* and *ICT Acceptable Use Agreement* may have their enrolment at the College reviewed.

Mobile Phones

The school does not generally allow mobile phones and other personal devices to be used at school. Devices brought to school must be placed in student bags, in locked lockers (secondary) or locked classrooms (primary). The school is not responsible for the security of any personal device brought on site. If a student uses a mobile phone or other unauthorised personal device at school, it will be confiscated and parents are asked to collect it from Front Reception.

Upon the teacher's discretion, secondary students may be permitted to use their phones for specific learning tasks. In such circumstances, students must abide by the college values and expectations as outlined above. Phones and personal devices must be returned to bags in locked lockers immediately following the authorised use.

Part B - The College's support for responsible and ethical use of technology

Mernda Hills Christian College uses the internet as a teaching and learning tool. It is a valuable resource but must be used responsibly and ethically.

Students are expected to use the internet and mobile technology responsibly and ethically at school.

Parents should be aware that the nature of the internet is such that full protection from inappropriate content can never be guaranteed.

Mernda Hills Christian College will:

- reinforce the values of Respect, Responsibility, Resilience and Learning, the Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct our Internet Acceptable Use Policy, and ICT Acceptable Use Agreements when students use technology
- provide a filtered internet service
- use sites and content approved by Adventist Schools Victoria for educational purposes
- abide by Copyright legislation requirements
- provide supervision and direction in internet activities and when using mobile technologies for specific learning
- use technology for educational purposes only
- teach students how to identify inaccurate or biased information online, including in content created by Generative AI.
- ensure the learning task, online space and responsibilities are clearly outlined and reinforced throughout the task
- work towards setting tasks that ask students open questions, so they can't copy and paste all answers from the internet or use generative AI to achieve an unfair academic advantage
- ensure students are aware of the implications of posting any content online, and support them to follow safe practices which protect both their privacy and the privacy of other members of the school community
- provide support to parents to understand College policies and documents (e.g. language support)

- provide support to parents through information evenings

Part C - Advice for Parents

Mernda Hills Christian College believes the teaching of cyber safe and ethical online behaviour is essential in the lives of students and is best taught in partnership between home and school.

21st Century students spend increasing amounts of time online learning and socialising. These online communities need cybercitizens who do the right thing by themselves and with others online, particularly when no one is watching.

Safe and ethical behaviour online is explicitly taught at our school and support at home is requested.

It is important to note that some online activities are illegal and as such will be reported to the police. This includes harassment of others and publishing of inappropriate images.

Any images or recordings taken of Mernda Hills Christian College students at school events or activities are the property of the school. Written permission from the Principal must be obtained prior to any recordings or images being published.

Please note: if a student is suspected of breaching this policy the device may be examined. This is inclusive of emails, computer and network files, cache files, internet history, internet favourites, downloads or any other information stored on the computer that constitutes a breach of this policy.

Bridging the gap between home and school:

At school, the internet is mostly used to support teaching and learning. At home, however, it is often used differently. Not only is it a study resource for students, but also it is increasingly being used as a social space to meet and chat.

We encourage families to carefully consider the way their child is using digital technology outside of school, and to create fair goals and rules in line with your family values and appropriate to your child's developmental needs.

At home, we recommend you consider:

- Finding out how your child uses the internet and who else is involved in any online activities
- Ask questions when your child shows you what they are doing, such as:
 - How does it work and how do you set it up?
 - Who else is sharing this space or game? (do you know them, or did you 'meet' them online?)
 - Can you see any risks or dangers in the activity - what would you say to warn/inform a younger child?
 - What are you doing to protect yourself or your friends from these potential dangers?
 - When would you inform an adult about an incident that has happened online that concerns you? (Discuss why your child might keep it to themselves.)
- Have devices with internet access in a shared place in the house – not your child's bedroom
- Choosing and diversifying your media - consider what you will allow children to access and when.
 - To guide you in making the best choices for your children refer to websites like [eSafetyParent](#) on the Australian Government [eSafety website](#) for reviews about age-appropriate media, apps, games and programs. [Common Sense Media](#) is a useful site.
 - Educate yourself and your children about Australian Free TV Viewing Classifications.
 - To ensure not all of one's time is spent doing one particular activity, use media in a way that promotes interaction, connection, and creativity.
- Co-viewing / Co-playing (especially with younger children)
 - Younger children learn better from media, educational shows, and videos when they are co-viewed and there is parent-child interaction.
 - Younger children learn better from interactive media when they share the experience with an adult, e.g. co-playing video games and using apps with a parent or adult.

- Safety and Wellbeing in the home
 - Discussing the serious consequences of online bullying
 - Acting quickly to support your child if inappropriate content about them has been published by contacting the eSafety Commissioner.
 - Treat media as you would any other environment in your house
 - Use resources such as [eSafetyparent](#), [eSafetykids](#) and [eSafetyyoungpeople](#) on the Australian Government [eSafety website](#) to learn more.
- Creating a safe space for children to approach you for help by normalising conversations about technology and its use, and ensuring they have support when working through challenges online.

We encourage you to implement:

- **Screen free zones** - spaces at home that are free from the use of digital technology eg. children's bedrooms.
- **Screen free times** - times when technology is 'off limits' eg.
 - Whenever the family is together such as when in the car together or when walking to school together.
 - During important family times like mealtimes.
 - One hour before bedtime so that mobile device use or watching TV before bed does not interfere with a child's sleep.
 - More extended breaks from technology as decided by the family to encourage family interaction, exercise and sleep.
 - Device curfews - deciding when all technology is turned off for the night

Protecting personal privacy rights and those of other students:

Students like to publish information about themselves and their friends on online platforms, but in doing so they can make themselves more vulnerable to being approached, groomed, bullied or harassed online. To avoid this we recommend they:

- don't use their own name, but develop an online name and use avatars.
- don't share personal details including images of themselves or their friends online
- password protect any spaces or accounts they have.
- don't allow anyone they don't know to join their chat or collaborative space.
- are reminded that any image or comment they put on the internet is now public (anyone can see, change, or use it) so no full names should appear in reference to individuals in any image, movie, or sound recording
- always make the space private so that they can control who sees their space and can communicate with them.

eSafety

The government website <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/esafety-guide> is an excellent resource to provide students, parents and teachers with up-to-date information on all things relating to safety while on the internet. Useful information in easy-to-understand language is there to help you stay safe online.

Issues include:

- Cyberbullying
- Online pornography
- Sending nudes and sexting
- Time online
- Online gaming
- Unwanted contact and grooming

Related Policies and Processes

- Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy,
- Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct
- ICT Acceptable Use Agreements
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- OH&S Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Reportable Conduct Scheme Document
- Responsible Behaviour Policy

Relevant Documentation or Legislation

- Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Crimes Act 1958 (VIC)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (as amended in 2011)
- The Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014