



Elim Christian College Mt Albert

Friday 25 September 2026

Dear parents and caregivers,

I am writing to share an important update regarding our learning environment and how we guide our students in an increasingly digital world. **Beginning in Term 1, 2027 (2 February 2027), our junior school (Years 4-8) will transition away from the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) model to a school-owned device system.** Alongside this shift, we are introducing thoughtful, structured guidelines to reduce overall screen time throughout the school day.

This decision comes after extensive reflection, research, and consultation with stakeholders. At its heart, it stems from our commitment to nurturing the whole child, academically, relationally, and spiritually. We believe technology should be a tool we use wisely, not a presence that passively shapes our students. Scripture calls us to guard our minds and foster genuine, face-to-face community. By establishing clear digital boundaries, we seek to protect our students' capacity for deep focus, meaningful friendships, quiet reflection, and spiritual growth.

Our direction is strongly supported by recent research into childhood and technology. In *The Anxious Generation*, social scientist Jonathan Haidt details the profound shift from a play-based childhood to a screen-based one, highlighting its toll on sleep, attention, and social development. He reminds us that while we naturally protect children in the physical world, we must be equally intentional about protecting them in digital spaces. Similarly, author and leadership researcher Carey Nieuwhof emphasises that leading young people well today requires active boundaries. Constant connectivity often fragments attention and dilutes relationships; restoring intentional limits gives children the space they need to build real-world resilience, mental clarity, and deeper connections.

This shift also aligns with the Ministry of Education's national guidelines on phone-free school environments and removing classroom distractions. Under Section 127 of the Education and Training Act, our board has a fundamental duty to promote high standards of educational achievement while ensuring a safe, supportive physical and emotional environment. Moving away from personal devices directly supports these standards by eliminating digital distractions, building core literacy and numeracy skills, and encouraging rich, face-to-face engagement across all learning areas.



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By moving to standardised, school-owned devices, we can better support every family and classroom in several key ways:

- **Equal access for all students:** Every child will have access to the exact same high-quality technology, eliminating technical disparities and socio-economic pressures.
- **Enhanced online safety:** Centralised administrative controls and filtering will protect students online and keep non-academic distractions out of the classroom.
- **Seamless learning:** Teachers can spend less time troubleshooting device issues and more time engaging directly with students.
- **A calmer learning environment:** Removing personal notifications and non-educational apps helps preserve focus, presence, and classroom community.

If your child currently has their own device, it can continue to be used at school as needed for classroom programmes, but will not be required every day. If personal devices are brought to school, they will be stored securely and only used when the entire class is completing an activity that requires a device.

We recognise that updates to technology policies naturally bring questions. If you have any specific questions, please direct these to Jessica Kidd, Assistant Principal of Junior Years. We will also host parent information events at the start of the 2027 school year also where this will be discussed in more detail.

We are grateful for your partnership as we work together to equip our students with wisdom, academic excellence, and healthy digital habits.

Sincerely,

T Calvert

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Principal
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