TAO Independent School – Mobile Phone & Smart Device Policy

TAO Independent School provides a nurturing, relational, and therapeutic learning environment where every child is known, valued, and supported. We believe that safety, trust, and belonging are the foundations of growth.

Our curriculum and culture are shaped by outdoor learning, trauma-informed practice, and compassion. This policy reflects those principles and sets out how we meet statutory requirements while maintaining the high levels of care and personal understanding that define TAO

1. Purpose

To ensure a calm, safe, and focused learning environment where mobile phones and smart devices do not cause distraction, anxiety, or safeguarding risks. This policy supports digital wellbeing, privacy, and trauma-informed practice by creating predictable

routines and boundaries around technology.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, and visitors on the TAO site and during off-site activities, outdoor sessions, and residentials.

3. Rationale

• Mobile phones can increase anxiety, conflict, and social comparison among pupils.

• Access to messaging or social media during the day can undermine focus and emotional regulation.

• Consistent boundaries help pupils feel safe and promote face-to-face connection and mindfulness.

4. Procedure for Pupils

• All phones and smart devices (including watches, tablets, and earphones) must be handed in to staff on arrival.

• Pupil devices are secured using the School's approved device-storage system, including secure Yondr pouches or another controlled storage arrangement as determined by the School.

• Devices are returned at the end of the school day by the key staff member responsible for hand-in.

• Pupils may not access or use devices during lessons, breaks, or transitions, including lunch and outdoor sessions.

• If a pupil needs to contact a parent or carer, this is arranged through staff using the school phone.

• Emergency contact from parents should always go through the main school number.

5. Procedure for Staff

• Staff may keep personal devices on them for emergency use but must not use them for personal communication during sessions or in sight of pupils.

• Staff should never take photographs, videos, or recordings on personal devices. All school-related media must be taken using school-issued equipment and stored on OneDrive.

• Any breach of this rule will be addressed under the Staff Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy.

6. Visitors and Contractors

• Visitors are asked to turn off or silence phones while on site.

• Taking photographs, video or other recordings is prohibited unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher/DSL for a legitimate school purpose and managed in accordance with safeguarding and data-protection requirements.

7. Exceptions

Use may be permitted where required for medical, accessibility or SEND purposes following approval by the Headteacher, with input from the SENDCo, parents/carers and relevant professionals where appropriate.

8. Sanctions and Restorative Approach

• If a pupil forgets to hand in a device, staff will remind them calmly and ask for it without confrontation.

• Repeated failure to comply triggers a restorative conversation to explore underlying issues rather than punitive sanction.

• Persistent refusal will be addressed through the Behaviour Policy and parental discussion.

9. Safeguarding and Online Safety

Unauthorised recording, covert photography, cyberbullying, sexualised content, image-based abuse, harmful online communication, AI-generated or manipulated images and other technology-related safeguarding concerns must be reported to the DSL and managed under the Safeguarding & Child Protection and E-Safety policies

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This policy supports the wider safeguarding framework and should be read alongside:

• Safeguarding Policy

• E-Safety Policy

• Behaviour Management Policy

• Staff Code of Conduct

• Data Protection & Privacy Policy

Staff will not routinely search the contents of a pupil's personal device. Where information suggests that a device may contain evidence of a safeguarding concern,

criminal offence or serious risk, staff will preserve the device and seek guidance from the DSL and, where appropriate, the police rather than unnecessarily accessing or deleting content.

Legal & Guidance Framework

• Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended), where relevant

• Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

• Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

• Equality Act 2010

• DfE Mobile Phones in Schools guidance, used as relevant non-statutory good practice

10. Review

This policy is reviewed annually or after any incident relating to mobile device misuse.

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