Northern School for Autism
"Learning for Life"

MOBILE PHONES AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY – STUDENT USE

PURPOSE

This policy explains our requirements and expectations relating to the student use of personal electronic devices during school hours and school activities outside school hours, in accordance with:

- the department's Mobile Phones and Personal Electronic Devices – Student Use Ministerial Policy
- the department's Smart Glasses and Covert Filming Devices Ministerial Policy
- Ministerial Order No. 1515 – Personal Electronic Devices in Victorian schools
- the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- all students at Northern School for Autism
- students' mobile phones, smart glasses, wearable devices and personal audio devices brought onto school premises during school hours, including recess and lunchtime.

DEFINITIONS

Assistive hearing device means a device manufactured for the primary purpose of assisting a person with a hearing impairment to hear, including hearing aids, cochlear implants, external sound processors and remote microphones designed for use with hearing aids or cochlear implants.

Mobile phone means a telephone with the capacity to connect to cellular telecommunication systems.

Personal audio device means wired or wireless headphones, earphones or headsets.

School hours means the hours within which a student is expected to attend the school at which they are enrolled.

Smart glasses means a device that is designed to be worn as spectacles and has the capability to send, receive, store, record or process digital information.

Wearable device means a device that is designed to be worn on the body and that has the capability to send, receive, store, record or process digital information, including a smartwatch, but does not include an assistive hearing device, a surgically implanted medical device, or smart glasses.

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POLICY

At Northern School for Autism the following requirements apply to students' personal electronic devices:

- Mobile phones must be switched off and securely stored during school hours.
- Wearable devices must have notifications, cellular connection and recording functions turned off during school hours. All wearable devices, or specified types such as smartwatches, to be securely stored. Personal audio devices must not be used during school hours.

Smart glasses must not be worn or used on school premises or at any school organised activity or event. This includes school organised activities that occur outside school hours or offsite. If they are brought to school or to a school activity, they must be switched off and stored securely.

Other covert filming devices must not be used on school premises or at any school organised activity or event.

During school hours, Northern School for Autism will provide secure storage for mobile phones and smart glasses, if they are brought to school.

Exemptions to this policy may be granted if certain conditions are met (see below for further information).

When emergencies occur, parents or carers should contact their child by calling the school's office.

Northern School for Autism understands that students may bring a personal mobile phone to school, particularly if they are travelling independently to and from school but will still need to adhere to this policy.

Secure storage of mobile phones, smart glasses and other electronic devices, such as smartwatches

- Personal electronic devices owned by students or their parents/carers are brought to school at the owner's risk. Students should not bring smart glasses to school unless they have been granted an exemption as a reasonable adjustment for disability. Students are encouraged not to bring mobile phones to school unless there is a compelling reason to do so.
- Our school does not have accident insurance for accidental property damage or theft. Students and their parents/carers are encouraged to obtain appropriate insurance for valuable items. Refer to the Insurance (inc Personal Property Damage, Medical Expenses and personal accident/injury policy &/or the department's Claims for Property Damage and Medical Expenses Policy
- Where students bring a mobile phone or smart glasses to school, our school will provide secure storage during school hours. Secure storage is storage that cannot be readily accessed by those without permission to do so. During school hours, students are required to store their phones and smart glasses. Northern School for Autism will provide secure storage. Secure storage is storage that cannot be readily accessed by those without permission to do so. At Northern School for Autism students are required to store their phones in their lockers or handed into the Leadership Team to be placed in a lockable cupboard.
- Where students bring a smartwatch to school, our school will provide secure storage during school hours. Secure storage is storage that cannot be readily accessed by those without permission to do so. During school hours,. Northern School for Autism will provide secure storage.
- During school activities that occur outside school hours, students should not bring smart glasses. Where students bring these devices, they must be switched off and securely stored in a way that restricts access to them. Northern School for Autism will inform students how they must store these devices if brought to these activities.

Enforcement and inappropriate use of personal electronic devices

Students who use their personal electronic devices inappropriately may be issued with consequences consistent with our school's existing student engagement *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* Policy

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Inappropriate use of a mobile phone includes using it, failing to have it switched off, or failing to store it securely during school hours, unless an exemption has been granted.

Inappropriate use of smart glasses includes wearing or using them on school premises or at any school-organised event or activity, unless an exemption has been granted.

Inappropriate use of a wearable device occurs when notifications, cellular connection or recording functions are enabled or used during school hours, unless an exemption has been granted. Secure storage of wearable devices will be provided.

Inappropriate use of a personal audio device is any use during school hours unless a specific use is permitted by this policy or an exemption has been granted.

Inappropriate use of any personal electronic device includes use:

- that disrupts the learning of others
- to send messages or make phone calls that are inappropriate, harassing or threatening
- to engage in inappropriate social media use, including cyberbullying
- to capture audio, video or images of people, including students, teachers and members of the school community, without their knowledge or permission
- to capture audio, video or images in toilets, change rooms, swimming pools or gyms
- to gain an unfair advantage during exams and assessments.

Exemptions

Exemptions to restrictions on personal electronic devices other than smart glasses may be granted to individual students or groups of students by the principal or a teacher, in accordance with this policy, under the following three exemption categories:

- to support student learning, for example:
  - specific learning activities
  - reasonable adjustments because of a disability and/or learning need
- to support student health and wellbeing, for example:
  - students with a health condition
  - students who are young carers
- to manage risks to students relating to participation in offsite activities, for example:
  - travel to and from excursions and camps
  - activities not on school grounds and unsupervised
  - during inter-school or inter-campus travel.

A teacher may grant exemptions for devices other than smart glasses, in accordance with this policy and the direction of the principal.

Where an exemption is granted, the student may only use the personal electronic device for the specific purpose outlined in the exemption.

All exemptions will be documented in writing. Exemption documentation will include details about:

- the student or group of students to whom the exemption applies
- the basis for the exemption
- the period for which it applies
- any limitations or conditions.

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The principal or teacher granting the exemption decides where these details are recorded based on the type of exemption and the needs of the student or group of students. This ensures details are recorded in the appropriate place, for example in:

- Individual Education Plans
- camp or excursion planning documents
- Student Health Support Plans
- a student's administrative record.

Exemptions that do not disclose student health or disability information may also be recorded in:

- lesson plans
- units of work.

Exemptions for personal audio devices

1. Learning-related exceptions

Specific exception	Documentation
For specific learning activities (class-based exception)	Individual Learning Plan
For students for whom a reasonable adjustment to a learning program is needed because of a disability or learning difficulty	Individual Learning Plan

2. Health and wellbeing-related exceptions

Specific exception	Documentation
Students with a health condition	Student Health Support Plan

3. Exceptions related to managing risk when students are offsite

Specific exception	Documentation
Travelling to and from excursions	Risk assessment planning documentation
Students on excursions and camps	Risk assessment planning documentation

Where an exception is granted, the student can only use the personal audio device for the purpose for which it was granted.

Exemptions for smart glasses

An exemption for smart glasses can only be granted by the principal, and will only be granted:

- where their use is a reasonable adjustment for a student with disability, for example, a student with vision impairment, and
- the adjustment cannot be reasonably provided by another device or approach.

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Any exemption will be limited to the functions and circumstances required for the adjustment. Before granting an exemption, the school will follow the department's protocols for smart glasses outlined in the Mobile Phones and Personal Electronic Devices – Student Use policy and the Smart Glasses and Covert Filming Devices policy. If an exemption is granted, a privacy notice must be issued before the smart glasses are used.

Camps and excursions

The policy restrictions on all personal electronic devices continue to apply during school hours when students are on excursions or camps, unless an exemption is granted.

The policy restrictions on smart glasses apply for the entirety of any camp or excursion.

In addition to the other requirements outlined in this policy:

- students must not bring mobile phones to school camps or excursions, including those outside school hours, unless an exemption has been approved by the school.
- if students are permitted to bring a mobile phone for a particular camp or excursion, the school will advise students and parents/carers in advance.

Exclusions

This policy does not apply to:

- travelling to and from school
- school-owned devices
- assistive hearing devices (including hearing aids and cochlear implants).

For Out-of-School-Hours Care (OSHC), the restrictions on mobile phones, wearable devices and personal audio devices do not apply. The restrictions on smart glasses continue to apply during OSHC that occurs on school grounds.

For mobile phones, wearable devices and personal audio devices, this policy does not apply to events outside school hours, except as set out in the 'Camps and excursions' section. For smart glasses, the requirements remain in place for all school organised events and activities, including those outside school hours.

A student undertaking workplace or curriculum-related offsite learning activities managed by an external provider, for example, work experience, a VET course, SBAT or offsite studies, must comply with any policies of the provider or employer responsible for the activity. While undertaking these activities, they do not need to comply with the personal electronic devices policy of Northern School for Autism.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available on our school's website
- Annual communication to school community
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Included in school newsletter
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in student diary
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request.

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Related policies and resources

- Northern School for Autism - Policies
- Mobile Phones and Personal Electronic Devices - Student Use
- Smart Glasses and Covert Filming Devices
- Weapons — Banning, Searching and Seizing Harmful Items
- Claims for Property Damage and Medical Expenses

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	21 Oct 2026
Consultation	Parent and Community feedback School Council School Staff
Approved by	Principal Noted at School Council
Next scheduled review date	Oct 2029 – noting that the recommended minimum review cycle for this policy is 3 years]

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