



Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts

## POLICY ON BOARDING SCHOOLS

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## 1.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines on the operation of boarding schools with the aim of improving access to quality education and providing safety and security to boarders in primary and secondary boarding schools, registered under the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (hereinafter referred to as MoEHA).
- 1.2 This policy contains national minimum standards to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders and is an overarching policy for a boarding school.
- 1.3 This policy shall not be applicable to:-
  - 1.3.1 Day scholars who do not board at the school.
  - 1.3.2 Boarding accommodation facilities under the care of Department of Social Welfare.
  - 1.3.3 Privately owned or run Residential homes that do not receive grant from Government.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Lack of access to schools was identified as one of the major challenges for achieving quality education. This resulted in high school drop out rates, absenteeism, late arrivals and lack of will to pursue secondary or tertiary education by students from rural and maritime zones.
- 2.1.2 In addressing these challenges, the Government of the day has made education accessible by providing free milk to Year 1 students, free

transport assistance, free educational resources tuition fee free grant and has opened boarding facilities as a matter of priority for students travelling from rural and maritime zones.

- 2.1.3 Despite initiatives taken by the Government at macro level to make boarding schools more accessible, boarding schools face difficulties in streamlining draconian contextualized boarding rules which prevents effective monitoring of the safety and security of boarders and leads to child protection violations. There is an urgent need for a policy that encompasses national minimum standards and acceptable procedures for boarding schools.

## **2.2 Rationale**

- 2.2.1 In Fiji there are many different kinds of boarding schools including but not limited to Government boarding schools, faith based boarding schools, community run boarding schools and private boarding facilities. In total Fiji boasts a total of 114 primary boarding schools and 61 secondary boarding schools.
- 2.2.2 Boarding facilities provide access to education for students from remote rural areas and maritime communities. The facilities also provide boarders with exposure to the world beyond the confines of their community by teaching adequate life skills training. The provision of boarding facilities provides a practical solution for students living in islands and remote locations where it is impractical for the Government to provide schools considering its feasibility.
- 2.2.3 Boarding facilities also allow access to further education for students of village schools that are limited to the lower grades.
- 2.2.4 Minimum standards do not mean standardization of policy provisions. These standards stipulated in the policy are designed to be applicable

to the many different types of boarding schools and are intended to support schools in developing their own ethos, policies and approach that meets the needs of individual boarders.

### 3.0 POLICY

#### 3.1 Enrolment and Induction

- 3.1.1 All registered boarding schools in Fiji shall ensure that their boarding policies and school rules are aligned to the principles of this Policy which shall be an overarching policy document for Boarding Schools.
- 3.1.2 It shall be mandatory for every Head of Boarding school to develop a well-defined selection criteria for enrolling students into the boarding school for transparency and fairness. Every criteria must have the following underlining principles:-
- (a) The student shall have a home residence away from the boarding school by a minimum of 10 kilometers radius from the boarding school.
  - (b) Priority intake of boarding admission shall be given to students from the maritime zones and/or very remote areas where there is no school available
  - (c) There shall not be any discrimination on students based on race, ethnicity, disability or social background during the selection process.
- 3.1.3 Written correspondences confirming intake with enclosed requirements such as list of boarding kit items shall be

- immediately made known to the parents/guardians on the selection of their child by the Head of School.
- 3.1.4 The boarding facilities including dormitories shall be strictly used by the boarders in the given school year.
  - 3.1.5 The admission of boarders shall not exceed the carrying capacity of the boarding facilities which includes but is not limited to beds or floor space.
  - 3.1.6 Boarding Admission Form shall be designed in such a way that students sign to undertake the strict observance of school rules and code of ethics, which shall also be witnessed by and explained to their parents/guardians before the signing.
  - 3.1.7 The school head shall appoint senior teachers as the Dorm Coordinators who shall be responsible to coordinate, monitor and supervise the planned activities for the boarders in their respective dormitories.
  - 3.1.8 The School heads shall be incharge of the overall supervision of boarding duties on a daily basis.
  - 3.1.9 The school head in consultation with the Dorm Coordinators shall appoint teachers on duty (TODs) to assist in the supervision of the boarders should it be practical to do so.
  - 3.1.10 The school head shall also be responsible to appoint Senior House Teachers who shall be responsible for the overall functions of their respective Houses.
  - 3.1.11 It is mandatory that all boarders go through orientation at the beginning of the year by the respective House Teachers which

shall include a guided tour of the accommodation, surroundings, fire drills and evacuation procedures. It shall be mandatory that parents /guardians attend the orientation with their respective child.

3.1.12 The boarder and parent / guardian shall sign the Agreement Form after they have fully understood the school/hostel rules and code of ethics at the orientation. In this form the boarder must agree to adhere to the school/hostel rules and policies.

3.1.13 All new boarders shall join the school's respective houses ensuring a equal distribution is maintained amongst the houses.

3.1.14 Re-enrollment of boarders will be done at the beginning of every Monday of the first week of each new term to monitor the student retention or movement. Parent(s) / guardians must accompany their son /daughter for re-enrollment whereby the school kit check will be done accordingly.

## **3.2 Compulsory attendance**

3.2.1 It shall be mandatory for all boarders to be present in the boarding school at all times and take part in all boarding activities sanctioned by the Head of Boarding School unless the boarder is diagnosed sick or incapacitated.

3.2.2 The ultimate decision shall rest with the head of boarding school to excuse a boarder from taking part in boarding activities.

3.2.3 The boarder shall always be in proper attire depending on the activities she/he is engaged with.

### 3.3. Boarders Weekends Out or Leaves

- 3.3.1 All boarders shall only be entitled to two weekends out per term from the boarding school primarily for the purpose of replenishing their toiletries and other essential items as required in the school boarding kit.
- 3.3.2 The School Head shall approve the weekends out for the boarder as per the termly planner or as they deem necessary at the School Head's discretion.
- 3.3.3 The Head of Boarding School shall take appropriate measures to keep the parents /guardians informed of all weekend outs or leaves taken by the boarders.
- 3.3.4 No boarder is allowed to spend their weekend outside the boarding school unless express permission is granted by the parent or guardian through the Head of Boarding School. The School Head must put in reasonable procedures in place so that he/ she is aware of the whereabouts of every boarder under his custody at all material times irrespective of weekend outs.
- 3.3.5 In any event, where parents / guardians may need their child/children to take leave from the boarding school, they shall contact the Head of Boarding School through a written correspondence outlining the reasons and duration of the leave.
- 3.3.6 Students found to be misusing their leaves for activities that are detrimental to their health, safety, wellbeing, dignity or that affects the reputation of the boarding facility or safety or other boarders shall forfeit their future leaves and must be counselled.

### **3.4 Boarding School Programmes**

3.4.1 All boarding schools shall have clearly displayed designated timing which must be known or communicated to all students for all boarding activities during the week days and the weekends.

3.4.2 Boarding schools may operate according to the following basic schedules that does not limit any other activities from taking place:

- a) 5.00 a.m. - 5.30am      TOD to ensure all students get out of bed, engage in morning studies and devotion
- b) 5.30 a.m. - 6.30 a.m.      Hostel duties
- b) 7.00 a.m. - 7.45 a.m.      Breakfast Time
- c) 8.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.      Class time
- d) 12.00 p.m. - 1.00 p.m.      Lunch time
- e) 1.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.      Class Time
- f) 4.00 p.m. - 6.00 p.m.      Afternoon duties, shower, change, devotion
- g) 6.00 p.m. - 7.00 p.m.      Dinner
- h) 7.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.      Prep Time
- i) 10.00 p.m.                  Lights Off

3.4.3. Senior House Teachers shall conduct roll check for all boarders under their respective jurisdiction before the commencement of daily morning duty and at the end of daily evening prep as well as before the commencement of Saturday and Sunday organized activity.

### **3.5 Student Support Services and Care**

3.5.1 Every boarding school shall take appropriate measures to ensure adequate student support services such as counseling services or access to child helpline and provision of a sick bay.



- 3.5.2 The Boarding school shall designate persons such as School Chaplain or School Counsellor that boarders can turn to in times of distress, emotional trauma or depression or to assist students encounter personal or family problems that may be too sensitive or serious and may warrant the attention of qualified counselors.
- 3.5.3 The School Head shall ensure that there is a daily activity to inculcate spiritual and moral values in students. All boarders are required to attend any such activity organized by the School.
- 3.5.4 Students in boarding schools shall be provided with the opportunity to have personal private counseling sessions and confidentiality of discussions must be maintained at all times.
- 3.5.5 Counseling for indiscipline behavior shall be governed according to the Behavioral Management Policy.
- 3.5.6 All counseling processes shall be documented and a copy of records to be kept confidential and maintained in the student personal file.
- 3.5.7 First aid equipment shall always be available at all sport related events.
- 3.5.8 Any medication in the sick bay or in the possession of the nurse / doctor/ warden shall be kept under lock and key and proper records are to be kept for its administration.
- 3.5.9 It shall be the duty of the Head of Boarding School to ensure that the safety, health and well-being of boarders is never compromised regardless of the nature of activities they are engaged with.

- 3.5.10 All boarders including those with special dietary medical or religious needs must be provided with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity and quality.
- 3.5.11 Sleeping accommodation as well as toilet/ bathroom facilities for boy boarders shall be kept separate from girl boarders.
- 3.5.12 Under no circumstances students shall play with electrical power lines, tube lights, tube light starters, switches, circuit breakers and fuses in the dormitories.
- 3.5.13 No boarder shall play with matches or fire in the dormitory and this includes the lighting of mosquito coils.
- 3.5.14 Every boarder shall be responsible to keep his/her sleeping area and surroundings neat and tidy at all times. Dormitory prefects shall ensure that all rubbish to be disposed properly and dormitories must be clean and tidy all times.
- 3.5.15 Vandalism and graffiti in school by boarders will be considered an offence and will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 3.5.16 Any damage to the furniture, dorm, discovered electrical faults or any other hazard must be reported to the TOD for appropriate action. The TOD shall notify the Senior House Teacher in writing of the details of the damage or hazard.
- 3.5.17 All boarding schools shall employ a watchman or security officer whose duty is to ensure the safety and security of the students, staff and the school buildings from 10.00 p.m. to 7.00 a.m. The watchman shall be required to inspect the premises on an hourly basis and give a brief report on his inspection and checks.

3.5.18 The watchman shall report any suspicious happenings in writing to the School Head within 24 hours.

### **3.6 Discipline, Counseling and Suspension**

3.6.1 The School Head may suspend a student if satisfied on reasonable grounds that—

- (a) the student's gross misconduct or continual disobedience is a harmful or dangerous example to other students at the school;  
or
- (b) because of the student's behaviour, it is likely that the student, or other students at the school, will be seriously harmed if the student is not stood-down or suspended  
or
- (c) the conduct is so gross and inexcusable that it had caused disrepute or major detrimental effect on the school or any of its teachers or Board officials.

3.6.2 The MoEHA has a zero tolerance policy on corporal punishment and child abuse. Under no circumstances shall corporal punishment or bullying in any of its forms, no matter how mild, be inflicted upon by any teacher, boarder, student or prefect even under the direction of the school head.

3.6.3 Any incidence or knowledge of corporal punishment, assault, bullying, abuse or injury shall be immediately reported to the Permanent Secretary for Education in writing within 24 hours. Failure to report such incidence may result in disciplinary action and /or termination.

3.6.4 The School Head shall clearly inform all staff and students of the boarding school of the schedules and time for various activities such as Prep time, Visiting hours, Saturday and Sunday programs as well as time allocated for breakfast, lunch and dinner. All lights in the dormitories must be switched off by 10.00 p.m. every evening.

### **3.7 School Head to ensure counselling and educational programme for suspended students**

3.7.1 When a student is suspended from a school, the School Head must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the student has the guidance and counselling that are reasonable and practicable in all the circumstances of suspension.

3.7.2 If a student's suspension is subject to conditions, the School Head must take all reasonable steps to ensure that an appropriate educational programme is provided to the student.

3.7.3 The purpose of the programme referred to in subsections (3.7.1) and (3.7.2) is to facilitate the return of the student to school and to minimise the educational disadvantages that occur from absence from school.

3.7.4 At any given time, no boarder shall be allowed to bring any electronic devices to the dormitory unless approved by the School Head.

3.7.5 Mandatory random spot checks shall be carried out in the hostel and any electronic devices confiscated must be returned only to the parent/guardian at the end of the year.

3.7.6 Drugs, alcohol and volatile substances are strictly prohibited in dormitories at all times. Students found possession of such substances shall

be dealt according to the MoEHA School Behavioral Management Policy.

3.7.7 Student shall be removed from the hostel for committing very serious offence like smoking marijuana, consumption of alcohol and/or *yaqona*, sexual offence, bringing pornographic material into school premises, bullying and willful damaging of Hostel properties.

3.7.8 No student shall enter any staff quarters without permission by the respective staff and no staff member shall instruct or allow a student to enter or remain in his/her quarters after 6.00 p.m. in the evening.

3.7.9 The School Head shall chair the parental counseling session where the offences of the child will be categorically outlined and a final warning is issued.

### **3.8 Withdrawal from Boarding School**

3.8.1 Each boarder is a registered member of the boarding school until he/she formally withdraws from the boarding facility by completing the withdrawal form which must be approved by the Head of School.

3.8.2 Boarders who fail to properly withdraw or fail to complete the withdrawal form shall continue to pay boarding fees until they complete all the necessary paperwork.

### **3.9 Visitation**

3.9.1 The School Head shall clearly schedule a maximum of two weekends in a month and circulate/ display the schedule at a noticeable location by which all parents and students are informed of the visiting dates and times.

- 3.9.2 Visitors are not allowed in the boarding facility unless a prior written approval is given by the School Head.
- 3.9.3 No visitors shall be generally allowed during weekdays and non-visiting weekends to ensure that the learning and teaching is not compromised. However in exceptional circumstances, visitors appearing during week days and non-visiting weekends shall report to the School Head to seek permission to meet their child.
- 3.9.4 Visitors shall find their own accommodation as the boarding accommodation is strictly for boarders.
- 3.9.5 Visitors are strictly prohibited to visit students during class time, night studies or after the lights are off.
- 3.9.6 Visitors and day scholars are strictly prohibited from entering the boarding dormitories or dining halls at any point in time.
- 3.9.7 The School Head shall have the discretion to refuse any visitor(s) entering school compound if, in the opinion of the School Head the security and safety of students are compromised based on reasonable grounds.
- 3.9.8 The school main office shall always keep a visitors log book and record names, dates and times of all incoming visitors.
- 3.9.9 All messages, parcels and letters shall be recorded and left at the main school office during weekdays or non-visiting weekends and later collected by the students at recess or lunch time.

#### **4.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATIONS AND POLICIES**

##### **4.1 2013 Constitution of Fiji**

- 4.2 PSC Act 1999 and Regulations
- 4.3 General Orders 2011
- 4.4 Education Act
- 4.5 Child Welfare Decree
- 4.6 National Substance Abuse and Drugs Act
- 4.7 Crimes Decree
- 4.8 MoEHA Child Protection Policy
- 4.9 MoEHA Behavioral Management Policy
- 4.10 MoEHA OHS Policy
- 4.11 MoEHA Emergencies in Education Policy

## **5.0 DEFINITIONS**

**5.1 Boarder** - A student who has completed the Boarding Admission Form and has enrolled in the boarding school with a complete boarding kit.

**5.2 Day Scholars** - A student who travels to school daily but does not reside in the school dormitory.

**5.3 Dormitory** - A building used to accommodate students / a room where students sleep in.

**5.4 Dorm Coordinators** - Senior teacher who is overall in-charge of any matter affecting the dormitory and to whom the teachers on duty report to.

**5.5 House teachers** - Teachers designated to supervise the activities and roles of each House

**5.6 Orientation** - Includes but is not limited to a thorough explanation of the school rules and policies of the Boarding school such as child protection policy, behavioral management Policy.

**5.7 School Head** - Refers to the Principal or the Head Teacher

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**6.0 Effective Date** ..... 16/01/2017

**7.0 Review Date** ..... 16/01/2020

**8.0 KEY SEARCH WORDS**

school kit, boarders, dormitory, counseling, Behavioral Management Policy, weekend leave, child protection

**9.0 APPROVED BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, HERITAGE & ARTS, DR. MAHENDRA REDDY**

  
.....  
**SIGNATURE**

16/01/2017  
.....  
**DATE**