



Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts



**POLICY ON  
MOBILE PHONES IN SCHOOLS**

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## **1.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and transparent framework to students and teachers in all Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts (herein after referred to as MoEHA) schools on the use of electronic devices in schools. The framework restricts the use of electronic devices that disrupt the learning and teaching environment and compromises the welfare of both teachers and students.

## **2.0 POLICY**

- 2.1 Electronic devices shall be brought to school following approval by the Head teacher or Principal upon written consent by parent or guardian.
- 2.2 Should approval be given by the Head teacher or Principal to bring electronic device to School, it shall be the responsibility of students and teachers who bring electronic devices into the school premises to adhere to the guidelines and procedures outlined in this Policy.
- 2.3 Parents/guardians are reminded that in all usual circumstances and cases of emergency, the school main office remains the vital central and appropriate point of contact.
- 2.4 Electronic devices shall be switched off and not accessed during any lesson time unless permitted and approved by the Head teacher or Principal or as provided in procedures outlined in this Policy.
- 2.5 Students found in breach of any school Code of Conduct using their electronic device shall face disciplinary actions.

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

### **3.1 Introduction**

3.1.1. The widespread ownership and popularity of electronic devices among young people requires that school leaders, teachers, students and parents take steps to ensure that such devices do not compromise the learning environment, safety and well-being of students and teachers.

3.1.2 In 2015, the MoEHA conducted a wide sector consultation that required members of the public, Government departments, school management, heads of schools, students, business houses, corporate companies, faith-based organizations, and interested individuals for views on the use of electronic devices in schools. After analyzing the consultation views, this policy was formulated which provides framework on the use of electronic devices in all schools.

- 3.1.3 Over 350 comments and suggestions were received through emails, face to face consultation, discussions held during the Education Forums as well as in meetings conducted at the Education Districts.

### **3.2 Rationale**

- 3.2.1 Personal safety and security of students in schools encourages that parents/guardians give their children electronic devices to protect them from everyday risks. There is also increasing concern about children travelling alone on public transport or commuting long distances to school. It is acknowledged that providing a child with a mobile phone gives parents reassurance that they can contact their child if they need to speak to them urgently. Above all, globally the society regards electronic devices as an important tool that can be used to enhance and supplement teaching and learning in schools.
- 3.2.2 While MoEHA acknowledges that electronic devices are a part of a modern society and there are times when it is useful for students to have the means to contact parents before and after school arrangements, it is imperative that electronic devices are not used in a manner which disrupts teaching and learning, invades people's privacy or is used as a tool for harassment.

## **4.0 DEFINITIONS**

### **4.1 Electronic devices**

Includes all modes of portable electronic gadgets operated by battery or a power supply including but is not limited to electronic devices, mp3 players, mobile phones, iPods, iPads, laptop computers, tablets, digital cameras, hand-held games, electronic dictionaries, electronic cigarettes and lasers. It also includes necessary gadgets used by children with special needs such as electronic chairs and hearing aids.

### **4.2 School**

Refers to Early Childhood Education Centre, Primary and Secondary that are registered and/or recognised with the MoEHA.

### **4.3 SMS**

Refers to Short Message Service and is a text messaging service component of a phone, Web, or mobile communication systems and includes any chat messages sent via any social media network such as viber, skype, facebook, twitter or gmail.

### **4.4 Recordings**

Audio or visual process of capturing data.



#### **4.5 Monitor**

To check, supervise, observe critically or measure the progress of an activity, action or system on a regular basis.

#### **4.6 Staff**

Refers to any person employed by the school that includes an attachee, part-time worker, fulltime worker, trainee teacher or an ancillary staff.

### **5.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND AUTHORITIES**

5.1 The Constitution of the Republic of Fiji – 2013

5.2 Child Welfare Decree- 2010

5.3 Public Service Code of Conduct, 1999

5.4 General Order, 2011

5.5 MoE Behavioural Management Policy

5.6 MoE Child Protection Policy

### **6.0 PROCEDURES**

#### **6.1 Student Responsibility**

6.1.1 Electronic devices shall only be brought to school after approval is given by the Head teacher or Principal of that school.

6.1.2 Students permitted to carry or use mobile phone or electronic device when in the school premises shall only use the electronic device for those purposes as authorised by the Head Teacher or Principal of the School.

6.1.3 The written consent referred to in subsection 6.1.1 shall be obtained by completion of the Authorisation to Carry Device Slip (Appendix 1).

6.1.4 Any reported or suspected proven case of deception by a student while submitting the Authorisation to Carry Device Slip must shall be fully investigated and where the student found guilty, she/he shall undergo counselling and shall further not be allowed to carry electronic device in school throughout the year.

6.1.5 It is the responsibility of students who bring mobile or electronic devices to school to abide by the procedures in this policy.

6.1.6 Appropriate use of the mobile device shall be the responsibility of the user.

- 6.1.7 A teacher, upon having reasonable cause to believe that there is inappropriate use of the device shall have the right to view the content of a child's electronic device at any time between 8.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. in the presence of the Head Teacher, Principal or his nominee.
- 6.1.8 The school accepts no responsibility for lost, stolen or damaged electronic devices if brought in the school premises. However, students should report their device as lost or stolen to the Head teacher or Principal on the same day or within 24 hours for record purposes.
- 6.1.9 Electronic devices shall be switched off when students enter the school premises and shall be used only if approved by the Head Teacher or Principal in writing.
- 6.1.10 Electronic devices shall be used before the school officially begins, and after the school officially finishes, in ways that are not disruptive to other members of the school community.
- 6.1.11 Students shall use tools in their mobile devices, including photo and video, to support learning only when this it has been explicitly agreed by the Head Teacher or Principal. Such permission can only be given on a lesson by lesson basis.
- 6.1.12 Students found in possession of the electronic device without authorization by the Head teacher or Principal shall forfeit the device to the Head teacher or Principal and be subjected to disciplinary process. The Head teacher or Principal shall return the device to the Parent or Guardian in person at the end of the school term.

## **6.2 The Use of Electronic Device in Boarding Schools**

- 6.2.1 The Head Teacher or Principal in custody of boarding facilities shall develop their own School Electronic Device Policy in writing, either allowing or disallowing students to use such electronic devices and the contents of such policy must be consistent with this MoE Policy.
- 6.2.2 The 'best interest of the child' shall be the underlying principle when formulating this policy.
- 6.2.3 Students intending to bring or use electronic device shall obtain prior written approval from the Head Teacher or Principal in writing.
- 6.2.4 Any electronic device found in possession of a student without having prior approval from the Head Teacher or Principal shall be confiscated by the hostel/dormitory/teacher on duty, documented and given to the Head Teacher or Principal for safe keeping and the student shall be counselled.
- 6.2.5 On the first infringement, the student shall be counselled and not be allowed to use electronic device throughout the current term.
- 6.2.6 On the second infringement the student shall be counselled and not be allowed to use electronic device throughout the year.
- 6.2.7 The Head Teacher or Principal shall return the electronic device to the parent or guardian of the student in person at the earliest practical time frame.

### **6.3 School Staff Responsibility**

- 6.3.1 Teachers and staff of the School are allowed to bring their mobile phones or electronic devices to schools at their own risks.
- 6.3.2 The school and the Ministry of Education take no responsibility for mobile electronics device which may be lost, stolen or damaged while on the school premises.
- 6.3.3 Teachers shall have their phones switched off and out of sight during lessons, supervision, meetings or school assembly.
- 6.3.4 Teachers are not permitted to make/receive calls/text messages during contact time with children. All emergency contact shall be made via the school office.
- 6.3.5 A written consent shall first be obtained from the parents/guardians before using electronic devices as recording equipment to capture recording of children.
- 6.3.6 Teachers and staff of the school are permitted to carry or use their mobile electronic device during sports events that involve interaction with another school.
- 6.3.7 A breach in the school staff/teachers code of ethics while handling electronic devices in school will be grounds for disciplinary action.

### **6.4 Central School Communication**

- 6.4.1 All communications by parents, guardians or other outside personnel shall be conducted through the school main office.
- 6.4.2 Messages for the students shall be conveyed to students at a reasonably appropriate time by the main office.
- 6.4.3 In the case of an emergency or sickness, a student shall be permitted to use main school office the phone. 6.4.4 Parents or guardians shall not contact students using the devices during class time. In case of emergency, parents and guardians shall contact their children through the main school office. 6.4.5 Under no circumstances students shall use electronic devices to make arrangements to leave the school premises, without the knowledge of the Head Teacher or Principal.

### **6.5 Inappropriate Use of Electronic Devices**

- 6.5.1 An electronic device shall deem to be used inappropriately if it:
  - 6.5.1.1 disrupts or is likely to disrupt the learning environment or interfere with the teaching and learning process.
  - 6.5.1.2 threatens or is likely to threaten the safety or well-being of any person;  
or
  - 6.5.1.3 is in breach of any law or policy; or
  - 6.5.1.4 is used to bully, intimidate or otherwise harass other people through any SMS or text message, photographic which includes posting of unauthorized images on social media websites as well as using



abusive branding or name-calling of individuals, video or other data transfer system available on the phone.

6.5.1.5 Mobile electronic devices are strictly not allowed in exam rooms or while sitting examinations.

6.5.1.6 It is a criminal offence to use a mobile telephone to menace, harass or offend another person. The school may consider it appropriate to involve the police if such a serious breach or criminal activity occurs.

## **6.6 Non-Compliance**

6.6.1 Students who infringe the procedures set out in this document, wilfully or accidental, shall have their electronic devices confiscated by Head Teacher, Principal or his/her nominee.

6.6.2 Any unapproved electronic device that is visible with the students during the official school hours shall be confiscated by Head Teacher, Principal or his/her nominee and the student shall be counselled. The incident must be recorded and signed off by the student. A written report shall be given to the Head Teacher or Principal.

6.6.3 The Head teacher or Principal upon receipt of a confiscated electronic device shall keep a record of the seizure and secure the electronic device under lock and key within the school main office. Parents must be notified and the student shall not be permitted to collect the phone or electronic device without the parent/guardian being present.

6.6.4 After a second infringement the school shall not allow the student to bring any electronic device to school for the rest of the year.

6.6.5 Should the student continue to breach any provision of this Policy, the student shall undergo counselling and appear before the Student Disciplinary Committee.

## **7.0 GUIDELINES**

7.1 Students are encouraged to hand the electronic device in at the office of the head of school before the school officially begins, should they so wish and collect it at the end of the school day for safekeeping

7.2 Students are advised to mark their electronic device clearly with their names since mobile devices are an attractive target for thieves. To reduce the risk of theft during school hours, students should securely keep their devices. Skins, decals, stickers and other items can be used to help identify electronic device. Using a case to protect the device would be a good idea.

8.0 EFFECTIVE DATE..... 26/08/16

9.0 REVIEW DATE..... 26/08/19

**10.0 KEY SEARCH WORDS**

Electronic device, Mobile phones, Viber, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, gmail, mp3 players, mobile phones, iPods, iPads, laptop computers, tablets

**11.0 APPROVED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR EDUCATION,  
HERITAGE & ARTS, HONOURABLE JOSIA VOREQE BAINIMARAMA.**



Signature



Date



APPENDIX 1

AUTHORISATION TO CARRY DEVICE SLIP

STUDENT : .....

I understand and agree to follow the guidelines for use of electronic devices during school and class time. I understand that breaking any of the guidelines in the Use of Mobiles and Electronic Device in Schools Policy could result in the loss of my technology privileges and may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases of breach, can be reported to the police.

.....  
Signature of student

PARENT / GUARDIAN :-

I understand that my child will be responsible for following the guidelines as per the Policy on the Use of Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices in Schools when using electronic devices in school and during class time. I have read and discussed the guidelines with him/her and agree the duties and responsibilities attached to the use of electronic devices.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree and allow my child \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent / Guardian Name(s)) (name of child)  
to use the electronic device \_\_\_\_\_ in school. I understand I may remove my consent for all or certain activities at any time by getting in touch with the school Principal or Head Teacher.

.....  
Signature of Parent

.....  
Full Name

HEAD OF SCHOOL

I approve the use of mobiles/ electronic devices by the student \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_(date) for the following purposes :

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
Signature of Head of School

*This information is collected for the purposes of ensuring parental consent is on file for electronic device use, technology use concerning Web tools and computer applications and personal mobile devices.*