



Benoni Muslim School



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Association of Muslim Schools

SCHOOL POLICY

Date:

January 2024

Topic:

**SCHOOL CELL PHONE
POLICY**

Enclosures:

None

Distribution:

LEARNERS/ PARENTS

For Action:

ALL STAFF

Implementation Date:

January 2024

Review Date:

December 2025

SCHOOL CELLPHONE POLICY

PREAMBLE

Benoni Muslim School realizes that part of the 21st century is adapting to the changing methods of communication. The proliferation of the ownership and usage of the cellphone and other electronic devices and the increasing sophistication of its derivatives in its various guises, makes it necessary for the usage of these devices to be ordered, controlled and monitored by the school.

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY:

The purpose of this policy is:

- to help preserve and foster a safe, non-disruptive educational environment for effective teaching and learning,
- to maintain and foster order and discipline,
- to deter learners from actions detrimental to themselves, their peers or the general value systems embraced by the school,
- and to achieve these objectives consistent with the law.

While the school acknowledges that cell phones have become an important and useful means of communication, it is also aware of the fact that their use and abuse, particularly by children, pose social, ethical and safety consequences.

2. LEGAL BASIS

The school has built its policy on the following premises:

2.1. Given the need for school safety and the protection and well-being of individual learners, the authority of the school to conduct searches is held to pre-empt an individual learner's right to privacy. Consequently, school officials are empowered to conduct searches of a pupil's property when there is reasonable suspicion that s/he may be in violation of a school rule, a policy or the law.

2.2. All school-related property is subject to search at any time. School-related property includes but is not limited to computers, cellphones and related or similar devices, and items used during or in the support of education-related programmes or activities, and in respect of this policy is deemed to include also privately owned devices brought onto the school property or to any school sponsored or school related activity or function.

2.3. Before undertaking a search of any privately-owned device however, the school official performing such search must have a reasonable suspicion that the learner has indulged in an action that violates the law, a school rule or policy.

2.4. ‘Reasonable suspicion’ may be created by firsthand eyewitness observations or reports, information from a normally reliable informant, and suspicious behaviour.

2.5 Effective immediately, no learner must have their cell phone in this/her possession while they are at school or in school uniform for the following reasons:

- Learners who carry or use cell phones in public, particularly when travelling to and from school, have become the targets of criminals who accost them and rob them of their cell phones and other possessions. These attacks occur most frequently when learners are seen using their cell phones, particularly if they are expensive and/or “latest models” of sought-after brands.
- Learners are careless with their cell phones and leave them lying around or in bags which are left unattended. Lost and mislaid cell phones are frequently claimed to be stolen when this is not the case.
- Cell phones can be used to cheat in examinations and tests. For this reason, no cell phones are permitted in examination venues or in teaching venues when tests and examinations are written. This same policy applies to the externally set national examinations.
- Cell phones are increasingly multi-functional, offering an array of features which are designed to attract and entertain users. The ready availability of these features means that learners with cell phones tend to access and use these features in the classroom, becoming distracted from their work. Learners with low levels of self-discipline, poor concentration and/or a poor work ethic are more likely to become distracted by these features.
- Cell phones allow learners unlimited access to salacious and age-inappropriate material.
- Cell phones make learners vulnerable to approaches by undesirable individuals or groups including criminals and paedophiles.
- Cell phones may carry private and personal material, including photographs, video clips, voice messages and personal details which may become accessible by undesirable individuals and groups when cell phones are lost, borrowed or stolen.

3. ACCEPTABLE USAGE

The following list, which is neither exhaustive nor exclusive, provides examples of practices which are deemed acceptable in terms of this policy:

3.1 The authorised and monitored use of handheld devices like cellphones, iPhones, iTouch and other electronic devices in order to enhance classroom learning with instructions from the teacher in the classroom.

3.2 Parental / guardian contact with children before and after school hours.

3.3 Tracing of the whereabouts of family members and friends, lift-givers and the like during the allowed time slots when these handheld devices can be on.

3.4 The rescheduling of lifts or extracurricular activities - for example in the light of changed weather conditions, unforeseen delays or earlier than expected ending of activities during the allowed time slots when these handheld devices can be on.

3.5 The enhancement of classroom notes, e.g. by means of recording a teacher's lessons and snapping a picture of the board **PROVIDED THIS IS AUTHORIZED IN ADVANCE BY THE TEACHER.**

3.6 The taking of pictures of own projects to show to parent(s) / guardian(s) thus allowing them to be involved in group class activities.

3.7 Communication during an emergency situation, e.g. in order to reach the authorities or a medical provider.

4. UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES

The following list, which is neither exhaustive nor exclusive, provides examples of practices which are deemed unacceptable in terms of this policy:

4.1 Disrupting academic time e.g. by allowing the ringing of cellphones or the sending or receiving of text messages during class, or updating or checking your status on various social media platforms during class time. Learners may use their cellphones / electronic devices before school until the first bell at 07h30. Thereafter, cellphones / electronic devices must be switched and handed in at the administration office. Learners are free to use their cell phones after 15:00.

4.2 Sending hoax bomb or other threats so as to avoid or condense class time or disrupt tests or exams.

4.3 The use of cellphones to gain an advantage or break, or circumvent exam rules or procedures.

4.4 Alerting miscreants to the presence / approach of the Principal, a teacher or

other disciplinary officer.

4.5 The use of a cellphone in the selling or distribution or procurement of drugs or other banned or illegal substances, the dissemination of threats, cyberbullying or harassment, unwanted text messaging, or the arrangement or coordination of anti-social activities.

4.6 The taking, viewing or distribution of inappropriate photos, making video clips of fighting, capturing inappropriate sexual behaviour of learners, or downloading inappropriate images from the internet.

4.7 The provoking of a teacher, and then capture and circulate the resultant response.

4.8 Publishing, posting, distributing or disseminating material or information that Benoni Muslim School determines is threatening, harassing, illegal, obscene, defamatory, slanderous, unlawful or hostile towards any individual or entity. This includes the spreading of rumours and misinformation.

4.9 Publishing, posting, distributing or disseminating material or comments that infringes on the rights and privacy of Benoni Muslim School or any educator.

4.10 Learners who choose to submit content onto websites or other forms of online media must ensure that their submission does not reflect poorly upon the school and bring the name of the school into disrepute.

5. BRINGING CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES TO SCHOOL

Within these parameters, learners are allowed to bring cellphones to school on the understanding that:

5.1 The use of cellphones and electronic devices at school is a privilege which may be forfeited by any learner not abiding by the school's Code of Conduct or the stipulations of this policy.

5.2 Learners are personally and solely responsible for the security of their cellphones and electronic devices. Not the school, the staff will assume any responsibility for theft, loss, or damage of a cellphone or electronic device, or any unauthorised use thereof.

5.3 There will be no use of a cellphone or electronic device in any manner whatsoever during class time or in classrooms, except where such usage is specifically authorized by teachers for legitimate educational purposes as part of the lesson plans and / or academic programmes. Such usage is at the sole discretion of the supervising teacher who is responsible for monitoring, controlling and overseeing such usage.

5.4 The use of a cellphone or electronic device to capture, store or transmit unauthorized pictures or undesirable, illegal or pornographic material is strictly prohibited on the school premises, during school-sponsored or educational activities or outings, or while travelling to and from school or school sponsored outing or activities, again except where such usage is specifically authorized by teachers. Such authorization will normally only be granted for legitimate, broad educational purposes as part of lesson plans and / or academic, sporting, cultural or outreach programmes. Such usage will be permitted at the sole discretion of the supervising teacher who will be responsible for monitoring, controlling and overseeing such usage.

5.5 Use for purposes other than those listed above (e.g. to contact home, to reschedule lifts, etc.) may be granted by a teacher or the responsible duty teacher in the Detention Room.

6. OWNERSHIP AND PRIVACY

6.1 In order to manage the wellbeing and safety of all who are part of the school and to maintain the integrity of school systems, the school reserves the right to check on usage and content (including by random monitoring) of any files, messages, pictures, images or similar which are created, received, stored, transferred to, viewed, read, sent from or received using a cellphone or other device present on school property, at a school or school-sponsored function or activity, or on the way to school or school sponsored activities regardless of whether the device was actually used on school property, at a school function, or not.

6.2 The school has the right to investigate the e-mail or account and equipment, including cellphones and similar devices, and also social networking domains such as Facebook and Twitter of any user who, in the opinion of the Principal or his / her delegate, which opinion shall be based on reasonable suspicion and/or first-hand eye-witness reports, might be transgressing the rules or the spirit of this policy.

6.3 In the event of any part of this policy being transgressed by a learner or other person using the equipment brought to school or a school or school sponsored activity, or belonging to or in the possession of a learner at school or a school or school-sponsored or school-approved activity, the following sanctions may be applied:

- Any staff member who sees a learner using a cellphone in contradiction of the specifications of this code, shall confiscate the device and hand it in to Reception for safe-keeping. Date, time, name of learner, name of teacher who confiscated the device, name of the owner of the cellphone and reason for the confiscation must be handed to the admin office for recording. Details of evidence of inappropriate content must be reported to the Deputy Principal.

- If it is suspected, based on reasonable grounds, first-hand, eyewitness reports or clear evidence that anyone is using a cellphone in contradiction of any of sections 4.3 to 4.10, and 5.3 of this code, those authorised to do so by the Principal will be expected to intervene and inspect the contents of the device to determine whether it has been or is being used for a purpose which is contrary to school policy.
- Should such evidence be found, it must be reported to the Deputy Principal who may take the matter further either through an internal disciplinary process or by reporting it to other authorities, including the Board of Governors, the school counsellor, a social worker, the education department, or the police.

6.4 When handheld devices like cellphones, iPhones, iTouch or other electronic devices are confiscated from a learner, the following sanctions will apply:

6.4.1- 1st Offence: The device will be confiscated, parent(s) / guardian(s) will be contacted and will be required to retrieve the device from the school.

6.4.2 - 2nd Offence: The device will be confiscated, parent(s) / guardian(s) will be contacted and will be required to retrieve the device from the school. A final warning letter will be issued and three detentions must be made up by the learner.

6.4.3- 3rd Offence: The device will be confiscated, parent(s) / guardian(s) will be contacted and will be required to retrieve the device from the school. The learner, accompanied by his / her parent(s) / guardian(s) will be required to attend a disciplinary hearing. **NOTE: The device will only be returned at the end of the term or 3 months and after the payment of a R500 fine.**

7. EXAMINATIONS/ TEST

7.1 If a learner is found with a cellphone/other device during the writing of an internal/ external exam or class test, the cellphone/device will be confiscated.

7.2. The matter will be reported to the Chief Invigilator/ Principal who in the case of an external examination will report the matter to the Department of Education for further investigation.

7.3 In the case of an internal examination/test, the cellphone will be confiscated and a disciplinary hearing will follow.

Failure to abide by this Policy, as with other policies at Benoni Muslim School, may result in disciplinary action as described in the school's Code of Conduct and School Rules.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Ebrahim', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

N. Ebrahim (Principal)

For Board of Governors

Review Date: December 2025