



SCHEDULE A: PHONE-FREE SCHOOL - POLICY REGARDING THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES, ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

1. INTRODUCTION

Vredenburg High School realises that it should adapt to the changing communication methods. The use of mobile phones and other electronic devices and the increasing sophistication of devices require the use of these devices to be formulated, controlled and monitored in and through the school. The purpose of this policy is to help safeguard and promote a safe, non-disruptive educational environment for effective teaching and learning, to maintain order and discipline, to prevent learners from negative actions which can harm themselves, fellow learners or the general value systems accepted by the school, and to achieve these goals within the law.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Cell phones and personal electronic devices include:
 - 2.1.1. Cell phones (both phones that connect to the internet and non-internet connected cell phones that send and receive text message and make phone calls)
 - 2.1.2. Personal electronics devices such as tablets and video games
 - 2.1.3. AirPods, earbuds, Bluetooth-connected headphones
 - 2.1.4. Smartwatches, fitness trackers and other accessories that connect to the internet

3. LEGAL BASE

The school grounded its policy on the following:

- 3.1. Given the need for school safety and the protection and well-being of individual learners, the authority of the school to search learners will be exercised in a way which will not violate an individual learner's right to privacy. In terms of section 8A of the Schools Act, school officials are authorised to search a pupil's property without the parent's presence, with or without a parent's consent, when there is a strong suspicion that he or she has violated a school rule, a policy or the law.
- 3.2. All school-related property is at all times subject to inspection. School-related property includes, but is not limited to computers, mobile phones and related or similar devices, as well as items used during or in the training of education-related programmes or activities. This policy also includes devices in private use, which are used on the school's property or any school-sponsored or school-related activity or function.
- 3.3. Before a private device is examined, the principal or his delegate who undertakes such a search, must have a reasonable suspicion that the learner has violated the law, school rule or school policy.

- 3.4. "Reasonable suspicion" can be created by first-hand eye-witness observation or reports, information from a usually trustworthy informant, obtained from social media and suspicious behaviour.

4. PHONE-FREE SCHOOL

- 4.1. The school grounds within the perimeter of the school boundaries are declared phone-free areas during school hours. (from the first bell to the last)
- 4.2. No learner will be allowed to visibly handle or use a cellphone or other personal electronic device, for any reason whatsoever, during school hours starting at 07:45 in the mornings until 14:10, or the end of the school day as determined from time to time.
- 4.3. No learner will be allowed to visibly handle or use a cellphone or other personal electronic device, for any reason whatsoever, during break time or between classes.
- 4.4. Learners are free to use cellphones and other electronic devices before 07:45 and after 14:10 or the end of the school day, as determined from time to time.

5. ALLOWED PHONE USAGE

The following list, which is not exclusive, provides examples of practices which are deemed acceptable in terms of this policy:

- 5.1. The authorised and monitored use of handheld devices such as mobile phones and all other electronic devices to improve classroom learning with prior approval from the principal and instructions by the teacher in the classroom.
- 5.2. Parent/guardian contact with children before and after school hours.
- 5.3. Locating family members and friends, arranging lift opportunities, etc. before and after school hours.
- 5.4. Communication during an emergency situation, e.g. in order to reach the authorities or a medical provider should the school be unable to facilitate such communication.
- 5.5. Using cellphones and personal electronic devices during extramural activities.
- 5.6. Any other usage as approved by the principal.

6. UNACCEPTABLE USAGE

The following list, which is not exclusive, provides examples of practices deemed unacceptable and which may result in further disciplinary action:

- 6.1. The visible possession or use of a cellphone or any personal electronic device on any part of the school grounds during official school hours

starting at 07:45 until 14:10 or the end of the school day as determined from time to time.

- 6.2. Disruption during academic time, e.g. by allowing cellphone calls or sending or receiving of SMS's during school hours, or updating/checking your status on different social media platforms during class time.
- 6.3. Theft, borrowing, using, breaking, damaging, hiding, removing or accessing the memory or storage capacity of a mobile phone or electronic device belonging to another person.
- 6.4. Sending false bomb or other threats to avoid or shorten class time or to disrupt tests or examinations.
- 6.5. The use of mobile phones to bypass examination rules or procedures.
- 6.6. Warnings for the presence/approach of the principal, a teacher or other disciplinary officer.
- 6.7. Using a mobile phone in the sale or distribution or acquisition of drugs or other prohibited or illegal substances, sending threats, cyber-bullying or harassment, unwanted SMSs/other similar social media, or the arrangement or coordination of antisocial activities.
- 6.8. The taking/display/distribution of inappropriate photographs/graphic material (e.g. sexual/violent in nature), making videos of any fighting.
- 6.9. The provocation of a teacher, and then the resulting video recording and dissemination of his response.
- 6.10. Playing music through any sound-amplification equipment. Music can only be listened to by headphones and for the individual learners' pleasures during break or on bus.
- 6.11. To provide material or information determined by Vredenburg High School as threatening, burdensome, illegal, obscene, defamatory, illegal or hostile to any individual or entity; publish or distribute in any way. This includes spreading rumours and misinformation.
- 6.12. The publishing, posting, or distribution of materials or comments that infringe on the rights and privacy of Vredenburg High School or any individual or entity. These include personal attacks or comments that disrupt an individual or group.
- 6.13. Learners who choose to load content on websites or other forms of online media must ensure that the content does not reflect badly on the school and does not bring the name of the school into disrepute.
- 6.14. Taking videos/photos of teachers/learners without their consent.

7. CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES AT SCHOOL

Learners are allowed to bring cell phones to school provided that:

- 7.1. The devices are not visibly in the possession of the learner or being used in any manner whatsoever by the learner during the official school hours.
- 7.2. The devices are switched off or on silent.

- 7.3. Learners are personally and solely responsible for the safety of their mobile phones and electronic devices. Neither the school, the staff nor the education department will accept responsibility for theft, loss or damage to a mobile phone or electronic device or any unauthorised use thereof.
- 7.4. The use of a mobile phone or electronic device to capture or transfer unauthorized photographs or unwanted, illegal or pornographic material is strictly prohibited on the school grounds, during school hours (07:45 – 14:10), during sponsored or educational activities or excursions and bus travels to and from school.
- 7.5. The use of mobile phones or electronic devices before the school day or after it will not be controlled by the school, provided that no provisions of the school's codes of conduct are contravened.

8. OWNERSHIP AND PRIVACY

- 8.1. All learners are responsible for the safekeeping of their own cellphones and electronic devices. The school will not be liable for any theft or loss of devices on the school grounds, during official school hours or during extramural activities. Learners are discouraged from bringing any electronic devices to school.
- 8.2. In order to manage the welfare and safety of all those who are part of the school and to maintain the integrity of the school system, the school reserves the right to investigate the use and content (including through random monitoring) of any files, messages, pictures, images or similar that were created, received, stored, watched, read, sent or received using a mobile phone or other device present on school property, at a school or school-sponsored function or activity, or on the way to school.
- 8.3. Access to the worldwide web, email services, the internet and school servers at this school is internally filtered and managed. Communication via email in the school system can therefore not be considered private, and the same conditions apply to messages, data or images found or used on any mobile phone or similar device brought on or near the school grounds. At/or during school, or at a school or school-sponsored function or activity.
- 8.4. It is a condition for using the consent granted under this policy, that the school has the right to use the email or account and equipment, including mobile phones and similar devices, as well as social networking domains such as Facebook and Twitter of any user who, in the opinion of the principal or his delegate, will be based on reasonable suspicion and/or first-hand eyewitness reports, who may have the rules or the spirit of this policy.

9. FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THIS POLICY

If any part of these directives is breached by a learner, the following sanctions may be applied:

- 9.1. Any staff member who witnesses a learner using a cellphone or other personal electronic device in contradiction with the specifications of this code for the first time will issue a first warning to the learner and details of said warning will be documented on the SASPAC system.
- 9.2. Any staff member who witnesses a learner contravening this code for the second time, will confiscate the cellphone or personal electronic device and it will be taken to the office of the Head of Discipline. The item/s will be documented, and the parent/guardian of the learner will have to make an appointment to collect the device from the office. A copy of this policy will be given to the parent/guardian.
- 9.3. Any staff member who witnesses a learner contravening this code for the third time, will confiscate the cellphone or personal electronic device and it will be taken to the office of the Head of Discipline. The item/s will be documented, and the parent/guardian of the learner must collect the item/s at the end of the academic term and have a meeting with the school to discuss the learner's actions.
- 9.4. Should the learner be guilty of continued contravention of this policy, the school reserves the right to institute further disciplinary action as stipulated in the code of conduct or repeat the prescribed steps in this policy.
- 9.5. The refusal of parents/guardians to adhere to and support the school in enforcing the terms of this policy will be deemed as refusal to comply with the school's code of conduct for learners. The matter will be reported to the Western Cape Education Department.

10. USE OF PICTURES/VIDEOS AND OTHER FOOTAGE BY THE SCHOOL

- 10.1. At times the school will take pictures, videos or other media footage to be used on the school's website, facebook page or other social media platforms. This is used for marketing purposes and to celebrate the achievements of learners.
- 10.2. The school undertakes to only use footage that creates a positive and uplifting image of the school and learners.
- 10.3. By enrolling learners and accepting the code of conduct, parents/guardians grant silent acceptance and permission for the school to publish media that falls within the ambit of 10.1.
- 10.4. Should a parent/guardian wish to revoke this permission, the school needs to be informed in writing of the revoked permission. The date on which the written notice is received, will be considered the date of revoked permission and will be effective from that day onwards.