Electronic Device and Digital Wellbeing Policy

Introduction & Rationale

In accordance with the UAE National Agenda and the directives of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), Buds Public School is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and highly effective learning environment. While the integration of technology is essential for preparing students for future success, the school recognizes the potential risks associated with the misuse or overuse of electronic devices, including adverse effects on student wellbeing, academic achievement, and social development.

This policy sets out our holistic approach to digital wellbeing, promoting responsible digital citizenship, ensuring safe and purposeful use of technology, and preventing electronic addiction. It is aligned with the Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB) framework, particularly in the domains of Students' Achievement and Students' Personal and Social Development, and their Innovation Skills, ensuring that the protection of student welfare remains a top priority.

Purpose and Objective

- Promote a balanced and healthy relationship between students and technology.
- Educate students, staff, and parents/guardians about the signs, risks, and prevention of digital overuse.
- Provide clear guidelines for the acceptable use of electronic devices on school premises and at school-sanctioned activities.
- Support students who may be experiencing issues related to device misuse or electronic addiction.
- Strengthen partnerships with parents in monitoring and supporting healthy device use.
- Ensure compliance with UAE child protection laws and KHDA regulations concerning student safety and wellbeing.

Scope

This policy applies to all students, teaching staff, administrative staff, parents/guardians, and visitors to Buds Public School, during school hours, on school premises, and at all school-sanctioned activities (including trips, extracurricular activities, and events).

Definitions

- Electronic Devices: Includes, but is not limited to, smartphones, tablets, laptops, smartwatches, gaming consoles, and wearable technology, it is all inclusive.
- Electronic Addiction / Digital Overuse: A behavioural pattern characterized by loss of control over device use, resulting in negative impacts on physical health, mental wellbeing, academic performance, or social relationships.
- Digital Citizenship: The responsible, ethical, and safe use of technology in learning and social contexts.
- KHDA: The Knowledge and Human Development Authority, the regulatory body for private education in Dubai.

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- DSIB: The Dubai School Inspection Bureau, responsible for inspecting and reporting on the quality of education in Dubai's private schools.

Policy Guidelines

A. Use of Personal Devices on Campus

Foundation Stage & Primary School (FS–Y6):

- Personal mobile phones and smartwatches with communication features are not permitted for use during school hours.
- If brought to school, devices must remain switched off and handed to the class teacher for safekeeping until dismissal.

Secondary School (Y7–Y13):

- Personal devices may be brought to school but are for educational purposes only, under teacher supervision.
- Device use is prohibited during breaks, lunchtimes, and in corridors unless specifically required for a learning activity.
- Non-compliance will result in confiscation and referral to school administration. A graduated system of consequences will apply for repeated offenses, coupled with guidance and counselling where needed.

B. Responsible Use of School-Issued Devices

- All school-issued devices are filtered and monitored in compliance with UAE internet safety laws.
- Devices must be used solely for curriculum-related purposes.
- Unauthorized software downloads, tampering with monitoring systems, or accessing inappropriate content is strictly prohibited.

C. Digital Citizenship & Awareness

- Digital Citizenship, online safety, and digital wellbeing will be explicitly taught across relevant year levels and integrated into the curriculum.
- The school will conduct awareness programs for students, parents, and staff on responsible digital behaviour, online safety, and the prevention of digital overuse.

D. Staff Responsibilities

- All staff are expected to model healthy and responsible device use.
- Teachers must enforce this policy consistently within classrooms and during supervision duties.
- Staff will receive professional development on digital wellbeing, online safeguarding, and strategies for managing digital overuse among students.

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E. Parental Partnership

- Parents/guardians are recognized as key partners in promoting digital wellbeing. The school will provide guidance to parents through workshops, newsletters, and resources on setting healthy digital boundaries at home.
- Parents are expected to support school guidelines by reinforcing consistent expectations with their children.

F. Safeguarding & Support

- Students showing signs of electronic addiction or unhealthy device use will be referred to the school's pastoral care team and counsellor for monitoring and intervention.
- Interventions will prioritize support, guidance, and counselling before disciplinary actions.
- Cases of serious misuse that compromise safety will be addressed under the school's safeguarding policy and UAE child protection regulations.

G. Data Protection & Privacy

- Monitoring of devices and online activity will be conducted in line with UAE laws, ensuring student privacy while upholding safety.
- Student data collected through monitoring systems will remain confidential and used only for safeguarding and educational purposes.

H. Extracurricular and Off-Site Activities

- The same expectations for responsible use apply during extracurricular events, school trips, and off-site activities.
- Staff accompanying students will ensure adherence to this policy in such settings.

Monitoring & Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure alignment with KHDA regulations, UAE laws, and emerging research on digital wellbeing.
- Feedback from students, staff, and parents will be incorporated into the review process.
- The Principal and Digital Wellbeing Committee are responsible for ensuring effective implementation and monitoring of this policy.

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Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in consequences ranging from confiscation of devices to disciplinary measures, depending on the severity and frequency of the incident. Where necessary, referrals will be made to the school counsellor or safeguarding team to ensure student wellbeing is prioritized.

With these enhancements, the policy is aligned with KHDA/DSIB requirements, UAE child safety laws, and international best practice, while also showing clear systems for prevention, intervention, staff training, and parent partnership.

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Approved By: Mr. Donald Weilson (Principal)

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