

# Theodor Herzl Schools

*Unique education for individual excellence*



## **THS Social Media Policy**

**(Which includes the use and possession of cellular telephones, tablets, desktop and so-called laptop computers and any electronic device capable of sending or receiving data, images and or information. All users are reminded that, in addition to the use of handheld or desktop devices the data network(s) utilised by THS in the normal use of such devices also constitute a “device” or area to which this policy is applicable).**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

**THEODOR HERZL SCHOOLS (THS) values and understands the benefit and challenges inherent in the use of modern methods of communication, including the use and prevalence of cellular telephones, computers and derivative platforms. With the benefits afforded by such devices and the social media run from such devices, additional discussion and responsibilities become incumbent on an institution such as a school. This policy is therefore designed to help institute, maintain and encourage a constructive, safe, non-disruptive educational environment for effective teaching and learning, to create, maintain good social order, ethics and discipline, to educate about and deter learners from conduct detrimental to themselves, fellow learners, educators, THS or the general value system and ethos embraced by the schools, and to do so with full cognizance and respect of accepted educational, legal and ethical norms.**

### **2. LEGAL PARAMETERS**

**THS accepts the following foundational norms and points of departure for purposes of this policy:**

- 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. 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.**
- 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, policy or that a failure to conduct such search may amount to the prejudice of a specific learner, the learners of THS in general or the operational interests of THS.**
- 4. 'Reasonable suspicion' may be created by eyewitness observations or reports, information from a normally reliable informant, suspicious behaviour or any relevant information.**

### **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:**

- 1. The authorised and monitored use of handheld devices like cellphones, iPhones, BlackBerrys, IPad and other electronic devices in order to enhance classroom learning with instructions from the teacher in the classroom.**
- 2. Parental / guardian contact with children before and after school hours, and during breaks.**
- 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 used.**

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

1. **Disrupting academic time e.g. by allowing the ringing or transmitting of any noise, vibration or disturbance of cellphones or the sending or receiving of text messages (on any platform) during class, or updating or checking of status or events on various social media platforms during class time. Learners may use their cellphones / electronic devices before school until the first bell. Thereafter, cellphones / electronic devices must be switched off until first break where calls / messages may be received. In the remaining sessions on either side of the second break, the same rule applies. Learners are free to use their cell phones after 14h15.**
2. **The theft, borrowing, using, breaking, damaging, defacing, hiding, removing or going into the memory or storage capacity of a cellphone or electronic device belonging to someone else.**
3. **Sending hoax bomb or other threats to anyone whatsoever.**
4. **The use of cellphones to circumvent exam rules or procedures.**
5. **Using such device(s) in the execution or aiding and abetting of a crime, civil offence and / or disturbance and / or an offence in terms hereof or school rules in general.**
6. **The use of a cellphone in the selling or distribution or procurement of alcohol, 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.**

- 7. The taking, viewing or distribution of inappropriate photos, making video clips of fighting, capturing inappropriate sexual behaviour of learners, or downloading and / or disseminating inappropriate images from the internet.**
- 8. The provoking of a teacher, and then capture and circulate the resultant response, and / or the unauthorised electronic recording of any conversation or discussion. Users are reminded that such unauthorised recording constitutes a criminal offence.**
- 9. The playing of music through sound amplification equipment. Music can only be listened via amplification or other devices if prior permission for such use has been obtained.**
- 10. Publishing, posting, distributing or disseminating material or information that THS determined or may determine is threatening, harassing, illegal, obscene, defamatory, slanderous, unlawful or hostile towards any individual or entity. This includes the spreading of rumours and misinformation.**
- 11. Publishing, posting, distributing or disseminating material or comments that infringes on the rights and privacy of THS, its teachers or any individual or entity. This includes personal attacks or comments disparaging an individual or group.**
- 12. 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, pupils are allowed to bring cellphones to school on the understanding that:**

- 1. The use of cellphones and electronic devices at school is a privilege which may be forfeited, either temporarily or permanently, by any pupil not abiding by the school's Code of Conduct or the stipulations of this policy.**
- 2. Learners are personally and solely responsible for the security of their cellphones and electronic devices, including airtime and data stored thereon. Not the school, the staff nor any Board member will assume any responsibility for theft, loss, or damage of a cellphone or electronic device, or any unauthorised use thereof.**
- 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 in terms hereof or 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.**

- 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 service 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. Use of cellphones or electronic devices before the beginning of the school day, or after its conclusion, will not be controlled by the school with the proviso that no provisions of the school's Codes of Conduct are broken, and no actions, even if conducted after hours and off THS premises, will impact or reflect negatively on THS, its educational ethos and reputation, or any individual teacher, learner or group forming part of or connected with THS.**

## **6. OWNERSHIP AND PRIVACY**

- 1. While cognisant of private ownership of material and recordings of information, including data and images, that may be stored on an individual's electronic device(s) as referred to herein, and in order to manage the wellbeing and safety of all who are part of the school and to maintain the integrity of school systems, THS 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. In this regard all users of electronic devices on THS property or off property as defined herein grants THS permission to access such data, and to, where necessary, confiscate such device(s) where necessary so as to establish any possible contraventions of this policy.**

- 2. Access to the worldwide web, e-mail services, and the internet and school servers at this school are filtered and managed in-house. Communication via e-mail on the school system cannot therefore be regarded as private, and the same conditions apply to messages, data or images on any cellphone or similar device brought to, found at or used on or in close proximity to the school premises, at / or during school or at a school or school sponsored function or activity.**
- 3. It is a condition of the use of the permission granted in terms of this policy that 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.**
- 4. In the event of any part of this policy being transgressed by a pupil 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 pupil at school or a school or school-sponsored or school-approved activity, the following sanctions may be applied:**

**6.4.1 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 front office for recording. Details of evidence of inappropriate content must be reported to the Principal.**

**6.4.2 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 4.12, 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.**

**6.5 Should such evidence be found, it must be reported to the Principal who may take the matter further either through an internal disciplinary process or by reporting it to other authorities, including the School Governing Body, the school counsellor, a social worker, the education department, or the police.**

**When handheld devices like cellphones, iPhones, BlackBerrys, iPad or other electronic devices are confiscated from a learner, the period of confiscation will be 3 days. Repeat offences will result in parents being called and privilege of cell phone or other electronic devices will be withdrawn.**

**Failure to abide by this Policy, as with other policies at THS, may result in disciplinary action as described in the school's Code of Conduct and School Rules, as may be in operation at the time hereof or as may be amended from time to time.**

**Reviewed: February 2017**