

## **Proposal for Revision of Mobile Phone Policy at EEB1**

### **Instructions for Class Representatives and Parents**

The APEEE considers the school's current mobile phone policy to be too narrow in scope and out-of-date and wishes to submit a proposal to the school for an update of the policy. A group of parents have drafted the attached background paper and proposal on behalf of the APEEE, and the APEEE CA has asked for the document to be circulated to parents for consultation.

In order to evaluate whether a revision to the policy would be supported by parents and to establish a parent position on the best scope and approach, we would like to solicit feedback. We would be grateful if parents could submit their feedback to class representatives, giving particular consideration to the points listed on page 3 below, especially:

- the possibility of separate policies for primary and secondary school;
- the possibility differentiated treatment of the lower years of secondary (S1-S3) and upper secondary (S4-S7);
- times/locations where mobile phone use should/could be permitted/prohibited.

**The class representatives should gather feedback, collate and return to your APEEE CA representative by Thursday, 10 January**—preferably earlier in time to allow them time to organise it. Feedback will be submitted to the APEEE through section representatives on 11 January and members of the Bien Etre Working Group will develop a parent position. **The position will be discussed, adapted as needed and agreed at APEEE's CA/board meeting on 22 January**, after which it will be submitted to the school.

## **Background**

Parents in a number of classes in both primary and secondary, in particular in the English and French sections, have raised the issue of the policy on mobile phone use at EEB1. Some were prompted to raise this issue having attended a talk by the secondary school psychologist Ms Gladsteen, where she raised concerns about the amount of time children are spending on smartphones during school hours, especially during breaktime, while others were motivated by the recent ban on phones in schools in France.

In particular, parents are increasingly aware of the current body of research concerning the effect of mobile phones on social interaction, concentration, academic attainment, etc. By way of example, a study demonstrating the positive effects of banning mobile phones from schools can be found in the Annex, along with links to a number of studies concerning the negative effects of mobile phones on, inter alia, academic attainment and cognitive capacity.

## **Current situation**

The school's current mobile phone policy for the secondary cycle is contained in the General Organisation Rules 2018-2019, which state:

*"GSMs/i-Phones/i-Pods etc. must be switched off during lessons and study time."*

Furthermore the Secondary Cycle Booklet for New Pupils states the following:

*"Mobile phones are tolerated but must be switched off during lessons. Any device which rings in class may be confiscated by the teacher who will hand it to Mr Louarn, Principal Education Advisor, from whom it may be retrieved. If it happens again, the Principal Educational Advisor will take more dissuasive action."*

The school thus does indeed lack a clear mobile phone policy. We were unable to find any policy at all in the rules for the primary school. Concerning secondary, the rules merely prohibit the use of mobile phones during lesson time but there is no mention of the use of mobile phones outside lessons. The rules applicable in the three other Brussels European Schools are very different in scope, with those at EEB3 and EEB4 in particular being more detailed and restrictive respectively (see Annex).

## **Proposal**

The rules on mobile phone use within the school should be reviewed in the light of current research and more detailed rules laid down. This should take account of parents' concerns; the needs of parents, teachers and students; student safety; the legal rules in force concerning privacy (especially GDPR) and practicalities for enforcing the policy.

The school's policy should include the following:

- clear rules about responsibility for mobile phones/screen devices brought to school
- definition of what devices are covered by the policy (mobile phones/screen devices/other electronic devices/e-readers/tablets etc.)
- separate policies for primary and secondary school
- differentiated treatment of the lower years of secondary (S1- S3) and the upper years of secondary (S4-S7)
- clarity about where and when mobile phones/screen devices may be used on the premises
- appropriate and clear consequences for use of mobile phones in class and other places where not permitted
- clear privacy rules concerning images of individuals and the school premises, in line with GDPR

A complete ban on mobile phones would be unlikely to receive the support of parents, as some children need to have a phone so that they can communicate about transport at the end of the school day, for example. Nor is this likely to be supported by the student body. Account should also be taken of the fact that, in the secondary school, some teachers ask or permit children to use their phones in class, e.g. to take photographs of slides etc. and students may use their phone on campus during school time for study purposes. Thus a balance must be struck between the competing needs and interests, and a practical approach should be taken that ensures protection of children's welfare while permitting reasonable use of mobile phones on campus.

We propose a more restrictive policy for breaktime mobile phone use in years S1-S3 while allowing greater mobile phone use in years S4-S7 in specified areas, such as libraries, cafeteria etc. There should be a ban on the use of mobile phones/screen devices on the premises of the primary school during the entire school day. Enforcement of the rules should be effective while not being detrimental to the other tasks and responsibilities of staff. We suggest aligning the new policy with existing EEB4 rules and adapting where appropriate.

## **Prepared by:**

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## **ANNEX**

### **Sample of studies (by way of example)**

Impact of schools banning mobile phones on student test scores:

<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1350.pdf>

Mobile phone use and academic performance:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2158244015573169>

Effects of mobile phone use on students' learning:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/acp.3323>

Presence of smartphone reduces cognitive capacity:

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/691462>

### **EEB2 Woluwe (from website)**

#### Secondary School Regulations

"It is forbidden to use a mobile phone, a MP 4 player or an I-pod, a personal laptop, a PDA or any other electronically devices in class. If pupils do not respect school rules, teachers reserve the right to confiscate those objects. In addition it is forbidden to take photos or film anywhere within the vicinity of the school."

#### General Information 2018-2019

"For safety reasons and respect of privacy, the use of mobile phones with camera and/or Bluetooth is strictly forbidden on school premises. The use of any other mobile phones is strictly forbidden during lesson time. It is strictly forbidden for Primary pupils to bring such devices to school."

### **EEB4 Laeken (from parent representative)**

#### Nursery/Primary:

"Pupils are NOT allowed to bring personal or valuable items to school. The school cannot take responsibility for loss, damage or theft of personal items. Pupils are responsible for their own personal property. Any electronic devices brought to school must be kept out of sight and turned off during the school day. They may be used only before and after school outside the school premises. Mobile phones are only tolerated at school if they are turned off and placed in the pupil's school bag. Mobile phones may be confiscated if used on the school premises and will only be returned to the pupil at the end of the school day. The school is not responsible for broken/lost/stolen valuables such as iPods, mobile phones, toys, etc."

## Secondary

"Regarding cellphones, iPods, MP3 players and other similar devices (except e-books): these must follow the 'bus-to-bell' policy, unless permitted in particular locations governed by specific room rules (see appendices). When circulating on the school site, such devices must be turned off and put away. Breaking this rule will result in confiscation by school staff. Only after the last bell of the school day can they be used again.

Confiscated items will be returned on the Friday following confiscation unless parents come to claim the device beforehand. All confiscations will be the subject of a disciplinary event. In addition it is forbidden to take photos or film anywhere within the vicinity of the school.

Study Hall and Chill-Out Rooms: For S4-S7 students, the use of electronic devices (tablets, cell phones,...) is authorised to study or work."

## **EEB3 Ixelles (from parent representative)**

"Code of Behaviour – Ecole Européenne III

Use of Mobile Phone (GSM)

In class:

- I am not allowed to use portable electronic devices in class, unless for pedagogical reasons, my teacher allows me.
- If I do not follow the school rules, I will have to turn my mobile phone off and place it on the teacher's desk during the class; I can only take it back at the end of the class. My mobile electronic device can be confiscated for a longer period than just one class, if I break the rules on more than one occasion (It will be kept in the head pedagogical advisor's office and can only be returned to my parents).
- Should this arise, my parents will be informed immediately by the relevant pedagogical advisor.
- Mobile phones are not permitted during the exams.
- Reminder: N.B. Point 8 in the internal rules of the school\*

Students must leave their coats, bags, pencil cases, mobile phones, smart watches and objects of value outside the examination center. These items can be left in the designated rooms or in the lockers.

- N.B. Point 4 of the instructions for students for the examinations of the European Baccalauréat européen.\*

Possession of a mobile phone and or of a smart watch is not allowed in examination centers and is considered a means to cheat.

Use of Mobile Phone – outside of class

I may **only** use my mobile phone in open areas which are situated:

- Outside all buildings
- In the cafeteria
- In room 6/7
- In the library (only for school related research)
- In the relaxation room B05
- In the Amphy 618

**I should be aware that taking photos or making videos of people without their permission is forbidden by law.**

Inside the buildings, any member of the educational team is entitled to ask a student to turn off their phones and to put it away.

#### **Failure to respect the rules regarding mobile phone use in school**

Failure to respect the school rules regarding mobile phone usage in the school will result in my mobile being confiscated and given to the Head Pedagogical Advisor. A letter will be sent by the educational advisors to either the parents or directly to the student, if he/she is over 18.

In accordance to rule 34 of the general rules of the European schools, the school is not responsible for any objects brought to school by students."