GFM Electronic Addiction Policy

Published Date:	01 September 2026
The Policy will be reviewed annually, or more regularly, in the light of any significant new developments. The next anticipated review date will be:	**01 September 2027**

This policy is applied at GFM alongside our school's vision, mission and values.

"Disconnect to Reconnect with Life."
Our school is committed to creating a safe, distraction-free, and supportive learning environment. This policy addresses both enforcement of the ban and support for students' digital wellbeing to reduce electronic addiction.

1. Purpose

This policy aims to safeguard the wellbeing, learning, and social development of students by addressing the growing concern of electronic addiction, including excessive use of smartphones, tablets, computers, gaming devices, and social media.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students from FS to Year 8 (growing to Year 13 in future years) during school hours, activities, and on school premises.

3. Objectives

- Ensure full compliance with UAE MOE directives on device use.
- Minimize distractions and protect academic focus in classrooms.
- Safeguard students against cyber risks and misuse of technology.
- Support students in developing healthy, balanced digital habits.
- Strengthen partnerships with parents and the wider school community

4. Cyber Addiction

Internet addiction, also known as problematic internet use or internet dependency, is a behavioural disorder characterized by excessive, compulsive, and often uncontrollable engagement with internet activities. This condition disrupts multiple areas of a person's life, undermining normal daily routines, social interactions, academic or professional responsibilities, and physical health. Unlike productive time spent online, internet addiction manifests as a persistent urge to remain connected, where virtual interactions and online engagement dominate experience and impair real-world functioning. For students, this may mean prioritizing online relationships over face-to-face friendships, or engaging compulsively in gaming, gambling, or continuous checking of smartphones and other digital devices.

Problematic use of smartphones and the internet has been linked to decreased overall life satisfaction, accompanied by a range of mental health challenges including depression, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, sleep deprivation, and obsessive-compulsive behaviours. Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to these effects due to their developmental stage.

Signs and symptoms of cyber addiction vary widely between individuals, but typically include:

- **Losing track of time:** Students often underestimate the amount of time spent online, with minutes easily expanding into hours. They may become irritable or upset when online activity is interrupted.
- **Difficulty completing responsibilities:** Academic work, homework, or household tasks may be neglected or rushed, leading to poor performance. Students may study late at night to compensate for time lost online.
- **Social withdrawal:** Excessive online engagement can cause isolation from family and friends. Students may neglect in-person relationships and prefer online contacts. They may feel misunderstood by peers offline yet find belonging through virtual communities.
- **Secretive or defensive behaviour:** Students might hide their internet use, lie about the duration or nature of their activities, or react defensively when challenged by family or friends about their screen time.
- **Emotional reliance on internet activities:** The internet may be used as an emotional escape, providing gratification, excitement, or relief from stress and negative moods. Physical symptoms linked to extended or compulsive internet use include:
    - Carpal tunnel syndrome, causing pain or numbness in hands and wrists.
    - Eye strain or dry eyes from prolonged screen exposure.
    - Headaches, neck or back pain contribute to poor posture or extended device use.
    - Disturbed sleep patterns due to overstimulation or blue light exposure.
- Recognising these signs can enable earlier intervention and support to foster healthier digital habits and overall wellbeing.

5. Prevention and Parental Guidance

Parents are key to preventing electronic addiction and supporting their children's balanced digital lives.

Prevention Tips for Parents:

- Establish clear screen time rules and device-free zones, such as during meals and before bedtime.
- Encourage open, judgment-free conversations about online activities and feelings. • Model healthy device use and promote offline hobbies, socialising, and physical activity.
- Use parental controls and monitoring apps to limit access to addictive content and track usage.
- Educate children on online safety, privacy, and respectful digital behaviour.
- Keep devices in common family areas for easier supervision

If You Notice Warning Signs:

- Observe patterns such as secretive use, mood changes, withdrawal from offline relationships, or declining school performance.
- Discuss concerns calmly and supportively; listen to your child's perspective.
- Seek advice or counselling from school counsellors, health professionals, or digital wellbeing experts if needed.
- Coordinate with the school's pastoral staff and Safeguarding Lead for additional support.
- Prompt, consistent action helps reduce risks and fosters healthier digital habits.

6. GFM IT Use and Social Media Control – School Policy Steps to control electronic addiction.

School Ownership and Admin Control:

- School devices are managed by the school's IT department.
- Device admin rights are tightly controlled; only school personnel can install or remove software and change settings.

Account Restrictions:

- Students use school-assigned Google accounts linked to the school domain. "Guest browsing" is disabled to prevent unauthorised usage.
- Sign-in is restricted to approved accounts only.

Social Media Access Controls:

- Strict whitelist policy allows access only to approved educational and safe social platforms. All other social media is blocked.

Web Filtering and Monitoring:

- Use of a robust web filter tailored by age groups to block inappropriate or distracting sites.
- Regular updating of whitelist/blacklist to adapt to emerging risks or uses.
- Real-time monitoring and logging of network activity for policy compliance.

Enforced Usage Protocols:

- School devices must be used for educational purposes only during school hours.
- Personal use, including unrestricted social media, gaming, or streaming, is prohibited on school devices.
- Installation of unauthorised apps or browser extensions is forbidden.

Education and Training:

- Students receive training on responsible digital citizenship and the reasons for device controls.
- Staff trained to detect and report misuse, support digital wellbeing, and enforce policies consistently.

Technical Support and Updates:

- Regular mandatory software and security updates on Chromebooks ensure latest protection is active.
- Inspections and audits of devices are conducted periodically to maintain compliance.

7. Parental Engagement:

- Parents are informed of policies and encouraged to monitor and support safe use at home.

8. In-School Device Usage

Mobile Phone Ban:

- Students are strictly forbidden from using or checking their mobile phones anywhere on school premises.
- All mobiles must be switched off and stored securely (if parents choose to send these with their child), completely out of sight.

No Device Policy for KS1:

- GFM operates a strict no device policy for all KS1 (Years 1–2) students; personal or school devices are not permitted in class.

Device Use in Lessons:

- Students may use iPads / laptops solely for teacher-directed educational tasks.
- Devices must not be used for games, social media, messaging, or any noninstructional purpose.
- Teachers enforce a "zero distraction" environment—devices are only on desks when needed for assigned work and put away immediately after.

Monitoring and Enforcement:

- Any violation of these rules results in immediate confiscation, parental notification, and further disciplinary measures as outlined in the school's Behaviour Policy.

Please read this policy alongside: *Anti-Bullying Policy, Inclusion Policy, Malpractice and Plagiarism Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Zero Tolerance Policy, Parent & Student Cybersecurity Guide, Filtering Policy, Acceptable Use Policy, Bring Your Own Device Policy, Curriculum Policy, Data Protection Guidance, Code of Conduct, Audio Video Conferencing Security Guide for Teachers, Student Password Policy, Remote Learning & Safeguarding Policy, Guidance for Safer Working Practice, IT Online Security Guidance for Parents, Safeguarding and Inclusion Guidance during Remote Learning, Mobile Phone Policy, Social Media Policy, Curriculum Policy and Learning & Teaching Policy*

Designation	Name	Signature	Date
Executive Principal/CEO/	**Akram Tarik**	Akram Tarik	**01 September 2026**
Principal	**Mia Chorfi**		**01 September 2026**

Next policy review date: 01 September 2027