



# *Grey High School*

*Founded in 1856*

Dear Parents

## **SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN OUR MODERN SOCIETY**

To be a parent of a teenager in this day and age is no easy job, especially since our young people are constantly bombarded by a variety of temptations in various forms. Modern society, unfortunately, has become extremely permissive, tempting her youthful contingent in so many ways, and encouraging them to ignore the advice of the “boring”, older generation. Therefore, it has become even more important to become more involved in the parenting of a child, and to take every possible step to ensure that your son is raised according to your wishes, not those of society. This, however, is not always easy, as today’s parents are often under immense pressure in terms of work commitments, financial obligations and social pressures. It is, sadly, our sons and daughters who take second place in a demanding world.

We, as a school, are extremely concerned about the current state of affairs with regard to many of our young people and their social activities. It has come to our attention on numerous occasions that many are engaging in behaviour which we feel is extremely detrimental to their well-being (possibly being conducted without their parents’ knowledge). Please be assured that we firmly believe that every child must live a balanced life. A healthy social life is of paramount importance to such a balance, however, when this sphere of our young people’s lives becomes destructive, it is critical that all of us take a careful look at expectations and accepted norms of behaviour from our young people.

We, therefore, would like to offer a few helpful tips with regard to monitoring the social life of your son, at the same time bearing in mind that in no way do we suggest a halt to such social activities, but rather a more “hands-on” and effective parental control thereof. The following ideas are suggested:

- Ensure that you know exactly where your son is going when he goes out, and if he is going to a party, the exact location of that party, the adults who will be present and the young person who is responsible for organizing it. There are certain venues where underage drinking and drug-taking are rife – make it your business to identify these and take the necessary steps to prevent your son from frequenting them.

- Ensure that you transport your son to and from the social activity (regardless of his embarrassment!!), or arrange for a lift-club so that responsible adults who are known to you will be transporting your son. Never allow him merely to inform you that he'll find his own way home, or that he'll organise a lift with a friend.
- If your son plans to spend the night away from home, know exactly where he is staying and which adults will be present, and insist on a contact telephone number.
- Always insist that your son comes to tell you (even if he has to wake you) that he is home after arriving back from a social function. Make every effort to meet him at the door, and spend some time speaking to him. Do not just let him shout from a distance, or slip off to bed.
- Discuss an appropriate curfew with your son and come to an agreement about it (remember that you have the overriding decision!). If you are unsure of what is fair, contact the parents of your son's friends and discuss the matter, thereby ensuring a level of consistency amongst the group.
- Insist that your son sends you an SMS when he leaves the party to return home.
- If you are unsure about the party he is attending, make enquiries – you have that right and responsibility.
- If your son requests permission to have friends over or to organize a party, make sure that you know about, and are happy with the number of people who will be attending, and that it is not an "open" party for anyone to attend. If during the party you are not happy with what is happening, step in and exercise your authority.
- For a possible standard of acceptable behaviour, it may be useful to refer to the Grey Code of Conduct and School Rules. These have been devised over a number of years, and can be used as a yardstick for determining what is socially acceptable behaviour amongst adolescent boys.
- It is a sad reality that drug cartels have made a deliberate effort to target young people, and often those who have access to a large amount of money fall prey to such temptations. Always try to be aware of how much money your son has access to, and what the source of that money is.

A further concern, which is often highlighted by parents, is the use of cellular phones, Blackberries, iPads and other mobile devices. There is no doubt that these devices are having an increasingly negative effect on the lives of our young people, and the inability to find a balanced approach to the use of such devices is a source of major concern. Many of our boys are complaining of being tired on a regular basis. However, after some investigation, it is apparent that a number of them are active on their phones until very late at night. A number of university students have commented to us that they often see Grey boys on various social media sites and in chatrooms as late as 1 am during the week. In addition to the use of these devices until late at night, it has been medically proven that exposure to these types of devices just before going to bed has a detrimental effect on the quality of a person's sleep. It is quite clear that many boys are unable to disengage from their mobile devices, and therefore, parental intervention is absolutely crucial. Unfortunately many boys are very clever at concealing the use of their mobile devices, and parents, therefore, have to be alert and vigilant in order to ensure a balanced use. Do not for one moment think that you do not have the right to take away your son's mobile device if you are concerned about his usage thereof. A common approach amongst many parents is to take away the device at a certain time in the evening and return it the next morning. Please do not be fooled into believing that the

device is not being used – boys are very clever at hiding their usage from their parents (e.g. using their phones under their duvets so that no light from the phone can be seen in a darkened room).

In no way do we wish to be prescriptive, as it is not our intention to override your parental role. It is merely our aim to advise in a sincere attempt to create a safer environment for young people. We are well aware that being a parent is a task that requires a great deal of energy, wisdom and commitment. We are also aware, however, that it is an incredible responsibility - one which cannot be taken lightly, regardless of the cost. To be a parent requires one to be unpopular at times, make tough decisions, and sometimes remain in control of one's son until he is able to accept increasing responsibility for his actions. However, we are called to make those decisions because we love those in our care and it is in their best interests. To back down and fail to make a stand could have devastating consequences.

Dealing with teenagers is an ongoing learning process and requires great patience (from parents and teenagers alike), but also, and even more importantly, requires a huge amount of communication. An open, honest relationship is a necessity for an effective relationship with your son.

We do not consider ourselves to be experts in this field, and we believe that at the end of the day the responsibility of disciplining a teenager should be borne by the parents. However, we do believe that we have a role to play, and therefore wish to share this responsibility. We are sure that many of you have comments and opinions regarding the above matters. Please feel free to put those in writing as your suggestions and feedback can make this a joint learning process. We look forward to hearing from you.

As has often been stated, education is predominantly about a partnership between yourselves as parents and ourselves as teachers. We attach an enormous value to this partnership, and it is in this light that we bring up these issues in an effort to raise healthy, balanced young men in an environment which stimulates them to grow to their full potential.

Yours faithfully



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