



St Nicholas Diocesan School

A Co-Educational, Independent, Anglican, Day and Boarding School for pupils from Grade RR-12

Thursday, 09 January 2025

High School Cell Phone Usage 2025

Dear Parents

Cell phone usage and the abuse thereof by students, is of huge concern to all academics and academic institutions across the world. Psychologists are troubled about the anxiety and mental health issues that are connected to cyberbullying and the abuse being incurred through social media sites. Survey findings are sounding the alarm on the negative effects that social media and cellphones are having on students' mental health, interpersonal skills, and learning. The problem has reached the stage where certain **countries** have or are about to institute legislation prohibiting the use of social media by school going aged children. The introduction of AI is compounding the issue. These concerns are not new. Childhood experts, from school principals to paediatricians, have been voicing concerns about the negative impact of cellphones and social media on students for some time - especially since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our generation of students that are currently in our care are being labelled the "Anxious Generation" – a generation of children that are continually worrying about what is happening on social media, posting what they are doing and looking at what others are doing. A generation endlessly worried about being accepted, liked or followed. The cell phone has become an obsession. Rates of anxiety and depression are at an all-time high. Jonathan Haidt, a Social Psychologist, has attributed this anxiety to the transition from a play- based childhood to a phone or screen based childhood, with factors such as smartphones, selfie cultures and social networks playing a role.

Taking a lead from the research being done, St Nicholas Diocesan School has revised the School's Phone Policy to protect our students and allow them valuable time away from their devices. This revised policy is in line with almost all independent schools in South Africa that belong to ISASA. At present, students may bring a cell phone to school and use until 07h20. At this time, the cell phone is to be turned off and may NOT be used until 14h30. Sadly, our students are not adhering to these guidelines and are continually being caught on their phones.

Cell phones are not needed during the academic school day. We would like your support in enforcing the policy of leaving cell phones / devices at home unless really needed. If your child brings a cell phone to school, they will sign in their cell phone when they arrive on the premises during their register class period at 07h20. The cell phone shall be

M & E
PROGRAMME



P.O. Box 3310
Pietermaritzburg, 3200

(t) 033 345 1566 /7
(w) www.stnicholas.co.za

(e) reception@stnicholas.co.za
34 Jabu Ndlovu Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201



ourstnicholas



@StNicsPMB



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placed in a purpose made cell phone box and placed in a secure office for the duration of the day. Added insurance cover will be taken out by the school in the event of a theft.

At 14h30, cell phones are to be collected from the register class and signed out. Should parents need to contact their children during the day, the students will only receive this message at 14h30, when the phone is turned back on again. In cases of emergencies, the parents are asked to contact the School Secretary, where a message can be sent through to the student concerned. We are hoping that fewer students will actually bring cell phones on to the campus.

The school understands that students rely on their phones to phone for transport. This can be done at the end of the day, when their cell phones are returned to them. Should a student forget to collect their phone, the phone shall remain in the safe overnight. Should a student not hand their phone in and be caught in possession of or using it during the school day, the phone shall be confiscated for a period of two weeks (1st offence).

This new structure will be implemented from January 2025 and I look forward to working with you, the parents, to assist us in the implementation of this policy for the well-being of our children.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any serious concerns regarding this matter.

Kind regards

SG Topper

Principal

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