



# TORQUAY GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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HEADTEACHER: MS S FORSTER | FOUNDED 1915 | ACADEMY TRUST

16<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians

It seems like a lifetime ago that I wrote my first introduction letter to you on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Since then, your child has achieved so much and are a credit to you and the school. I am incredibly proud of all they have accomplished in such extraordinary circumstances as I know you will be too. I will share some of the great events that have happened this term in my final newsletter tomorrow.

Today I write to you about safeguarding and wellbeing.

Changes to the school this term have been implemented with student safety at the forefront and I am proud of the way in which our students have embraced these. These significant changes have included:

- The school site is now secure. When your child is in school at TGGs you can be confident that only approved adults are also on the school site.
- ID badges for visitors, staff and Sixth Form students mean everyone can identify any individual in school.
- Staff are more visible at the start of the day, lunch time and the end of the day. Some students have labelled this 'patrol' but this is a usual teacher duty and part of our care in looking after your child. In January, this will be extended to the Paddock because the students have asked for a more visible staff presence there at the end of the day.

When speaking with students throughout the school on a one to one basis they have shown great maturity in understanding why these changes have been important. In fact, many of the students have shared that they feel more secure as a result.

As Headteacher I want to be able to look every parent in the eye and say their child is safe here and we are doing everything we can for their wellbeing. Currently the relaxed use of mobile phones stops me from being able to do this.

I know from speaking with many of you, the battle with mobile phones is currently similar in school to the one at home. For this generation of students, the mobile phone often takes priority over face to face communication (and fun). I am filled with sadness when I walk the school at lunchtime and see students all in the same room together with their heads down looking at their mobile phones. This is spread across the whole school and it is not good for their wellbeing. As they are using their own mobile data, it also means I cannot keep them safe as our secure filtering systems are bypassed. They can be accessing anything on the internet and talking to anyone. I hope you understand why this sits uncomfortably with me and why it needs to change.

The students are at their happiest when they are engaged with each other, having face to face interactions or involved in the many clubs that are on offer at lunch times. Whether this is talking about schoolwork, ambitions and hopes or even what they thought about their lunch – it is better when they are talking!

As Headteacher I have a moral obligation to change the way they spend their time at break and lunch, allowing them to talk and enjoy the physical presence of each other.

Therefore, from Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January we are introducing the rule of no phones to be used during the school day. Instead they are asked to talk, listen and be present. Students have shared via student voice that they would attend more clubs, getting more from their school experience, if they were not on their phone. In summary, the purpose of this policy change is to keep our student's safe and improve their wellbeing.

I know that many students travel a significant distance to school and as a parent I understand why you would prefer your child to have their phone with them at school so that you can contact them re travel arrangements if needed – to enable this, students can use their phone prior to the start and after the end of the day.

If you have an urgent message for your child during the school day then of course this can be passed to them in an appropriate way. We ask you to contact the school reception on 01803 613215 and then we will ensure that the message is passed to your child. Our Heads of Year are all non-teaching colleagues and are an asset in these circumstances especially if the news is difficult.

During lessons, the teachers may invite students to use their phones for an educational purpose and this will continue to support their learning as appropriate.

To keep this as simple as possible, the approach will be '**See It – Lose It**'. This means that students (Year 7-11) will not be allowed the use of their mobile phone during the school day unless instructed by a member of staff as part of a lesson. This new approach will not affect 6<sup>th</sup> Form Students and they will be allowed to continue to use their phones in the Sixth Form area or when conducting personal study, but as role models to other students we will ask them not to use their phones around the main school when they are moving between lessons.

Phones are a critical part of their life and our PSHE curriculum includes age appropriate content on online safety and appropriate use of technology.

We have a small group of students that rely on their mobile phones to manage a medical condition. They will of course still be able to use their phone for this important purpose.

Our hopes are that students will take a more active approach in engaging with some of the fantastic extra-curricular activities available to them (see our Clubs List attached). These activities all support our wider student Wellbeing Programme – [click here](#) to find out more.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S. J. Forster' with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Ms Sarah Forster BSc (Hons), PGCE, MA, NPQH**  
Headteacher  
Torquay Girls' Grammar School