

Risk Taking and Parties

Dear Parents

The College recognises that parties are an important social outlet for teenagers and under the right circumstances they should be encouraged. However, periodically we as a school feel the need to share our experience of teenage living and give a friendly warning to parents about such activities, because large parties for our young people can sometimes go wrong. This is why the State Government at the end of last year amended laws pertaining to Liquor Licensing and the supply of alcohol to minors, a matter which we raised with you earlier this term.

In the vast majority of cases, Scotch families hold successful parties which go well. Nevertheless, while our duty of care does not officially extend to private parties, it is appropriate and responsible to provide some guidance to assist parents in dealing with what can be a most difficult and sensitive area with adolescent children. It is a demonstration of our concern for the welfare of your children and our intention that they should make the most of their education at Scotch, uninterrupted by an unforeseen social incident that can leave a long-term mark on their lives.

The main focus of this letter concerns service of alcohol at parties. However, we believe minors should not smoke cigarettes. South Australian laws support this view and also make other drugs, such as marijuana and amphetamines, illegal. Leading expert Paul Dillon each year educates our students about responsible behaviour at parties. This visit complements our Health curriculum program.

Quantities of alcohol, cigarettes and illegal drugs have been available at teenage parties and informal gatherings in social settings across the western world for many years. There would be very few 16-year olds who have not been exposed to such substances when attending parties or gatherings.

We therefore offer some suggestions below in an attempt to minimise potential hazards, particularly in the area of alcohol consumption:

Planning Parties

- Remember at all times that as parents we can say NO.
- Parties should be planned well ahead.
- Establish a guest list (we suggest no more than 25) to minimise the possibility of gate-crashers, and issue individual invitations. Minors should not organise events where alcohol will be consumed.
- Information on invitations should include the address and telephone number of the host parents, start and finish times, information about the intended consumption or not of alcohol, supervision plans and an RSVP date.
- Neighbours and the local police should be informed of the date of the party.
- It is unwise to serve alcohol at young people's parties (especially for those under 18).
- There are legal issues in relation to the sale and supply of alcohol, as well as requirements concerning the wellbeing of those consuming it.
- Parents (hosts) must be the judge of this, taking into account the age of their guests, the size of the group and their knowledge of their child's friends.
- If you do choose to serve alcohol to minors limit the amount of alcohol and make this fact widely known to parents and students Be prepared to monitor it as part of your responsibility

for hosting. This will require a process for alcohol distribution. Drinks are often smuggled in or hidden at the party venue prior to the event. Vigilance is all. Check that access to back yards is limited and storage of bags is adequate.

- Never allow guests to leave the party and then return later. These guests may be using you and your function to disguise errant behaviour elsewhere.
- Check guest lists off at your door. Never permit entry to gate crashers or any others whom you have not specifically invited. The use of social media has made the problem of gate crashing even worse. For any function it is wise to have the assistance of friends and – depending on size - the services of a security firm for the sole purpose of supervision. It is important to monitor behaviour that is happening out the front or close to your property.
- Supervising adults should move among the guests from time to time. As hosts, parents are responsible for the safety and welfare of other people's sons and daughters. Be visible.

Below is a sample text invite from parent to parent.

xxxx & I are hosting xxxxxxxx's 18th birthday party (dates and times) & your daughter/son has been invited.

As your child is not yet 18, by law we require your consent if they are to be served alcohol.

There will be many responsible adults at the party who will supervise throughout the night. Please text me back your consent & son/daughter's name which will allow entry into the party.

Any queries please feel free to call us.

*Warm regards,
Xxxxxxxxxx (mobile number of inviting parent)*

If your child is attending a party

- Call the host.
- Always check the supervision at the party.
- Reserve the right to enter the venue yourself.
- Deliver your child to the function yourself and always collect him or her at a previously agreed time. Most young people are far more likely to drink or smoke if they think they won't see their parents that evening.
- Be sure that your child knows the strategies to avoid trouble and is knowledgeable about the risks of substances and situations.
- Make special checks if the party involves an overnight stay. This is a popular stratagem for allowing the effects of behaviour you would not condone to wear off.

Further information can be obtained from the following websites:

<http://darta.net.au>

www.dassa.sa.gov.au (Drug and Alcohol Services Council)

www.alcohol.gov.au Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol (with hints and

tips on safe partying)

www.olgc.sa.gov.au (information on liquor licensing laws in South Australia)

For your information, the College has excellent educational programs about drugs and alcohol. The biological and social issues relating to alcohol and drug use are discussed in Years 8 and 9 Health and in Years 10 and 11 in the Alcohol, Drugs and Safe Driving Program. The College takes a strong stance against alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other sources of difficulty for young people of school age. I ask for all parents to work with us on these issues at all times.

You may also contact either Kelly Sharp, Shawn Kasbergen or Dale Bennett to discuss any questions you may have around safe partying and the College's position.

Most young people will do the right thing most of the time but your example and leadership as a parent is crucial. Do not be afraid to exercise good judgement and do not be afraid of your child. He or she may appear to be mature, but this is not necessarily matched by mature and responsible behaviour. It is possible for the best young person to be carried away by peers and the euphoria of the moment.

The most successful students are usually those who have been encouraged in the right ways and who display habits and behaviours which have been provided by the strong leadership of good parents.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John H. Newton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Dr J Newton
Principal