

# Pymble Ladies' College

16 October 2024

**Re: Four important new rules and guidelines for technology use announced to students in this week's assembly.**

Dear Parent or Carer

Hopefully you have had a lovely holiday break with your daughters and that the first day back went well, despite the wet conditions.

## The very real challenge

The holiday break provided me with an opportunity to reflect more deeply on a conversation I had with a group of Secondary School students during the last week of term. It left me deeply worried about the impact of social media on our young people and the destructive culture that seems to be, overall, getting worse globally.

I'm a big believer in technology for good but when our students described what was happening on apps like TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat, I knew something had to change.

What really shook me was how social media has, in the students' words, "normalised" completely unacceptable terms such as 'kill yourself'. [This article](#) gives some context about the history of the phrase.

After consulting with our Deputy Principal – Students (K-12), Mr Justin Raymond, our Wellbeing team and our academic staff, collectively we have decided that we cannot stand by and allow this to continue. We have to try something new, harness our courage, and act in the best interests of our students.

## The very real risks

Many of you live with the daily worry of how to control your child's use of technology, and will most likely be aware of the huge body of [research](#) regarding the impact technology is having on our young people. To summarise, the overuse of technology can lead to:

- Reduced academic outcomes
- Increased risk of cyberbullying
- Decreased healthy relationships
- Increased anxiety and depression
- Decreased sleep
- Decreased family dynamics / relationships
- Enabling harmful and sexual content to be viewed

These risks are significantly amplified for children with reduced self-esteem.

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**Dr Kate Hadwen** | PRINCIPAL

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## **Our response – starting today**

We want a better world for our girls, and so do they. We asked a cross section of students from different year groups to come up with suggestions that would lead to real change. These all take effect from today, with a grace period of one week for actions 2, 3 and 4.

1. **The use of 'KYS' or the words 'kill yourself' is banned.**  
The consequence of using this phrase, or something similar, will result in an immediate one-day in-school suspension, followed by a meeting with parents the following day.
2. **All student laptops and iPads must be closed at the start of each lesson.**  
They can only be opened when the teacher invites students to do so.
3. **No technology is to be used during recess and lunch.**  
Students may only use their phones to purchase food at Archie's Café, where we have staff on duty.
4. **Air pods, or headphones are not to be worn at school unless special permission has been sought and given.**  
This includes when students are walking onto the school grounds.

In addition to implementing more stringent guidelines regarding technology use, we are delighted that Emeritus Professor Donna Cross, who sits on our Health Care Advisory Panel, will be working alongside our wellbeing team this term. Prof Cross is a global expert in interventions that support the prevention of bullying, cyberbullying and associated mental health harms among young people.

## **Taking wellbeing one step further in 2025**

On Monday night's incoming Year 7 parent information session, we launched another new initiative – the *Pymble* Wise Phone. This involves partnering with HMD and the [Better Phone Project](#) to provide mobile phones that have **no access to social media** to students in Years 4 to 7 (2025), noting Junior School students may opt for no phone at all.

While we are still finalising the details, the College will fund the phone, and parents will fund the SIM and Plan. The College will also identify and manage appropriate apps and features students can access.

In Year 7, for example, we will allow access to:

- 'Find my daughter' plus Navigation
- Spotify
- Bluetooth
- Tap payments
- Camera
- WhatsApp

We will be contacting parents of Years 3 to 5 students shortly to provide them with more information. In the meantime, if you are interested in joining the *Pymble* Wise Phone initiative for 2025, please email [wisephone@pymblelc.nsw.edu.au](mailto:wisephone@pymblelc.nsw.edu.au).

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## **Seeking your support and understanding**

As a school, we want your daughter to be happy, healthy and to achieve to her potential. This is only possible when we work together as a united, committed community.

Our team has worked hard to implement these changes, and I'm incredibly proud of the courageous decisions we continue to make to ensure we consistently work towards what is in the best interests of your daughter.

Thank you for understanding that all our decisions come from a place of deep care, and for your support of these steps to make the world a better place for our girls.



**Dr Kate Hadwen**  
**Principal**