



# MERCEDES COLLEGE

COMPASSION LOYALTY JUSTICE INTEGRITY RESPONSIBILITY MUTUAL RESPECT

## Guidelines for parents and students with respect to hosting and attending parties.

### Purpose of these Guidelines and Procedures

Out of a concern for the continued welfare and safety of students attending functions out of school, the following guidelines and procedures are strongly suggested to parents, guests and hosts of social events. These guidelines are developed within the context that young people need and want to socialise, yet may also need access to education, support and supervision in order to do this successfully. Mercedes College is committed to working with families in order to develop responsible approaches to socialising among the student body, recognising that the values of the College are important to keep in mind when planning and conducting social events. The Mercy Keys provide a guide to the attributes that we expect students to uphold when engaging in social activities either at school or out of school hours.

It is important that in the context of socialising among adolescents that parents are actively involved in the planning, preparation and supervision of events. This may include parents getting to know their children's friends and other parents in their child's social network. Families working together to assist in supporting children to develop skills in socialising may assist in increasing independence and responsibility among adolescents.

Mercedes College is clear in that it has no authority or responsibility in relation to parties that are held at private residences. However, these guidelines are intended to gather support amongst the parent body to provide some consistency in the operation of social gatherings involving your children. In addition, gatherings that occur immediately prior to, or immediately after, official College events have an increased level of concern for the College as these events are more likely to have an impact on relationships between students that may influence interactions between students while at school. Events such as after parties following Senior School Socials, Intercollegiate competitions, Graduations, and end of term celebrations are events that the College strongly advises parents against hosting as they can become large, risky undertakings. These events also have a high potential to generate outcomes that may affect the pastoral and academic needs of students upon return to school.

Whilst the College has no authority or responsibility in regard to parties on private residences, the College may elect to respond to matters or incidents that occur at such events where these situations consist of a breach of any of the College's policies. In particular, students who engage in behaviour at private occasions that lead to harm, distress or injury to other students may find that the College will enforce consequences appropriate to the incident. The College will respond directly to any matter that occurs on the College site that follows from a social occasion at a private residence.

The guidelines that follow reflect some of the concerns of the staff, students and parents of Mercedes College, and are developed in connection to some publically available advice in this area. Some of these support materials are identified in part 4 of this document, as further information to be considered by parents and students. Senior College staff have collaborated on developing these guidelines and are requesting that these are reviewed prior to the holding of any social gathering.



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## 1. Responsibilities of Students and Parents in hosting parties

- During Term time, parties should not be held on a week night
- Set an appropriate finish time for events held on weekends, which allows those attending to arrive home at a reasonable hour, and be appropriate for the age of guests involved
- Students are not to use broad social media based invitations to invite guests to parties, or to use the College's name or image in social media communication in relation to private social events (for example, the creation of Snapchat filters that use the name or image of the College)
- Students are expected to ensure that the College's reputation and standing in the wider community is upheld. Examples such as sharing images or recordings of students in College uniform while at a party via social media platforms may result in the public perception of the College being brought into question. Images or recordings of students must not be shared on social media platforms without their permission.
- Students are not to attend parties
- Students are advised to involve their parents in planning parties and the supervision of gatherings
- Students are advised to keep the numbers of guests to a manageable level, appropriate for the location and the level of supervision for the event
- Prepare for the possibility of uninvited guests and how this will be addressed if required
- Ensure that there are responsible male and female adults in attendance for the duration of the gathering, and it is advocated that responsible adults are actively engaged in supervision of adolescents throughout the event
- Alcohol **should not** be provided at parties. The majority of students are not legally able to purchase alcohol and parties may involve students from a variety of year levels
- Guests should be of a similar age. Involving students from a wide range of year levels may increase risks to younger students
- There **MUST** be no alcohol if the party has any connection to any College event (for example end of season sporting team break ups)
- Parties may lead to scenarios where illicit substances may be available. Every step must be taken to prevent this possibility. Consider strategies such as having a dedicated room to store bags for guests which is supervised, notice if the same guest returns regularly to their bag, be aware that some young people may look to store alcohol in containers such as perfume bottles to avoid detection, for example.
- Parents have the right to set the standards expected at events they host. Seek the support of those assisting in supervising the event to maintain these standards for the duration of the occasion
- Students should be discouraged from driving themselves and others to and from parties.
- Police should be notified of the party – this may assist in helping the hosts in the event of unwanted scenarios occurring

## 2. Responsibilities of Parents of Guests at parties

- Parents are encouraged to travel with their child to parties, and to greet the hosts at the door before departing, ensuring their child is at the location of the party
- It is advised to check the details of the party with the host/s
- It is helpful to be available by phone for the duration of the party in the event that the host/s need to contact you regarding your child
- Parents may have expectations and standards that may differ to those of the host. Parents are encouraged to communicate these with their child and revisit these as their child matures and their socialising adapts accordingly
- Parties may present challenging social situations for some children. Parents are advised to discuss with their children appropriate strategies to cope with challenging situations



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## 3. Parents

Parents are asked

- That children must be guided and supported in their growth and development through adolescence
- That the College is prepared to work in partnership with parents and students in developing skills in socialising
- That the College may contact them if there are concerns raised with College staff regarding an event that they may be hosting
- That the College reserves the right to investigate scenarios arising from parties that occur under the supervision of parents. If situations occur at out of hours social events that have a detrimental impact on the relationships or behaviour of students during the school day, then the relevant Head of School may discuss this with students/parents and in some circumstances this may lead to the imposition of consequences for students if there are breaches of expectations under the Personal Responsibility Policies of the College

## 4. Further information to be considered

The following links may be of use as resources to assist in discussing hosting parties and also the attendance of your child at parties hosted by others.

Paul Dillon – blog for parents on hosting a ‘safe as possible’ party

<http://doingdrugs-darta.blogspot.com.au/2015/10/three-simple-tips-how-to-host-safe-as.html>

<http://darta.net.au/wordpress-content/uploads/2017/03/HOSTING-TEENAGE-PARTY.pdf>

The Federation of Catholic School Parent Communities – information on safe parties for teenagers

[http://www.parentfederation.catholic.edu.au/files/11624/Safe\\_Teenage\\_Parties.pdf](http://www.parentfederation.catholic.edu.au/files/11624/Safe_Teenage_Parties.pdf)

Raising Children Network – tools and tips on teenage parties

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/parties\\_early\\_teens.html/context/1141](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/parties_early_teens.html/context/1141)

Party Safe – advice and tips for a safe party

<http://www.safeparty.com.au/party-safe-for-parents/>

Legal Services Commission of South Australia – advice on relevant legislation when hosting parties at private residences

<http://www.lawhandbook.sa.gov.au/ch06s01s02.php>

SA Police – guide to safe partying

[https://www.police.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/2688/party\\_safe\\_booklet.pdf](https://www.police.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2688/party_safe_booklet.pdf)

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