

St Andrew's College Middle School

Family Smartphone Agreement



St Andrew's College

Purpose

This agreement supports families to introduce smartphones responsibly. It sets clear expectations that promote safety, well-being, and healthy habits aligned with St Andrew's College values.

Golden Rules

- no devices in bedrooms or bathrooms;
- screen time is limited to an agreed daily maximum (outside school work), with curfews;
- social media is a monitored privilege. If allowed, parents may check apps and messages at any time without argument;
- the phone belongs to the parent/caregiver. Your child is leasing its use. Misuse may result in temporary loss of access;
- devices must be charged in a shared living space, not bedrooms.

Responsible Use and Safety

- passwords for accounts on this device are shared with parents/caregivers;
- location-sharing is limited to trusted family members. Parents/caregivers decide what is safe for apps that access location;
- respectful communication online: no bullying, harassment, or sharing of inappropriate content;

- report concerning messages immediately: put the phone down and talk to a parent/caregiver;
- do not text and drive, the phone remains off while driving;
- family time is device-free e.g. meals, car rides, and special events.

Apps and Social Media

Apps require parental approval. No downloading or deleting apps without discussion. Social media access may be introduced gradually at the parent's discretion, with ongoing oversight.

Spaces and Times for Use

At home, phones are used in shared spaces only. Bedrooms and bathrooms are phone-free.

Consequences

Breaking these rules or not living our family values will lead to agreed consequences e.g. temporary removal of the device, reduced privileges, or additional monitoring.



Family Settings (to be completed together)

Daily screen time limit (outside school work): _____ hours

Weekly social media allowance (platforms and hours): _____

Apps allowed at this stage: _____

Parent monitoring tools in use (e.g., Screen Time/Digital Well-being): _____

Code word/emoji for a discreet pickup request: _____

Curfew for phone use: _____. ____ pm; device checked in at: _____. ____ pm

Consequences for breaking rules (agreed, reasonable, consistent): _____

Agreement and Signatures

We understand that learning to use a smartphone well is a process. We agree to the rules and values in this contract and will review it together regularly.

Parent/Caregiver Name: _____

Date: DD / MM / YYYY

Parent/Caregiver Signature: _____

Youth Name: _____

Date: DD / MM / YYYY

Youth Signature: _____



Parent Guide: Why These Rules Matter (Research-backed)

- keeping devices out of bedrooms protects sleep and mental health. Night-time smartphone use is consistently associated with shorter sleep, more awakenings, and poorer next-day well-being (see references);
- focus on balance and quality of use, not just quantity. International paediatric guidance recommends personalised family media plans that emphasise sleep, physical activity, school work, and positive online activity rather than rigid hour-based limits (see references);
- charging in shared spaces reduces late-night use and makes monitoring easier. This helps enforce curfews and device-free bedrooms (see references);
- social media is powerful and mixed in its impacts. Benefits include connection and creativity; risks include social comparison, sleep disruption and cyberbullying. Introduce gradually with oversight and open conversations (see references);
- location-sharing should be limited to trusted adults. Broad or peer-group location sharing can introduce privacy and safety risks, including coercive control (see references);
- active parental monitoring and clear expectations reduce risk behaviours and support mental health (see references).

Practical Tools and Tips

- set up iOS Screen Time or Android Digital Wellbeing, e.g. Google Family Link, for app limits and downtime;
- use content filters, e.g. DNS filtering on home Wi-Fi, and age-appropriate app ratings;
- model healthy habits: put phones away during meals and conversations;
- learn how Snapchat and TikTok work. Understand the platforms your children are using;
- schedule regular check-ins to review activity, privacy settings, and new apps;
- create a simple response plan for cyberbullying, sexting, or exposure to explicit content.

References & Further Reading

American Academy of Pediatrics – Family Media

Plan and screen time guidance (2016–2025 updates):
<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/media-and-children/>

HealthyChildren.org – Make a Family Media Plan (AAP): <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/How-to-Make-a-Family-Media-Use-Plan.aspx>

Common Sense Media – Constant Companion: A Week in the Life of a Young Person’s Smartphone Use (2023): https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2023-cs-smartphone-research-report_final-for-web.pdf

JAMA Pediatrics Meta-analysis: Bedtime access to media devices and sleep outcomes (2016): <https://www.screenfreesleep.org/research>

UNC Winston Center Summary: Overnight smartphone use and adolescent wake events (2023): <https://winstoncenter.unc.edu/overnight-smartphone-use-can-disrupt-adolescent-sleep/>

Netsafe New Zealand – Online Safety Parent Toolkit: https://resource.netsafe.org.nz/ST_Online-Safety-Parent-Toolkit-English.pdf

New Zealand Ministry of Education – Digital technology: Safe and responsible use in schools (2024/2025): <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/digital-technology-safe-and-responsible-use-digital-technology-schools-guide>

RNZ – Location sharing risks and coercive control (2025): <https://www.rnz.co.nz/life/relationships/family-is-location-sharing-actually-making-teens-less-safe>

CDC – Parental monitoring and teen health (2024): <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-youth-parent-resources/positive-parental-practices/parental-monitoring.html>



One-Page Family Smartphone Checklist

- Devices stay out of bedrooms/bathrooms.
- Daily screen-time cap agreed: _____ hours (outside school work).
- Curfew: device checked in at _____. ____ pm; charging in living space.
- Passwords shared with parents/caregivers.
- Social media (if allowed) is monitored; parents/caregivers can check anytime.
- Location sharing limited to trusted adults; review app settings monthly.
- Family device-free zones: meals, car rides, special events.
- Code word/emoji for a pickup request: _____
- Response plan: who we tell and what we do if something goes wrong.

