

## SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITHIN BOARDING

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Some boarding students experience problems with social adjustment. Teenagers quite often set up active social patterns and enjoy a certain amount of independence. Due to the nature of the boarding community, and the direct responsibility of the staff to the parents and boarding students and the diversity of our “family” some students, at times, find some of the day-to-day workings a bit hard to adjust to, especially early on during their time in boarding.

To help them cope with this new lifestyle, it would be beneficial to discuss with them some of the differences that might be experienced. If you want more background information please do not hesitate to phone the Head of Boarding or Senior Boarding House Assistant with your queries. It may be of benefit to encourage your child to make the contact if they are indeed worried about any aspect of boarding life.

Success in this matter lies in the understanding that a large community, such as ours, is in some respects reasonably inflexible. It is essential that students arrive at an understanding of what is acceptable and what is not and why these things are so. A new boarder has to quickly realise that some social patterns will not fit the new situation and that they must take steps to adjust their behaviour accordingly rather than try to change the community. Our rules and expectations have been put in place with the boys and girls’ best interests and security in mind.

### HOMESICKNESS

It is perfectly normal for boys and girls living in completely new surroundings, and in a structured environment, to feel homesick. Often homesickness reflects a very positive relationship with family and friends and the home environment. We have included a number of observations on this problem and feel that our suggestions may help your child to overcome this very real difficulty as quickly as possible.

1. We believe it is important for them to realise that homesickness is perfectly normal and that they are likely to feel homesick from time to time, and that it is something that they should not hide from but face up to and try and talk about.
2. It is important for you, as parents, to emphasise the need for complete involvement in and out of the classroom. The best way to prevent homesickness is for boys and girls to keep busy. Involvement in sport, games, music and other activities is essential and should be encouraged whenever possible.
3. It is important for you to realise that you will hear of, or experience, the worst of your child’s homesickness. Boarding students will tend to text, email or ring when they are feeling at their lowest. They may also tend to exaggerate the worst features of what they are experiencing in order to get your attention.
4. Poor grades and difficulty with work are often closely related to homesickness in the early stages.
5. A recurrence of the problem is quite common after returning from term holidays. However, it is usually overcome very quickly after returning to school and settling in with normal routines and friends. It is important to note that too many day outings or overnight stays over the first few weekends of term can cause great difficulty for your child making the break from home. We encourage you to let your child experience the normal activities of the boarding house, particularly during weekends, and be mindful that taking them out of boarding too often for little ‘breaks’ from boarding can actually compound the problem and prevent them from settling into their boarding life.
6. Please encourage your child to see the Head of Boarding, Senior Boarding House Assistant, the Health Centre staff or the School Counsellor if the problem seems to be reaching intolerable levels. Often discussing the problem with someone not directly involved is of great assistance. Encouraging your child to speak with an older student, such as one of the student leaders, who has likely experienced the same thing can also be of great comfort to them.

We do not wish to alarm you in any way, but purely make you aware of a very common and usually short-term problem. It is also our aim to help you and your child cope with the difficult settling in period. It is best

to deal with any problems that may arise in the early stages, as this is advantageous for all concerned. Understanding, patience and firmness would appear to be the most important qualities necessary for quick and relatively smooth adjustment to the new environment.

Above all, please do not hesitate to contact your child's Senior Boarding House Assistant or Head of Boarding if you wish to discuss the problem.

As well as your child experiencing homesickness, it is not uncommon for you, as parents, to also feel "homesick for your child". The following are a few observations that might help you cope with your own sense of loss.

1. The sense of loss may not be as obvious for you as it is for your child because your daily routine continues. Acknowledging the sense of loss for you is just as important.
2. When a child goes to boarding school there is a change in the structure of parenting because the daily dependence of the boy and girl is no longer present. Your child will quickly establish an increasing level of independence and often parents are caught unawares by this sudden move of their child from childhood towards the adult world. If your child is making this transition well it is a sign that, as parents, you have prepared them well for adulthood.
3. Despite planning for many years for your child to attend a boarding school, the reality comes suddenly – one day they are at home and the next they are not. Do not underestimate the effect it may have on you, and feel free to contact your child's Senior Boarding House Assistant or Head of Boarding about your own concerns as well as those of your child.

## **BULLYING**

The Grammar community does not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form.

Bullying is ongoing and unwanted behaviour that is deliberate and causes harm. Types of bullying are:

Verbal

- Name calling, teasing and threatening comments.

Physical

- Hitting / punching.
- Damaging others possessions.

Social

- Lying/spreading rumours.
- Excluding others.

Cyber

- Posting pictures.
- Making hurtful comments.

What should students do:

- Ask them to stop.
- Tell them you don't like it.
- Tell a trusted adult, Mum, Dad or Teacher.
- If your friends are being bullied let a trusted adult know.

Bullying has negative consequences for all concerned and is therefore taken very seriously. Should students experience bullying (either directly or as a bystander), they are expected to tell another member of the boarding community so that it can be resolved efficiently.

## FAMILY ISSUES

These do occur and boarding staff need to be informed immediately. This enables staff to be prepared and to provide the best possible care for your child.

## DEATH OF A FAMILY MEMBER/FRIEND AND/OR COMMUNITY TRAGEDY

In the unfortunate event that the above may occur it is **absolutely imperative** that contact is made as quickly as possible with the boarding staff (preferably either with your child's Senior Boarding House Assistant or Head of Boarding) to discuss the best strategies for informing the boys or girls involved.

## PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR BOARDING STUDENTS

The school counsellor is a professional practitioner who provides a free confidential counselling and support service to students and their families around a wide range of issues. These may include mental health difficulties, risk assessment, conflict resolution, grief and loss, stress management and relationship issues. The school will also liaise with parents and external agencies where appropriate, to better assist and support students. The service can be accessed directly by families, students or referred through Senior Boarding House Assistants or Head of Boarding. The school psychologist is a registered practitioner who can provide developmental, cognitive and educational assessments to assist learning, engagement and positive outcomes for students. The school psychologist works in collaboration and consultation with staff, school, parents and other professionals and agencies and can assist with learning plans and educational adjustments. Generally students are referred by teaching staff but parents may contact the school if they wish to arrange a referral.

