PARENTAL GUIDANCE – COVID19 AND REMOTE LEARNING
SENIOR STUDENTS

The purpose of this communication is to provide parents or carers of students in senior school with guidance on the school's transition to remote learning, as well as tips for managing children at home and their online usage, including social media and apps.

COVID-19 and the school's response

The school has been proactively managing the spread of coronavirus and has been guided by state and federal government departments on the impact this has on the school and our students. Our key priority is the safety and wellbeing of all students, staff and the community. Consistent with this commitment and governmental guidance and directions, the school has made the decision to move its education to remote learning. While we appreciate that the move to remote learning may present some challenges, we believe it will assist you and your children to comply with social distancing measures and limit the spread of the coronavirus.

The school remains committed to providing continuity of education to all students and has been working hard on its strategy to do so. We appreciate that your child may be undertaking their final year assessments and this may create additional stress for you and your family. These are unprecedented times and we appreciate your patience and support while we devise solutions to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

This document aims to provide you with some more information on remote learning. We recognise that by moving to remote learning, your children will primarily be at home and this may raise unique challenges for you and your families. We anticipate that because social distancing laws have meant that your children have not been able to gather with their friends, an increase in the use of social media and online usage may take place. We have provided you with some additional tips and guidance on managing these risks below.

Remote learning

Remote learning refers to providing education to our students through technology and online platforms. It may include teachers and other staff members:

- providing lessons to or interacting with students online (whether live or pre-recorded, with or without video) through a series of platforms (e.g. MyPenola, the college email network);

- messaging, interacting or communicating with students (and their family members) via online platforms including but not limited to Mypenola;

- calling students over the phone or any other web-based platform; and

- emailing students.

Students will only communicate with teachers and staff members through these platforms. They will also be provided with online lessons, assessments, homework and the opportunity to ask questions through these platforms only. This is to ensure the privacy and security of communication and information.

Students working from home

Students will be provided with homework and tasks that they can complete at home, and our teachers have been working hard to adjust the curriculum to allow this to occur. Assessments will also be undertaken online where possible. Naturally, there will need to be some changes and teachers will communicate with students regarding what this will involve in practice.

We encourage students to have a study set up where possible. This may be at a desk in their room, in a study or at a table in a common area. To ensure the health and safety of students, the room should be well-lit with a comfortable chair and any hazards such as things that the student could trip over should be removed. We understand that there may be several family members working from home and we appreciate any effort you can make to create a productive educative space with limited distractions.

Students will also need internet access to connect with the school's online platforms. **If you have no or limited internet at home please make contact with the school for assistance.**

We will set expectations with students regarding online learning and their behaviour. However, we will need your support in helping ensure that students are limiting the use of their personal devices such as phones during school hours and that they are continuing to focus on their education. Students will also be provided with an Online Learning Code of Conduct which sets out expectations of behaviour when engaging with the school's online learning platforms and technology. We also encourage you to read this Code of Conduct and discuss it with your child as failure to comply with it could lead to disciplinary action.

Keeping students safe online

The school remains committed to the safety of all children. We recognise that moving to remote learning has the potential to create some risks to children, and have worked hard to ensure the safety of students online. We have done this by:

- only using school approved platforms to provide online education to our students;

- ensuring that only authorised teachers and staff members have access to the approved platforms;

- providing all teachers and staff members with a Remote Learning Staff Code of Conduct which sets out the school's expectations of their conduct online;

- working closely with the school's IT team to ensure the security of the systems and platforms that we are using; and

- providing all students with a Remote Learning Student Code of Conduct to ensure all students understand their obligations to act safely online and not engage in inappropriate behaviour.

We would also appreciate your assistance in helping us keep students safe online. Please alert us immediately if there are any concerns or red flags that you notice. This may be individuals on school platforms that you and your children do not know, inappropriate messages or any signs that the platforms may have been compromised.

The school's existing child safety structures will also remain in place, including our Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct. Our staff members are aware that they must continue to comply with their child safety reporting requirements, and we encourage you to alert a staff member immediately if you have any concerns about your child or any other student at the school.

Managing emotional wellbeing

In accordance with governmental guidance and for their health and safety, it is recommended that students comply with social distancing requirements. This will lead to students not being able to participate in extracurricular and social activities as usual. Understandably, this may lead to them feeling distressed or isolated from their friends.

A survey conducted by Kids Helpline found that children and young people were concerned about the following in the current climate:

- **Family members and their own health** – students may have grandparents and other family members that are vulnerable or may be suffering from COVID-19. Some students are also worried about catching COVID-19 themselves, especially if they have asthma or other health issues that may make them vulnerable.

- **Isolation and missing their friends** – students are being isolated from their friendship groups. Even though many are connected via social media, students are concerned about missing extracurricular events and social events.

- **Impact on studies** – for older students, especially those in year 11 and 12, missing out on school and the potential impact this may have on their studies is causing a lot of students stress and anxiety.

- **Not being worried** – ironically, a common issue for students is that some of them do not feel worried about COVID-19 and this is making them feel guilty. Kids Helpline found that 50% of the children they surveyed were not worried about COVID-19 and some were actually excited about not having to go to school.

- **Difficult family circumstances** – for some students, being isolated at home could be a damaging or even unsafe circumstance. We need to be particularly mindful of these students, recognising that several domestic violence agencies have already felt a spike in reports with families being confined together and facing difficulties such as financial concerns.

We encourage you to speak with your child about what is happening and how they can remain connected with their friends and peers during this time. The school's online learning platforms will also help facilitate communication between students.

We have also provided some external support services below that your child may be interested in accessing. The school also has support services available if needed.

Social media use

Students are likely to be using social media at increased levels. Below we have set out some common apps that children in senior school are using and some of the risks that you should be aware of. This is not a comprehensive list of apps and your child may be using different apps. We recommend that you discuss this with them.

Please also refer to the eSafety Commissioner's [eSafety Guide](#) on apps and games that children may be using.

App	Icon	Age restrictions	Summary	Safety features	Risks
Minecraft		7+ or 13+ depending on the version played	Computer game where individuals can build their own worlds (often described as online Lego).	Refer to Minecraft safety page.	• No age verification • Public servers allowed – different servers run by different people • Addictive • Some violence
Fortnite Battle Royale		13+ (no age verification)	Third-person shooter game where up to 100 players are put on an island and compete to be the last person or team standing.	Refer to Fortnite's code of conduct and FAQ.	• Violence • Addictive • Chat function • Inappropriate language and profanity
Instagram		13+ (no age verification)	Social media app that allows individuals to post photos and videos, stream live videos and connect with friends and followers.	Refer to Instagram's tips for parents.	• Messaging app • Search engine could expose children to inappropriate content • Bullying • Image based sexual abuse
TikTok		13 + (anyone under the age of 18 must have parental approval)	Video creating and sharing app that allows individuals to create videos up to 60 seconds long. Individuals can comment on and share videos.	Refer to TIk tok's parent guide and safety centre.	• Self-esteem and bullying • Exposure to inappropriate content • Privacy and sharing personal information

Houseparty		13+ (no age verification)	Live video chat and games that allow individuals to connect with their friends. Also allows messaging and chat function. Individuals can chat with new people.	Fairly new app so safety features are limited. Refer to Houseparty's Guidelines.	• Used to send explicit content such as intimate images • Risk of image based abuse and unauthorised screenshots and sharing • Location sharing • Bullying • Interaction with strangers • No administrator monitoring of chats or calls
Snapchat		13 + (no age verification)	Messaging app that allows the sharing of images, videos or texts for a short period of time. Individuals can also create stories that are available for 24 hours. There is also an add-on called YOLO which allows users to ask anonymous questions.	Refer to Snapchat's parent guide, tips for staying safe and safety centre.	• Used to send explicit content such as intimate images • Risk of image based abuse and unauthorised screenshots and sharing • Bullying • Exposure to inappropriate content • No administrator monitoring of chats or calls
Yubo / Tinder / Grindr etc.		13 + (multi-factor age authentication required for individuals aged 13 – 17)	Location-based apps that allow individuals to connect with other people in their local area, often used as a dating app. In particular, Yubo is targeted towards children.	Refer to Yubo teen safe guide, parent guide and safety portal.	• Meeting strangers • Risk of moving to face-to-face meetings • Exposure to inappropriate content • Sharing of personal information and data

FAQs

This section answers some of the common questions that parents are asking in relation to remote learning.

How are you ensuring the privacy of students?

The school is only using online platforms that it has authorised and is able to monitor and control. These platforms include Microsoft Teams, and our online intranet (MyPenola) and email. These platforms have their own inbuilt security.

Only our students and authorised staff members can access the school's online platforms and sharing any login details is a breach of our Remote Learning Codes of Conduct. We have provided guidance to teachers and students that they are not to share excessive information online. We will continue to monitor the situation and ask that all staff members, students and parents alert us to any concerns. Our Privacy Policy will continue to apply.

How closely will remote learning be following the curriculum?

Where possible, we will be doing all we can to continue to teach the curriculum. However, there will be times where this is not possible and we will need to adapt to the current circumstances. Each teacher will be responsible for their curriculum and lessons and we ask that you direct any specific questions about class content to your child's teacher(s) in a respectful way.

What about physical health and wellbeing?

Each child's physical health and wellbeing remains important, especially during this time when students are indoors more.

We also encourage students to go for walks, runs and bike rides where possible and allowed by governmental guidance.

How can parents contact teachers? Are there still going to be parent / teacher interviews?

Maintaining a dialogue between the school and families remains a priority. You can contact teachers through their email address as a starting point and then phone calls or video conferences may be arranged by the teacher.

We ask that you are patient with our teachers during this challenging time as they too are adapting to the changing circumstances. We will keep you informed regarding parent / teacher interviews but do be assured that we will prioritise communicating with parents during this difficult time.

What about senior school students and their final year assessments?

We have provided senior students with a FAQ which answers many of their questions.

At this stage, assessments for ATAR will be continuing where possible and we are exploring alternative methods for conducting these online. Continuity of learning will be a key priority for the school to ensure that students can continue to complete their studies.

The school is working closely with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority that administers the VCE & VCAL. The Victorian Tertiary and Admissions Centre (VTAC) who

administer the ATAR, are working with schools regarding the changes for this year. Updates will be provided on MyPenola on the VCE Page. The school may also adjust assessment dates and types. We will continue to keep you and the students updated on this. However, please be assured that the school is committed to supporting students to complete their studies with as minimal disruption as possible.

Resources and contacts

For more information on online safety during this time, we recommend that you access the eSafety Commissioner's parent guide. We would also recommend that you speak to your children about being safe online and refer them to eSafety Young People and the resources available.

This is understandably a difficult time for children and adults alike. If you or your child would like further support, please access the support services available below.

- Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800
- BeyondBlue – 1300 22 4636
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- MensLine – 1300 78 99 78
- Black Dog Institute

If you would like more information or have more questions, please contact your child's year level coordinator or teachers.