

## **PARENTAL GUIDANCE – COVID19 AND REMOTE LEARNING**

### **JUNIOR SCHOOL (Years 7 & 8)**

The purpose of this communication is to provide parents and carers of students in junior 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. 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 online learning. We recognise that by moving to online 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 and the opportunity to ask questions through these platforms only. They may be provided with assessment tasks and homework to complete. This is to ensure the privacy and security of communication and information.

#### **Students learning from home**

Students may 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. 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.

Depending on the age of your child(ren), you may be required to provide additional assistance such as helping them with their homework or tasks. 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 (03 93012777) 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 a Remote 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 children 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 them to feel distressed or isolated from their friends.

A survey conducted by Kids Helpline found that children 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.
- **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 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 during this time. Below we have set out some common apps that children in junior 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
<b>Minecraft</b>		7+ or 13+ depending on the version played	Computer game where individuals can build their own worlds (often described as online Lego).	Refer to <a href="#">Minecraft</a> safety page.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No age verification</li> <li>• Public servers allowed – different servers run by different people</li> <li>• Addictive</li> <li>• Some violence</li> </ul>
<b>Clash of Clans</b>		13+ (no age verification)	Online multiplayer strategy game where individuals build their own community, train troops and attack other players.	Refer to Clash of Clans parent <a href="#">guide</a> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-game messaging</li> <li>• Violence</li> <li>• Voice chat</li> <li>• Private chat rooms</li> <li>• Profanity and inappropriate language</li> </ul>
<b>Instagram</b>		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 <a href="#">tips</a> for parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messaging app</li> <li>• Search engine could expose children to inappropriate content</li> <li>• Bullying risk</li> <li>• Risk of image based sexual abuse</li> </ul>
<b>TikTok</b>		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 <a href="#">guide</a> and <a href="#">safety centre</a> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem and bullying</li> <li>• Exposure to inappropriate content</li> <li>• Privacy and sharing personal information</li> <li>• Interaction with strangers</li> </ul>

<p><b>Animal Jam</b></p>		<p>13+ (if under 13, need parental permission to register an account)</p>	<p>Online game developed by National Geographic Kids for children where they can learn about the natural environment and connect with friends.</p>	<p>Refer to safety <a href="#">page</a> and <a href="#">tools</a> for parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chat function – inability to stop strangers from speaking to your child</li> <li>• Reports of bullying and name-calling</li> <li>• Scamming</li> <li>• Limited age vetting</li> </ul>
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## FAQs

This section answers some of the common questions that parents are asking in relation to online 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. Please also keep in mind your obligations under the Parent Code of Conduct.

We will keep you informed regarding parent / teacher interviews but do be assured that we will prioritise communicating with parents during this difficult time.

## 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 Kids](#) 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 teacher.