



**Penola**  
CATHOLIC COLLEGE  
EST. 1995

Friday, January 29, 2021

Dear Students, Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to a new year at Penola Catholic College. A particularly warm welcome to our new staff, students and families who join us this year, and I hope that your time with us is both rewarding and fulfilling. I hope that you all have had an enjoyable holiday and that you are well refreshed and looking forward to the year ahead. I am really looking forward to this year at Penola Catholic College commencing with our key focus on Strengthening our Learning Culture. In what was a particularly disruptive and challenging 2020, the improvement in our collaboration was one of the key reasons for our successful remote learning throughout last year.

Our theme for the year is "To work on with Constancy and Courage" (St Mary MacKillop, 1876). This theme is particularly relevant to us as we seek to help each student achieve their individual potential and improve our VCE and VCAL results.

As most of you are aware, COVID-19 arrangements continue to change as the Victorian Government alters the restrictions in place. Our COVID Safe plan has been updated and I have included an excerpt regarding face masks as this appears to be causing most confusion.

#### **Face masks in schools**

As per the directions of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, the following actions are mandatory:

- Face masks are to be worn by individuals over the age of 12 when on public transport and school buses – unless they have a lawful exemption.
- **Individuals over the age of 12 must carry a face mask at all times.**

The same exemptions to the wearing of face masks apply in schools as when people are out in the community. This includes students who are over the age of 12 and are unable to wear a face mask due to the nature of their disability. This also includes students or staff who have a medical condition, such as problems with their breathing, a serious skin condition on the face, a disability or a mental health condition.

Face masks are recommended for use by staff and students when physical distancing of 1.5 metres cannot be maintained. Students will always have the option of wearing a mask if they wish. Whilst we acknowledge that we are attempting to socially distance as much as possible in classrooms, sometimes students will not be 1.5 metres from their peers. It is recommended but not compulsory to wear a mask within classrooms unless they are specifically directed to wear a mask by a staff member e.g. when students are required to gather close together around an experiment or demonstration in class etc.

At Penola Catholic College students will be required to wear masks where there are large gatherings such as Year Level Assemblies, Campus Assemblies, Whole School events. A face mask must cover the nose and mouth. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements.

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We have made the decision to postpone our New Family Welcome Dinner which was to be held on Friday February 12 due to the current restrictions in place with regards to indoor gatherings. Hopefully we will be able to reschedule at some other stage.

### 2021 Mobile Phone Ban

We have made the decision to ban mobile phones throughout the school day for 2021. Students will still bring their phones to school but they are not to be taken to class nor into the grounds at recess and lunchtimes. Students will be responsible for locking their own phones in their lockers throughout the day. There may be times where a staff member specifically asks students to bring their mobile phones to class to use for educational purposes such as specific apps etc. but this will be clearly communicated to students. There will obviously be a range of sanctions for students who are caught with their mobiles which are outlined below:-

Students who refuse to hand the phone over to the staff member will incur the consequences of the next offence

<b>First offence</b>	The phone will be confiscated and taken to the Campus Office. If this is a first offence the student can collect it at the end of the day. Campus Office staff will record this on Office 365
<b>Second offence</b>	The phone will be confiscated and placed in the office until the end of the day. A text message will be sent to the parents by the Campus Office telling them that on the next breach they will have to collect the phone
<b>Third offence</b>	The phone will be confiscated and placed in the office. The Campus Office staff will text the parent that they will be required to collect the phone
<b>Fourth offence</b>	The phone will be confiscated and placed in the office. YLC/COS will schedule a meeting with parents for the phone to be returned. A Saturday Detention will be applied. Campus Office staff to record the 4 <sup>th</sup> breach in Synergetic

Education is a three way partnership between the school, the students and families. The stronger the relationship the better the outcomes for all involved. I encourage you to read our College newsletter each fortnight and continue to engage with your daughter or son's education this year. One of the key ways that you can support your child's education is by taking a genuine interest in what they are doing at school. Ways that you can show that you are interested is by asking how their day was at school or through your attendance at Parent/Teacher/Student interviews and other school events.

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Wishing you all well for the year ahead

Chris Caldwell  
Principal