

7th October 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This guide is distributed within the newsletter of 7th October 2020. It is intended to provide supporting information for students and families as we prepare to return to onsite learning next week.

Below are a series of process updates that will be in place to maintain the safety of our Damascus community on campus from Monday 12th October 2020.

Return to onsite learning for all students

- **Monday 12th October** - Year 7, 11, 12 and those Year 10 students who have a VCE class on Monday 12th will return to onsite learning. Year 8 -10 students will continue remote learning on Monday 12th. Onsite supervision will be available for those families previously seeking support.
- **Tuesday 13th October** - All students return to onsite learning.

All students will be expected to attend school as normal from Tuesday 13th October 2020. This means if you choose to keep your young person/people home after that date, there will be very limited available support for learning from home. This does not apply to children who need to be absent for health or medical reasons. For those families, please contact the College so we can make an appropriate plan.

Health and Safety Measures - Five S's

- Damascus College will implement a variety of strategies to support physical distancing, particularly among adults, and good hygiene practices to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the practical limitations of a school environment.
- Signage will be placed around the school to encourage physical distancing for adults and encourage students as much as practicable to do the same.
- Critical to the College's Health and Safety measures is the implementation of our 5 S's message:

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Sick? Stay Home

Stay Left & Stay Moving

Sanitise and Sneeze Responsibly

Social Distance at School
1.5 METRES

Study, Stay Connected, Sleep and Nurture Your Spirit

 **Be. My. Best.**
damascus.vic.edu.au

Sick? Stay Home

The most important action school communities can take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), is to ensure that any unwell staff and students remain at home, even with the mildest of symptoms. If a member of the household is unwell and displaying COVID-19 symptoms, that person should undertake testing. All members of the household should observe isolation until a negative COVID test is returned.

Face Masks in School

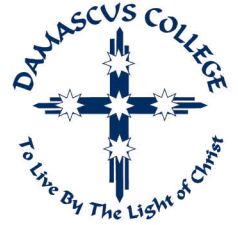
Everyone attending Damascus College must wear a face mask at school, and when travelling to and from school.

A face mask that covers the nose and mouth is now the only permitted type of face covering. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements.

Some students and staff are exempt from these requirements. 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. Where medical conditions prevent a community member from wearing a mask, we ask that families provide documentation from their treating health professional, please.

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Attendance

All students are expected to attend onsite once their year level has returned to onsite learning. Exceptions may exist for medically vulnerable students. It is recommended that parents/carers of students with complex medical needs, seek advice from the student's medical practitioner to support decision-making about whether onsite education is suitable. As indicated earlier, please liaise with the College so we can best support your medically vulnerable young person's needs.

Breaks

Face mask breaks are allowed for staff and students during the day, but they should be kept brief, when seated outdoors having lunch and physically distanced,

Parents and carers

Parents/carers are required to wear face masks whenever they leave the house, including for school drop off and pick up. If they are travelling in a car alone, or only with members of their household, they do not need to wear a face mask.

Physical Distancing

A variety of strategies to support physical distancing among all students and staff will be pursued, where possible.

Staff must practice physical distancing between themselves and other staff members or adults to the extent that is reasonably practicable and should physically distance themselves from students where appropriate and feasible.

A face mask provides protection when physical distance cannot be maintained. Physical distancing is not practical when providing direct care, such as in sickbay or attending to someone who is hurt. In this situation, a face mask, together with standard precautions, including hand hygiene, are important for infection control.

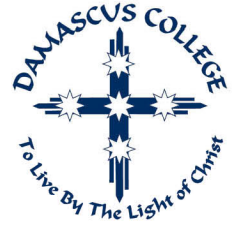
Students should practice physical distancing where possible. Maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 meters will not always be practical in the school environment, and this may be particularly challenging in the younger years levels. In these contexts, a combination of health and safety measures will be utilised to reduce risk.

Density quotients of one person per 4m² do not apply in classrooms and other spaces for the purposes of student use, including corridors and other shared areas.

Density quotients apply to staff areas such as staff lunchrooms and areas accessed by the public, such as reception areas.

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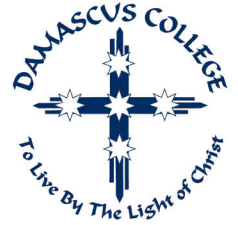
Hygiene

Strategies to reinforce personal hygiene practices and improve infection control in addition to the existing cleaning arrangements include:

- All staff students and visitors to the College must wear face masks as stipulated above.
- All staff, students and visitors to schools should undertake regular hand hygiene, particularly on arrival to school, before and after eating, after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the toilet.
- Students should bring their own transparent and clearly named water bottle for use at school as drinking fountains have been disconnected. Taps may be used to refill water bottles.
- Sharing of food should not be between students.
- As a school community, it is important to practice non-contact greetings (not shaking hands, hugging or kissing)
- Hand sanitiser stations are at the entry point for each classroom and learning area, as well as other high traffic areas around the College. Students are also encouraged to carry their own hand sanitiser, particularly if they have skin sensitivity to specific sanitisers.
- Soap dispensers in toilets will be checked twice each day to ensure they do not run out.
- Sneeze guards have been located in reception areas, ICT helpdesk and the St Martin Resource Centre (SMRC) counter.
- The First Aid area now has access to PPE including gowns, eye protection and face masks.
- Additional signage supporting good hygiene has been located around the school (building entries / toilets / drink stations / sanitiser stations / distancing decals in reception / ICT / SMRC). This will be supported using messaging on classroom TV screens and device backgrounds.
- Social distancing markers will be in place at reception for staff, students and visitors, so that appropriate distance is maintained between them and staff in reception.
- Drinking fountain taps have been disabled, but do allow for the bottle fillers to be used. Students should bring their own transparent and clearly named water bottle for use at school.
- Classroom furniture has been adjusted to improve distancing. Air conditioning and climate control units are set to use external air rather than recycling. Staffroom tables are spread out and limited staff to use the facility at any one time.
- Doors to be kept open to improve airflow and reduce touching.

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- Windows unlocked to enable for greater airflow (weather dependent).
- Students will be encouraged to travel directly to school and be discouraged from visiting shops or other venues prior to attending school.
- In subjects where students are required to use shared class equipment, hand sanitation will be practised before, during and after equipment use. In areas where equipment needs to be used regularly by students which may include shared computers, class sets of teaching and learning materials, tools and musical instruments etc., wipes will be provided for the classroom teacher to distribute to students to clean items of equipment that will be used by other students. Additional bins for wipes will be placed in all classroom spaces. This will be in conjunction with hand sanitisation procedures.

Cleaning

High touch areas are currently being cleaned and disinfected. The existing cleaning program has been expanded to include:

- Building entry/exit doors/handrails
- Desks and chairs in classrooms
- Student drink refill stations
- Student locker doors
- Classroom door handles
- Classroom light switches
- Photocopiers
- External student seating and tables
- Bus shelter and seating
- Fitness station (once commissioned)
- Reception counters
- ICT counter and charge bays
- SMRC counter
- JSC sports equipment

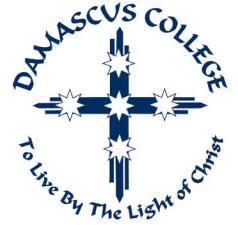
Temperature screening

Based on the advice of the Acting Deputy Chief Health Officer, given the current levels of community transmission in Victoria, mandatory temperature testing of all students on arrival to schools will not be required in Term 4.

However, should community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) increase, temperature checking may be reintroduced.

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Transport – Buses

- As schools resume onsite learning, all school bus services will resume with their regular timetables
- The School Bus Program will operate as normal across rural and regional Victoria
- Public transport services (including school buses) will continue to operate a normal timetable, providing a reliable option for students travelling to school.
- The Department of Transport continues to work closely with DHHS and transport operators to implement measures to limit the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) so that students can feel confident travelling on public transport to school.
- Transport Operators will continue enhanced cleaning across all services to ensure that high-touch surfaces are regularly disinfected (handrails and seating areas).
- Physical distancing is to be maintained for adult bus staff (driver and other attendants) where practical.
- Physical distancing should be exercised by parents and school staff at bus stops, interchanges and school bus loading areas.
- Students should:
 - Not use transport if unwell
 - practise hand hygiene before and after catching school transport (i.e. prior to leaving home and at the end of the school day)
 - practise physical distancing at bus stops and train stations and interchange locations for other shared transport services where practical.
- Students at 12 years and older should wear face masks whilst travelling, and where possible, siblings should be seated together.
- Bus Companies have been very explicit with Damascus that they will refuse the right to travel for students not wearing face masks.
- Students are encouraged to carry their own hand sanitiser when travelling on public transport or school buses and to spread out as much as possible.

TA

- The Teacher Advisor remains a key support person for students and families and has been in regular contact with students throughout remote learning. Please liaise with your Teacher Advisor or House Leader if you have concerns about your student/s return to onsite learning.
- Teacher Advisor interviews are calendared for the afternoons of November 4th, 5th and the day of November 2nd. These interviews will be conducted remotely and will provide a key opportunity for families to liaise with Teacher Advisors regarding student progress and support.

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Student Resources

- As students return from Monday 12th October, they may gradually bring back their books and other resources, that they need for their learning at school. It is not expected that they will have all of their resources on campus from the first day.
- Students may have been used to having their device on the charger while learning at home. Please encourage them to re-establish the practice of charging their device overnight.

Curriculum planning and delivery

- The College will continue the practice of two week 'bundles' of work for students to transition back onsite and provide the agility to respond to a COVID-19 outbreak within our own community. In the unfortunate circumstance that a member of our community is diagnosed this structure enables us to respond appropriately and swiftly.

Reports and Feedback

Parents are encouraged to stay in touch with their young person/people's progress through Learning Areas within the Parent Access Module. If you have misplaced your password, please do not hesitate to contact the College to have it re-issued.

Interim reports will provide a snapshot of student progress this semester, and they will be available to parents from the week of 19th October.

VET and VCAL

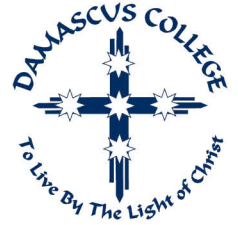
Students undertaking VET and VCAL will resume onsite classes from the start of next week. Those students who have workplaces and the employer is supportive of the placement continuing will attend their workplace on Wednesdays. VET students will be directed by their individual teacher as to whether they are resuming onsite learning. A number of VET programs may be extended to enable students to satisfy the competency based practical requirements of the respective courses. Applied Learning Coordinator Belinda Dwyer will continue to provide information for students and families regarding changes to applied learning programs.

If your student's VET class remains remote and the young person cannot return home at lunch and needs to remain on campus, the SMRC will be open until 4.30pm, if your student requires supervision.

Mr Boadle's VET Building and Construction class here at school will resume as timetabled.

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Student pick up, drop off and parking

- As we bring students back on site, we have experienced an increased number of families dropping off and collecting students at the College. We ask for patience and courtesy in this regard as it does impact on the traffic flow within the College grounds, and we would ask parents to please keep vehicles moving through the drop-off and pick up points so as not to block access to vehicles attempting to enter the College at the traffic lights. For the end of day pick up, please use parking spaces if available rather than queuing in the driveway while waiting for students. Please if you are able to drop students earlier or pick them up later, it does make a big difference to the flow of traffic onsite.
- Our work on the Damascus Events Center (DEC) is nearing completion. Over the final weeks of construction, the parks adjacent to the DEC are unavailable. This will increase congestion near the College office and families are requested to use the turning circle adjacent to the oval for student drop off and pick up, please. Our young people are very precious - please be patient when driving onsite.
- Some of our senior students may be tempted to drive to school. Parking is limited, and unless they are confident and experienced on the road, other means of transport should be considered.

If senior students do drive to school, they must use the on-street parking in Jones Avenue or Lecke Grove.

Supporting wellbeing during students' return to onsite learning

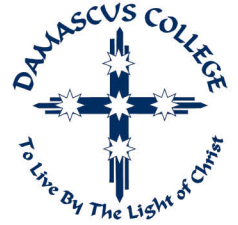
To prepare and support wellbeing during students' return to onsite learning and the classroom/school environment, some resources have been developed for parents/carers

After months of remote learning and a range of COVID-19 restrictions, young people will be returning to school routines, classrooms, classmates, teachers, expectations and, in some cases, even new school settings.

Amid the anticipation and excitement, many young people are feeling, for some, leaving the home learning routine and environment may create anxiety for a range of reasons including the ongoing uncertainty of COVID-19; social distancing and hygiene measures in place; family circumstances related to health; grief associated with a recent loss; or economic circumstances. To prepare and support students' return to onsite learning and the classroom/school environment, please click [here](#) to consider the following tips.

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As previously mentioned, contact with the Teacher Advisor or House Leader is recommended. Students can also access professional support by contacting counselling@damascus.vic.edu.au.

Other professional services are available through;

- **Headspace** - Call Headspace on 1800 650 890 or online at www.headspace.org.au
- **Kids Helpline** - Call 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au
- **ReachOut** - Online at reachout.com.au
- **SANE Australia** - Call 1800 187 263 or online at sane.org

Facilities and building access

- One of our 5 S's to guide students as they return is "stay left and stay moving". This is particularly important in stairwells, around lockers and in high traffic areas at Damascus - we need everyone to stay left and stay moving. If people stop to talk or gather in stairwells, in high traffic areas and around lockers, it prevents others from practising social distancing. Staff and students will be able to utilise the existing entries and exits for buildings, but they will also be able to exit via external fire escapes to decrease traffic in the corridors and central stairwells.
- Year 7-9 students will be released from class earlier at the end of the day, to assist them in getting to and away from their locker quicker and be organised for their buses.
- Outdoor facilities are preferred for the purpose of physical education and recreational activity. Particularly as the weather improves, students will be required to spend recess and lunch breaks outdoors.
- Non-contact sports should be encouraged. Hand hygiene must be practised before and after use of any sporting equipment.

Parent and visitor movement on campus

- One of the significant risk minimising factors that we will adhere to for the safety of our community will be prioritising students and staff on campus. Our advice specifies the importance of limiting adult to adult contact over this next stage, so I ask that parents not exit their car when onsite. If you believe there is a legitimate need to come into the College office, please contact the office via phone, and we will work through the specifics of your need individually. Attendance on campus by visitors will be limited to those delivering or supporting essential school services and operations (e.g. student health and wellbeing services, safety, cleaning and maintenance workers).
- The one exception is if you need to visit the uniform shop onsite. Only two families can access the shop at a time; families may move from their car to the uniform shop as required.
- At this time the College is minimising other contractors and visitors to the College. Any visitors to the College will be screened upon arrival, where they

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complete a COVID-19 survey. Sanitiser will be available at reception for any visitors to the College, e.g. Deliveries. Records of all visitors to the site are kept for contact tracing purposes.

- Information sessions and TA interviews will continue to be replaced with online and video alternatives this term. There can be no school tours for prospective students and their families at this time. Exemptions can be considered at a local level to support essential educational planning and decision making for students with a disability or highly complex needs.

Visitors to school grounds must comply with physical distancing and face mask advice set out in this document, and practise good hand hygiene.

Transitions and end of year events and gatherings

In line with the Operational guides distributed for all schools - Face-to-face school assemblies and other non-essential large gatherings must be postponed or adapted considering the use of technology for the immediate future.

Calendar items for the rest of Term 4

- Monday 12th October Year 7, 11, 12 and those Year 10 students who have a VCE class on Monday 12th will return to onsite learning. Year 8, 9 and remaining Year 10 students continue remote learning
- Tuesday 13th October all students return to onsite learning.
- Friday 23rd October – AFL Grand Final Public Holiday
- Friday 30th October – Year 12 Final Day
- Monday 2nd November – TA Interview Day (Non-Teaching Day)
- Tuesday 3rd November – Melbourne Cup Public Holiday (replacing Ballarat Show Day Holiday on Nov 13th)

Onsite supervision will be available to those families who have had students supervised onsite between the 5th and 12th October.

There are other dates subject to change in the College's previously published calendar, and we will keep the College community informed as these events approach.

Early dismissal and lockers

To avoid mass gatherings before and after school, we require that:

- On arrival, students move to the locker areas, collect material, drop off bags and make their way to TA.
- Locker areas should be cleared as quickly as possible during recess and lunchtime access.
- Students in Years 7-9 will be dismissed from period 6, 5 minutes before the

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rest of the school. During this time, they should make their way to the lockers, collect their bags and move to the bus stop or student pick up point.

Student timetable and movement on campus

- In most cases, student timetables will be very similar to the remote learning period, and timetables will be the same with some room changes from Term 1. Students are reminded to please check their SIMON timetable for the fortnight ahead, and keep an eye out on Student Notices for any room changes.

Use of St Martin Resource Centre after school

- Students will be permitted to use the St Martins Resource Centre each day after school until 4.30pm. Staff are encouraged to support student's after school with their work but should exercise social distancing where possible.

Food and Drink - Canteen

- The canteen will only be available to supply lunch orders for the rest of the term from next Tuesday 9th June. There will be no canteen food service before school or at recess, and those students wishing to order their lunch need to do so by 9.00am daily. The means of ordering lunches has been shared with families via email this week. Please make sure that if students like to eat at recess, that appropriate food is brought from home.
- There will be limited space for students to gather in the undercroft. This will be monitored by staff on duty.

Wet Weather Plan for students

- The College wet weather plan will see spaces designated for year levels for recess and lunch breaks. To enable appropriate supervision, other areas of the school grounds will be unavailable. For example, if it is a wet weather timetable, the oval will not be available.
Areas designated are;
- Year 12-Common Room, Building 2, level 1 and 2. With some classroom spaces available.
- Year 11- Building 2, level 2. With some classroom spaces available.
- Years 9 & 10- Level 3, Building 4. With some classroom spaces available
- Years 7 & 8- Level 2, Building 4. With some classroom spaces available.
- Years 7-12- Limited space in the St Martin's Resource Centre and passive space on one court in the John Shannon Centre.

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- In the event of wet weather arrangements, staff would be redeployed from other outdoor areas to support supervision in these spaces.

Extra and Co-curricular activities for the rest of Term 4

- Co-curricular activities such as after school tutorials and Year 12 Subject Workshops will re-commence as of Tuesday 9th June. Year 12 teachers of the subjects will notify students of details. All workshops will run from 3.30pm- 4.30pm
- Staff will advise when the Wednesday Homework and Maths Club will also re-commence. Please see the Daily Messages for more information. The Homework and Maths club will still be held in the St Martin Resource Centre.
- Sustainable Racing Team- SRT are keen to get back on the track. More news on this will be provided by Alan Stange in the coming weeks.
- At this stage, there is not a firm decision regarding after school sport for Term 4. Families will be advised of after school sport arrangements over the coming weeks.
- Excursions/Camps are being reviewed as to whether they can safely occur this term. If they do proceed, it will be in modified formats. Certain excursions are permitted to proceed, and families will be notified via the regular PAM processes.
- More information will be available on Term 4 events over the coming weeks.

Student Uniform

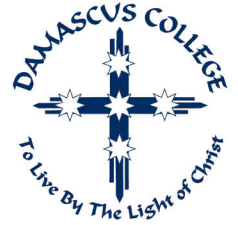
- As student's transition back to face to face teaching on campus, so does the requirement to wear the full winter uniform. Details of the summer uniform can be found on the school's website.
- Students may wear summer or winter uniform for the first two weeks onsite to account for the variability of the weather.

Remember that:

- Hem length must be to the knee for dresses, with equally the trouser hem should meet the shoe when standing.
- Shorts are available for all students, but ladies' pants and belts can only be accessed through Crocker's at 4 Armstrong St in North Ballarat.

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The Damascus uniform shop onsite is open stocking Dobson's products
Monday - Friday - 8:30am - 11:30am & 1:00pm - 4:00pm

For those who wish to shop at Crockers (Armstrong St N) their normal trading hours apply.

- For families wishing to access Dobson's uniform on site, we ask that you move directly from your car to the shop observing social distancing with only two families in the shop at one time.

Mobile Phones

- In a change to our usual practices, we are allowing students to keep their phones with them during the day, for the remainder of Term 4 only, in support of contact tracing in line with our safety priority. This will only be supported if students abide by the instructions of not using their phones during class time.
- Students are also encouraged to download the COVID Safe App on their own mobile phones.
- Reminders will be made to staff and students to clean their phones regularly.

Year 12 Study Lessons

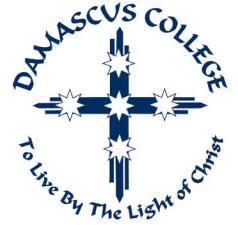
- If Year 12 students have study lessons at the start or the end of the day and can get to school safely, they may arrive later or leave early. If you come late or leave early, you must sign in or out through the office and still connect with TA in the morning.
- Supervised study spaces will be available for all students onsite. If students sign out, they must go home. Those students who abuse this privilege will be denied the opportunity.
- Year 12 students are encouraged to use their time on campus to access their teachers over these final weeks in preparation for the coming exams.

First Aid Procedures

- If a student presents to the First Aid officer in student reception, with a temperature of 37.5 degrees or more, they will be required to wear a mask and wait in an appropriate area as directed by the First Aid officer. Parents will be phoned, and the student is to be promptly collected.
- If a student presents as being unwell/or injured but does have any of the COVID-19 symptoms (sore throat, cough, fever, and runny nose) they will be required to wear a mask and be seated in the First Aid area. First Aid

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rooms have been equipped with wipeable pillows and mattress protectors. All chairs will be sanitised.

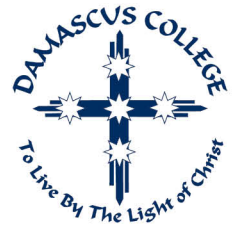
- The College will continue to advise students and their families that where a student becomes ill, has a temperature, or displays any of the symptoms of the COVID-19 virus - the student must stay home. This is in line with our Five S's "**Sick? Stay Home.**" The College reception must be contacted on the morning of/day before, to advise of student non-attendance.

Management of an unwell student or staff member

- It is important that any staff member or student who becomes unwell while at school gets tested and returns home. While it is unlikely that a staff member or student who is unwell with flu-like symptoms will have coronavirus (COVID-19) there are some sensible steps schools can take while a student awaits collection by a parent or carer as a precaution.
- Staff and students experiencing compatible symptoms with Coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fever, cough or sore throat, will be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and students should be collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention should be sought where indicated. It is not suitable for an unwell student to travel home unsupervised.
- Where staff or students are experiencing compatible symptoms with Coronavirus (COVID-19), the important actions to follow include hand hygiene, physical distance and putting on a surgical face mask (both staff and student where appropriate).
- In the context of schools supporting students with complex health needs, if the care of an unwell child or young person is to be prolonged (for example, because it will take some hours for a parent to collect a child) and maintaining distance is not practical when providing supervision or direct care; surgical face mask, gloves, gown and eye protection are recommended to be worn by the staff member.
- Health care plans, where relevant, should be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of Coronavirus (COVID-19).
- If a staff member is unsure whether a student is unwell, it is advisable in the first instance to contact the parent/carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the student. The College will take a precautionary approach, and request the parent/carer to collect their child if concerns remain.
- Staff or students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19) will be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps.
- Where staff or students have been tested, they must isolate until they receive the test result. Family members should isolate too.

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- Staff and students are generally not required to present a medical certificate stating they are fit to return to an education setting after a period of illness; however, staff and students should not return until symptoms resolve.

Financial Support

- The safety of the Damascus community is the key priority of this period of time. It sits alongside our commitment to continuing our provision of quality education and maintaining a connected and supported community. In ensuring we are able to provide the support families need, please contact fees@damascus.vic.edu.au if your family is experiencing financial duress. Young people's education must not be a victim of this global pandemic, and we are here to help.

The school community as a whole is looking forward to finding some routine in the remaining weeks of 2020. God Bless.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Byrne".

Matthew Byrne
Principal

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