



Parent/Carer Update - 7 April 2022

As we approach the end of a busy term, I want to update parents on a number of matters.

Covid 19 Current risk assessment – Living with Covid

We have updated our Covid19 risk assessment in line with current Scottish Government advice to educational establishments. This is about how as a school we will continue to take precautions and mitigate against Covid 19 and learn to live safely with the virus. The updated risk plan can be found on our website at <https://penicuik.mgfl.net/>

Attendance and Late Coming Procedures

Good attendance at school is fundamental to young people achieving the best possible qualifications that allow them to move successfully on to their chosen career path. While it is inevitable, particularly in the circumstances we have found ourselves in since March 2020, that students may at times be absent for a variety of reasons, the cumulative effect of non-attendance can be extremely damaging.

In order to support our students and families we have previously written to you with regard to our revised attendance procedures and we would like to highlight the following amendments:

- Registration teachers will check back on student attendance for the previous day(s) and follow up any classes that a student may have missed.
- Guidance staff are closely tracking non-attendance with House Heads and actively looking at what supports can be put in place to support students to improve attendance.
- If students are missing from class, parent/carers will be contacted to alert them to this fact. This may be either a phone call or a Group Call message depending on the individual student and their circumstances. Whilst this may cause alarm and there might be a legitimate reason why they are not where they are supposed to be we do have a duty of care and need to ensure we notify about any possible non-attendance. We will do our best to locate them through our Duty Head rota that operates every period.
- Truancy and wandering have been a consistent issue since lockdown and a few students are continually the subject of call outs for Duty Heads. ***Please see the information below regarding truancy.***

In cases where a clear pattern of non-attendance is developing Guidance staff and House Heads will begin communication with home, initially by phone, but depending on subsequent attendance, then by letter and parents/carers will be invited to meet staff to agree support strategies

Late-coming

Many students do not always realise the impact of late-coming on learning. Punctuality is a basic requirement for any employer so it is important that students develop good habits in their timekeeping. From our return after Easter we will begin targeted interventions with young people who have particularly high levels of late-coming.

Please Note:

The school doors are open from 8.25am to allow students to enter and be in class on time.

- Students arriving after 8.30am will be recorded as being late for school by their Registration teacher.
- Students arriving after 8.40am will be recorded by the school office.

Truancy

Truancy is a serious safeguarding issue and can be extremely disruptive to learning. In the case of persistent truancy:

- Guidance (or Senior Management) will contact home.
- A 1/2 hour Time Back will be issued. If parental permission is received this may be on the same day as the truancy occurred, otherwise it will be in the next Time Back slot. Time Back sanctions are at lunchtimes as we know this inconveniences students the most. They will have time to eat and go to the toilet.
- Students who repeatedly truant will be put on Daily Monitors.
- Support will be offered to students and their parent/carer and for students experiencing particular issues a Child's Planning Meeting (CPM) will be convened to agree supports required for the student to attend as required.
- In some cases disciplinary action may be used where there is persistent and deliberate truancy when agreed supports are in place. This could be internal withdrawal, loss of break times, Formal Disciplinary Warnings (FDW) or a temporary exclusion where there is an accumulation of behavioral issues.

Our first concern is to make sure our students are where they are supposed to be and are safe. We remain committed to inclusion and well-being focused on positive relationships but will use sanctions as part of modifying poor behaviour and seeking respect and a good learning climate.

We very much appreciate the continued support of parents and carers in our school community which is essential if we are to modify poor behaviours. If you have any concerns about your child's attendance or progress please do not hesitate to contact your child's Guidance Teacher via the School Office.

Uniform

As previously stated we have been flexible around uniform given the PE situation and previous lockdowns. After Easter senior students will have exam leave but we do expect students to wear school uniform to all official SQA exams next term. If this causes any difficulty then please contact your child's Guidance Teacher.

S6 prefects must make arrangements to return their School blazer by their official leaving date that will be confirmed after Easter. All leavers will also need to return Chromebook devices.

Current S5 Prefects who wish to retain that role in S6 may keep their issued blazers for next session.

N.B. S1-S3 - Uniform rules after Easter

After Easter from the week beginning 2 May 2022 we will be resuming the use of the changing rooms in PE for S1-S3. Students may choose to wear masks in these rooms and we will be expecting them to be in the changing room for a short period only. Additional cleaning and pre and post ventilation will be put in place. We are also recommissioning the changing areas in the old Gym area to improve capacity. This means that students will no longer be permitted to wear PE uniform to school and normal school uniform rules will start to apply. However, we do recognise that some students may not have full uniform or that because young people are growing it will be better to wait until summer to purchase new uniform. We ask that you write a note or send an email to the school email address penicuik_hs@midlothian.gov.uk so we can note exemptions.

The uniform is as follows:

White shirt or blouse

Black V neck jumper or cardigan

School tie – All new S1 students will receive a free tie on Wednesday 18 August

Black trousers or skirt

Black shoes

School Blazer – if purchased

We will be checking uniform to ensure reasonable compliance and also look at appropriateness. If students do not have uniform they will not be permitted to wear crop tops as some have been doing for PE. Non-uniform clothing must be of an appropriate standard:

Outdoor clothing must be removed in all classes. Football scarves and colours are not allowed in school. Clothing should not have any offensive logos or wording. Leggings (except for PE) and ripped/torn jeans and skirts **are not permitted as normal uniform.**

The Parent Council on behalf of the Parent Forum has agreed our uniform policy. If we feel the uniform is not appropriate to the school setting we will write or phone to ask for your support to address the situation.

I will write again about our uniform expectations for August 2022 and the new session in Term 3 and this will include information for parents about purchase of our school blazer.

Study leave

We have sent a letter home to the parent/carers of all senior students outlining Study leave. You will find these details on our website - <https://penicuik.mgfl.net/>

Supported Study programme

Once again we will have a comprehensive SQA Study Support programme that has been running from March 22 and will encompass the Easter holiday period and the extended exam period as well. The full programme will be updated and sent out via group call to all parents and put on year level Google classrooms this week. There are also immersion sessions during the school day over exam leave prior to exams. Staff have already been sending texts to parent/carers of students they feel need targeted support. After Easter we will also be auditing around risk of failure to complete National 3 and 4 qualifications. We will work to ensure in-school support during the exam period to target completion. Where necessary parents/carers will be notified of any issues through Student Support or Support for Learning.

Student Voice

This session has seen the launch and introduction of the Penicuik High School Student Council. There were over 70 students who signed up to represent their classes and year group and be part of the student council. These students have now received their training which included learning about the meeting format, producing an agenda and taking minutes. The first official student council meetings took place this week.

- S1/2 Student Council meeting - Tuesday 5 April period 3
- S3/4 Student Council meeting - Thursday 7 April period 4
- S5/6 Student Council meeting - Monday 4 April period 3

Council meetings will then be followed up with Student Parliament meetings being held shortly afterwards to take forward any potential actions. As well as Student Council members the parliament will be attended by representatives from the various student groups across the school e.g. Eco Group, Equalities Group, etc. The parliament will also be attended by Mr Dewar (DHT Student Engagement) and Mr Biddick. This is going to be a great opportunity for students to be a key part in driving forward positive change in the school. Thanks is noted to Yasamin Tavakoli, Stephen Milligen and Ellie Campbell for leading their specific year group Student Councils

Parent Consultations

As you will be aware we have held telephone based parent consultations during the two year Covid period and these have largely been well received. We are now carrying out a consultation with staff and parents to ascertain whether you wish to remain with this system or return to face-to-face meetings. There are two scheduled parent consultations in Term 3 and we will update you on the outcome of these consultations early next term.

Term 3 Activities

As you will be aware term 3 is a busy term as we complete the SQA exam diet and wind down toward summer holidays. Thankfully this year's summer break may be more normal and allow families to travel and enjoy being together.

In Term 3 we are planning to bring you a Summer Concert, a face-to-face School Prize Giving, a Senior Prom and an S6 leavers' morning to name a few events.

The S6 Leavers' morning will be on Friday 27 May 2022 from 9:00 -10:30 am so this will be their last official day at school. S6 will be asked to return Chromebooks and blazers by this date

More information on dates and times for other key activities will be communicated after Easter. Thank you to all parent/carers for all your support of the school over recent months. I hope you all have a safe and happy Easter break.

Kind regards



Craig Biddick

Head Teacher