St Joseph's College Geelong
Remote Work (Health & Safety) Guidelines

To date you have been provided a number of guidelines to assist with working remotely. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with: remote learning protocols, child safe standards, and all workplace policies.

Working remotely means that you are available to be contacted at all times during normal business hours, save for standard and reasonable breaks which you would otherwise be taking if working at the School. If you take a break, you should let your team members know how long you will be away.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic.) (OHS Act), the School must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of people in the workplace, which includes people working remotely. You also have an obligation under the OHS Act to take care of your own health and safety at work.

Please remember, private and confidential material must be kept secure at all times. When working remotely, you must ensure that you take all reasonable precautions to maintain confidentiality of material.

You should consider each of the following, as they apply to you:

- manage time effectively;
- create and follow a priority list;
- know when to take breaks;
- set rules for children and other members of the household; and
- allocate family time.

Please run through the **Remote Work Self-Assessment Checklist**, Appendix 1, to help you understand your work area. Further, you may wish to refer to the **Guidelines For The Safe Use Of PCs and Laptops**, Appendix 2.

When working, you should:

- where possible stand up while using the telephone, this assists with posture, provides an opportunity for movement and is a stretch break;
- pause every 30 minutes for a few minutes and stretch (see Appendix 3);
- routinely interrupt your viewing of the screen or printed material to look at items in the distance and blink regularly; and
- remain connected, use videoconferencing facilities as much as possible to speak with your colleagues and maintain the usual workplace relationships.

The reporting of workplace incidents is a critical component in the effective management of workplace health and safety. All employees are required to promptly report any workplace incidents (injury, illness, near-miss events and hazardous conditions) that occur in the home working environment to the Human Resources Manager.

Workers compensation arrangements apply to all injuries arising out of or in the course of employment, whether the injury occurred while the person was working from home, another offsite location or in the usual workplace, subject to satisfying legislative requirements. *The WorkCover agent will determine the eligibility of any claim in the usual manner.*

If you have any concerns about the content of these guidelines or have any questions, please contact the Principal immediately.

Appendixes:

1. Remote Work Self-Assessment Checklist
2. Guidelines For The Safe Use Of PCs and Laptops
3. Guidelines For Taking Breaks And Stretching

Remote Work Self-Assessment Checklist

The following checklist provides guidance on important factors to consider when adopting work practices away from the School. It is important that you reassess your remote/home office work area regularly.

Where the optimal equipment and environment are not available, it will be a case of ensuring flexibility and developing workarounds for any issues as they arise. The guidance material below will also assist with these situations.
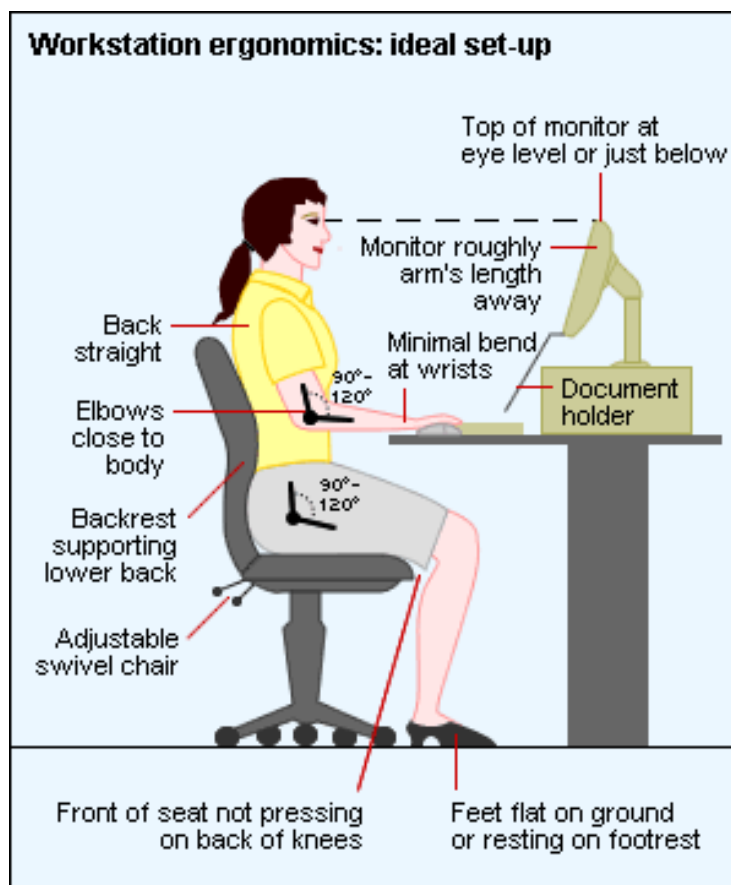
Work Environment - Designated work area	
▪ A work area has been identified to provide adequate space for working – it is recommended that you have approximately 2.3 metres square unencumbered space	☐
▪ The work floor is level and there is limited use of mats/or rugs	☐
▪ The work area is away from activities of other household members and in a place which is free from distractions	☐
▪ Seat height is set high enough to allow you to work at the computer without hunching or raising your shoulders	☐
▪ When seated, thighs are parallel to the floor with your feet supported either on the floor or on a footrest	☐
▪ The area of the work surface is adequate for the task	☐
▪ The most frequently used items are within easy reach from the seated position	☐
▪ **Where possible**, in relation to the chair: - the seat height, seat tilt, angle and backrest are all adjustable - there is adequate lumbar support - the chair height is adjusted so that feet are flat on the floor and knees are bent at right angles with thighs parallel to the floor - the chair does not have armrests (or, where the chair has armrests, they are stowed out of the way while typing)	☐
Environmental conditions	
▪ Lighting is adequate for the tasks being performed – easy to see and comfortable on the eyes	☐
▪ Glare and reflection can be controlled	☐
▪ Ventilation and room temperature can be controlled, regardless of season	☐
▪ There is no excessive noise affecting the work area and ambient noise level is appropriate	☐
▪ Work area and walkways are clear of clutter and trip hazards	☐
Electrical	
▪ Power outlets are not overloaded with double adapters and power boards	☐
▪ Power boards (with overload protection) are used instead of double adaptors or piggyback plugs	☐
▪ The use of extension cords is minimised, where use of the extension cord might provide a trip hazard	☐
▪ Electrical cords are safely stowed where they will not be damaged	☐
▪ Connectors, plugs and outlet sockets are in a safe condition	☐
▪ Electrical equipment is free from any obvious external damage (e.g. no evidence of frayed, torn, broken or loose electrical leads)	☐
▪ All equipment in the home office is suitable and in good condition	☐

Work practices	
▪ Safe posture is adopted	☐
▪ Wrists are kept straight and not supported on any surface while typing	☐
▪ Sitting posture is upright or slightly reclined, with lower back supported	☐
▪ The telephone, keyboard and mouse are within easy reach from the seated position	☐
▪ Long periods of continuous activity are broken by performing other tasks, changing position, standing up and stretching	☐
If using a desktop PC and/or laptop	
▪ The monitor / laptop is positioned in front of you at a height that allows you to see the screen without bending your neck (your eyes should be as close as possible to level with the top of the screen, see appendix 2 for the ideal set up.	☐
▪ Wherever possible, laptops should be used in conjunction with an external keyboard and mouse so that forearms are parallel with the work surface.	☐
▪ Be aware of the importance of posture. Arms should be resting by your side, elbows bent to 90 degrees and wrists straight while keying.	☐
▪ Frequently rotate PC and laptop use with other activities.	☐
▪ Keyboard and mouse: - Keyboard to user distance allows user to relax shoulders with elbows close to the body. - Keyboard position is flat and mouse is placed directly next to the keyboard at the same level	☐

Guidelines For The Safe Use Of PCs and Laptops

You should seek to achieve the optimal workstation setup as shown below. However, if you are only partially able to follow these principles, then:

- If working from a laptop, use a laptop riser in conjunction with an external keyboard and mouse. If no riser is available, use books or a sturdy box to elevate the laptop screen to eye-level.
- If no external keyboard or mouse is available and your only option is to work from your laptop, increase the frequency of breaks as well as postural changes. Sustained static postures are not ideal and increase our risk of injury. Move around your home frequently throughout the day, working from different locations with your laptop.
- Stand as often as possible (e.g. when in a meeting or on the phone moving around while you do).
- Schedule postural breaks and follow the guidance for exercises and stretches.
- Use a headset/headphones when on the phone.

Guidelines For Taking Breaks And Stretching

Take a break

Staying in the same position and using the same muscles for hours at a time is not good for your back or neck.

Eye breaks

Looking at a computer screen for extended periods causes some changes in how your eyes work, including blinking less often and exposing more of the eye surface to air. Every 20 minutes, briefly look away from the computer screen for a minute or two to a more distant scene, preferably something more than 20 feet away. This lets the muscles inside the eye relax. Also, blink your eyes rapidly for a few seconds. This refreshes the tear film and clears dust from the eye surface.

Micro-breaks

Micro-breaks are less than two minutes long and perfect to do between bouts of typing. A micro-break isn't necessarily a break from work, but it's a break from using a set of muscles (such as the finger flexors if you're doing a lot of typing). Most people type in bursts rather than continuously. Between these bursts of activity, rest your hands in a relaxed, flat, straight posture. Though micro-breaks are short, you can stretch, stand up, move around or do a different work task (such as make a phone call).

Rest breaks

Every 30 to 60 minutes, take a brief rest break. During this break, stand up, move around and do something else. Get a beverage, have a walking phone call, chat to a co-worker over phone or videoconferencing. This allows you to relax and exercise different muscles, and you'll feel less tired.

Exercise breaks

There are many stretching and gentle exercises you can do to help relieve muscle fatigue. You should do these every one to two hours. See below for guidance extracted from WorkSafe Victoria's Officewise handbook.

Stop, get up and move

Getting up and walking around is the best exercise you can get to provide a break from sitting, concentrating and using the muscles of the arms and hands. About every 20 to 30 minutes is a guide to how often it is helpful to move around.
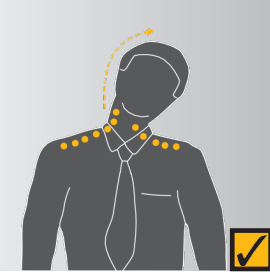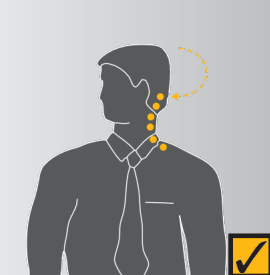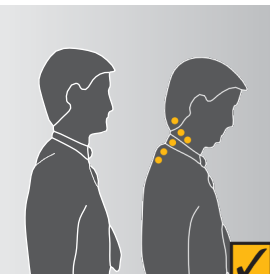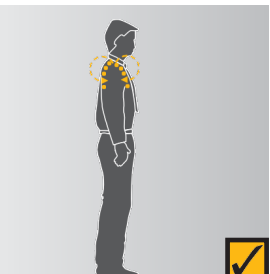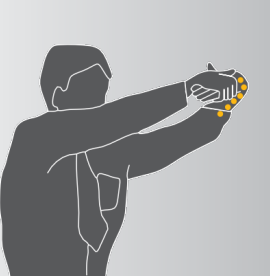
Even getting up for 20 to 30 seconds to pick up papers from the photocopier or get some water is a way to change your posture and give muscles a chance to recover.
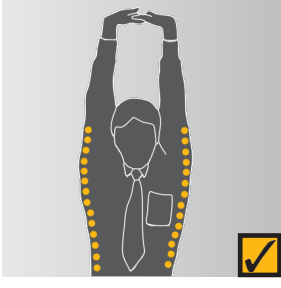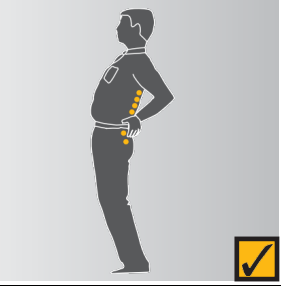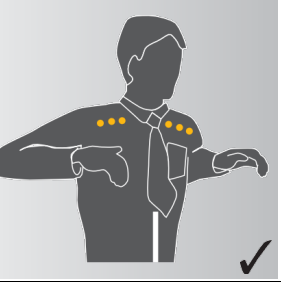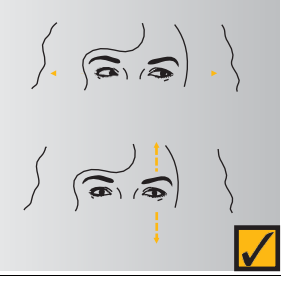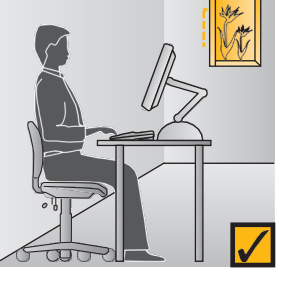
S-t-r-e-t-c-h and check!

Stretching exercises help to relax muscles which have been working and move those which have been in a fixed position. If possible, stand up to do your stretches. Print the exercises and put them in a prominent location.

While you are exercising, read the notes alongside each instruction and consider whether your workstation is adjusted to suit you.

- Do a few of these exercises a few times every day.
- Dots show the muscles that you are exercising.
- Make sure you relax and perform them gently.
- Hold the stretch or repeat as indicated on the diagram.
- Do not over-stretch.
- Stop if you feel discomfort when performing an action.
- Remember to do each side.

	Neck stretch Keeping your chin tucked in, gently lower ear to shoulder and hold for 10 seconds on either side. Repeat several times.
	Head turns Turn head slowly to look over left shoulder. Turn head the other way. Repeat several times.
	Chin tucks Raise the head to straighten the neck. Tuck the chin in and upwards creating a double chin. This also results in a forward tilt of the head. Repeat several times.
	Shoulder rolls Circle shoulders forward several times, then backwards. Repeat 3 to 5 times. **Check shoulder posture** Relax your shoulders and rest your hands on your lap. Bend your elbows to no more than 90 degrees and check the height of your fingertips against your current work height. If the work (keyboard or desk) is higher than your hands, you may be hunching your shoulders unnecessarily. If so, try and raise your chair height or lower your desk height, and try and relax your shoulders while working.
	Wrist and elbow stretch Interlace fingers, palms outward, and straighten arms in front. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat several times.
	Wrist stretch Straighten your arm in front and bend your wrist forward, gently assist the stretch with your other hand. Hold for 10 seconds then stretch your wrist back and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat with other arm. **Check hand and wrist posture** • While keying, keep your wrist straight while your fingers are suspended over the keyboard. • Keep elbows at keyboard level. This may mean adjusting the desk or chair height. • Don't rest your wrists on the desk or keyboard while keying. Keep hands suspended. • Rest on the desk between periods of keying.

	Upper and lower back stretch Interlace fingers and turn palms upwards above head; straighten arms then slowly lean slightly from side to side. Repeat movement several times.
	Back arching Stand up. Support your lower back with hands and gently arch back and hold for 5 to 10 seconds. Repeat as often as is needed.
	Pectoral stretch Raise both arms to shoulder height and bend elbows. Pull both elbows back slowly to bring shoulder blades towards each other. Repeat several times. ***Check back support*** • Sit well back in your chair – if your feet need support, use a footrest. • Adjust the backrest on your chair to support your lower back.
	Foot pump Stand up, holding the chair for balance if necessary, and alternately raise heels and toes. Repeat 10 times. ***Check leg comfort*** • If the seat of your chair is digging into the backs of your thighs, check that it is not too high or whether it is tilted backwards. • If the seat is too high, lower the chair and desk or use a footrest to support your feet. • Also check the tilt of the seat and, if necessary, adjust it to a horizontal position.
	Eye exercise Sit up straight, face forward and repeat this sequence several times without moving your head. Look up, then down. Look left, then right.
	Visual rest Look up and away from the screen. Focus on a distant object (more than 3 metres away). For example, look out of the window or at a picture on a far wall. Shift vision back to screen and refocus. ***Check eye comfort*** • Is there enough light falling on your documents? • Do windows or light fittings cause glare or reflection on the screen? If so, try turning the screen or blocking the path of the light. • Use a screen with a light background when working with text. Software with a light background for text is more comfortable for the eyes.