Dear Parents,

Much has been happening over the summer break with our ICT resources. We have deployed a major software update as well as scheduled hardware updates, mainly in the Middle School area but flowing down into Primary as well. Our actions and decisions continue to be guided by the ICT Strategic Educational plan where we are aiming to facilitate teaching and learning in the best possible way. The goal for ICT learning at MECS continues to be for students to be able to use ICT wisely, efficiently, responsibly and with discernment. To support this wise use, we have a ‘Student Use of ICT’ Policy. We look forward to partnering with you this year in this important area.

Internet Safeguards

We have a number of strategies in place to promote safe and effective use of ICT:

1. Students must agree to work within the School’s guidelines as the attached policy explains. We expect students to honour this agreement.
2. Email and Internet filtering and monitoring systems are installed that do not allow access to harmful and inappropriate material. However, they are not ‘fool proof’ and we are not wholly reliant on them.
3. The personal access system that we have in place allows us to identify all users, computers, times and sites accessed by users.
4. Staff closely supervise computer use.

Information for Parents

It is important that parents be aware of and remain vigilant about these aspects of their child’s computer and Internet use. There are two main factors we encourage you to consider:

1. Purpose. ‘Surfing the net’ is to be used for purposeful searching in connection with a specific task. In our viewpoint searching that is not purposeful, ie casual surfing, leads to time wasting and the temptation to go off on tangents which may in turn lead the student to harmful and inappropriate behaviour. Therefore the school does not allow surfing.
2. Supervision. We would strongly recommend that parents be aware of the dangers of the Internet as well as the benefits. Our hope is that our students will learn how to utilise the Internet in a mature and responsible manner and that parents will exercise vigilant, close supervision of their children’s Internet access and computer use at home.

Some ideas to assist you with this could be:

• Ensure that computers are located in a shared space, and not in bedrooms.
• Work out reasonable and appropriate boundaries and times with your children for their computer use.
• Talk with your child about what they are doing online and who they are interacting with.
• If they are using a social media site, assist them to implement security and privacy settings to protect them.
• Install Internet filtering software. You can find more information about this on the Government’s cybersmart.gov.au website.

Policy Compliance

Parents need to clearly understand the school’s Student Use of ICT Policy and all students need to understand their rights and responsibilities in accessing the computer network, associated devices and the Internet. Both the parent and the student are asked to sign a document of accountability in this regard. This agreement
covers use of all school computer facilities and networks whether they are used at school or outside of school.

The Process

The process for this year has changed slightly so please read these instructions carefully. This year, to try to streamline the process more, all students have been given computer access by default, instead of waiting for a form to be returned. There are different Agreement forms included with this letter. Please fill out the correct form for each of your children and return to the school by **Monday 18th February**.

1. Please be familiar with the attached Policy and at the very minimum read the appropriate Agreement form with your child, explaining what they will be required to agree to. For Secondary Students, parents and students are asked to read together both the Student Use of ICT Policy and the Secondary Student ICT Use Agreement form.

2. Print a copy of the **appropriate Agreement form** for each of your children. Fill out and sign the forms together as instructed. Please ensure that you are completing the correct form for your child. If you are unable to print the form, you can obtain copies from the Office, or call the Office and they can post them out to you or send them home with your child/ren. The form should then be returned to your child’s class teacher or the Office. Please keep the Policy for your information.

3. Once the form has been returned and processed, the student will then be able to continue having access to the computer network. Access will be revoked if the signed form has not been returned by **Monday 18th February**. Students are expected to work within the Policy’s guidelines at all times. Failure to do so will be firmly dealt with.

Digital Literacy

We do not assume that all students understand how to use computers and/or the Internet. We continue to work at integrating and developing digital and information literacy skills into our curriculum in ways that support teaching and learning and reflect the values of our school. We are committed to supporting students to become wise and capable users of technology.

Parents are encouraged to become more informed and to develop their own skills. There are numerous websites available to assist you with this. The Cybersmart website already mentioned is a great place to start.

Please talk to your child’s teacher if there are issues or concerns in this area. If you wish to inquire further please feel free to contact the School’s ICT Coordinator – Mr Mic Dempsey, or the Senior Teacher Librarian – Mrs Carole Bird.

Thank you for giving your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Oldman
Principal

13 February 2013