The Children’s Progress - The Villians!

Year 10 students Neth & Lachlan had fun playing the bad guys in the Performing Arts
Kids ought to be able to climb trees

In this week’s editorial Principal Martin reflects on what’s been lost as we seek to ensure that ‘no one gets hurt’ in an OHS world.

Kids don’t play like they used to

Interestingly a recent campaign by Britain’s National Trust called ‘50 things to do before you're 11’ encourages children to skim stones, make mud pies, climb trees, run in the rain, race snails, bug hunt and fly a kite. The charity’s report revealed that:

“Fewer than one in 10 children regularly play in wild places, compared with almost half a generation ago. The report found that a third of children have never climbed a tree… In the age of Facebook and smartphones, children are more sedentary than ever when they are outside, with one in 10 unable to ride a bike… A survey by charity Play England showed over-protective parents are banning their children from ‘dangerous’ pursuits that they once took for granted. 17 per cent are not allowed to play tag. Adrian Voce, director of Play England, said: ‘Playing is an essential part of growing up and helps to instil critical life skills in kids… Children today are completely unfamiliar with that feeling being allowed to roam around all day unsupervised’, they need to be given the confidence and the skills to go into the wood and build a den or climb a tree. The outdoors is a treasure trove, rich in imagination. It brings huge benefits that we believe every child should have the opportunity to experience. And there are huge costs when they don’t.”

Let the pirates play

Over the Christmas break we’re going to erect one of those wonderful climbing rope pyramid things (there’s one in Montrose and another at Lilydale Lake) in the Primary playground. I’ve been trying to cobble the money together (they’re pretty expensive) for some years and finally, along with a very kind donation from P&F, we’re going to have Stage 1 constructed. Stage 2 includes another tower and a bridge where our Primary children will be able to play pirate wars.

Why a pirate tower? Well students are not allowed to climb trees anymore. In fact, we’ve got a long list of all the things they can’t do… No jumping down the stairs; no running along the covered ways. No climbing over fences to retrieve balls. No swinging on the branches. No playing with sticks. No brandings. No British bulldog. No throwing balls against the windows or walls. No splashing in puddles. No getting mud on your clothes. No leap-frogging over our temptation-yellow bollards. No parkour (interesting game where boys bounce off or leap off any interesting gravity challenged object). No labelling games with names that adults don’t understand.

The most common question that’s arisen as we’ve proposed the tower is whether it’s safe. Won’t kids fall? Isn’t that too tall? What’ll happen if a kid ‘freezes’ up the top? Do you have padding underneath? Will your insurance pay for my kid’s broken bones?

All we have to fear is fear itself

Sometimes I get the sense that we’re becoming frozen by ‘fear-mongers’ - fear of litigation; fear of parents sprouting ‘duty of care’; fear of not filling in the risk assessment form right; fear of not having explained the risks or the rules; fear of… Might I courageously suggest that we shouldn’t let the fear of the possibility that something might go wrong cause us to smother our kids in cotton wool.

[This is the place where normally you’d expect to read a counter paragraph about… being responsible… understanding ‘duty of care’… kids are precious… don’t forget to think through all the risks… find the line of balance between good care and sufficient freedom… what’s the considerate Christian response - All those caveats to ‘cover your back’ and show that you’re really not out of control].

Schools are losing the ability to be ‘gardens of delight’ (the literal meaning word of the word ‘kindergarten’) as they sink under all the red tape that accompanies an increasingly challenging accreditation environment. We all know that no school worth its bandaid cabinet would not have an extensive OHS policy and OHS committee. And speaking of bandaid, have you got the parent’s permission to apply one, and did they tick the latex-intolerant box? It’s not that some of these things aren’t important but don’t you find that the suffocation is smothering the adventure of life?

Adventurous play

I love an initiative that’s come from the Primary staff called a Playpod. Check it out on www.playforlife.org.au. It’s a shipping container that’s full of the junk you’d find in the back shed with odds and ends (safe ones of course) like - car tyres (with no wire sticking out), big containers (with no cracks which could pinch the skin), blocks of timber (sanded down to remove splinters), pipe cylinders (measured to ensure no body part gets stuck), rope (with label tags stating shouldn’t be used for strangulation purposes), chairs (warnings painted under the seat, “Turn over - four lethal prods may cause serious injury”), and wads of material for making cubbies and cushions (surely there’s no misuse of these soft bits).

At lunch time the container doors are opened and kids are released to let their imaginations go. They can build… do real adventures. Watch out 2013 because the primary playground just took a few more daring steps.

Make a difference for the real adventure maker

Surely we want to raise our children with a zest for life and a burning desire to explore and be inquisitive. Don’t we want our kids to be immersed in the real world of rough knocks? Don’t we want our kids to have courageous spirits that step out and take (wisdom-guided reasonable) risks?

And lastly, don’t we want our kids to learn how to make a difference for the real adventure maker?
School Notes from Martin, Principal

Kindergarten Building Thanks

Last Friday we held a luncheon with many of the builders/subcontractors working on the Kindergarten as a way of saying thanks for their great work. Sadly builder, Jonathon, couldn’t join us because of injuries he’d sustained in a fall at his home. Despite this, the building marches on and we are so thankful for great architects and tradesmen who make amazing buildings appear from nowhere.

Harry

We continue to pray for Harry and his whole family this week. Harry is in Monash ICU in an induced coma and his condition is critical. We’re praying for miracles of healing. Harry, who was due to retire from his teaching work at Donvale, has been a long term consultant and ‘teacher of teachers’ here at MECS.

Middle School Camps

Next week our whole MS heads off to Wilson’s Prom, Inverloch and Canberra. Isn’t it fantastic to continue learning in the classroom of the great outdoors.

Nearing the End

Our Year 12s continue their exams this week with everyone finishing with Monday’s ‘Religion & Society’ exam bringing up the rear. Years 10 and 11 have been doing exams this week also and then they return for orientation on 26 Nov.

Ed Support Coordinator

We’ve started advertising for a new Ed Support Coordinator with the departure of Jo at the end of the year. Jo will help us into the early part of 2013 with transition issues.

Year 10-11 Leavers

Last Thursday we farewelled 7 students from Years 10 & 11 as they are taking up options outside of MECS - alternate courses, apprenticeships or work. This was done at a farewell assembly and morning tea where we heard about each student and their contribution to our community. We would like to thank Shane who responded on behalf of students and his father who responded on behalf of the parents. We wish these students God’s richest blessings.

Cliff
SS Coordinator

Year 9 & 10 Basketball

It was a great day down at Dandenong. The bus dropped all 6 teams at the front door and it was straight into it. The girls played well in all three teams and it was great to see how they organised themselves with little help from adults. The games were played in a great spirit and there were many examples of good sportsmanship throughout the day. The top boys team were beaten in the final but given that most of them were from Year 9 it looks like this could be a really top team next year.

Cliff
SS Coordinator

Yr 10 Romeo & Juliet

The Year 10 English classes presented Romeo and Juliet with a difference. Each group of students were responsible for a couple of scenes in each act. The difference was that each group did this in a theme of their own choice. We saw Romeo and Juliet presented as robots, cowboys, station rats, buggans, the Hunger Games, Doctor Who and many other themes on the day. Congratulations to the students who put this together in a very short time frame. It was most enjoyable.

Cliff
SS Coordinator
Parents & Friends

Urgent Stationary Help Required

Thursday 31 January is the 2nd sales day and currently there are only 2 people that have offered to help. Those of you who have picked up stationery in January in the past will know how busy it is and know that 2 people are not enough. It is only the morning, 8.30am-12 noon, so PLEASE contact me to help and make this day run smoothly. There are still some helpers needed for packing on Wed 28 Nov in the afternoon also. Please contact me if you can help at any of these times. Thankyou.

Evelyn
Stationery Coordinator

High School Orientation

High School Nerves Relieved

At MECS we aim to relieve the nerves students may have about entering High School. We do this with a number of Orientation events held in Term 4 before the commencement of High School. At one of these events - the Information Night held recently, the parents and students were informed about Middle School and had supper. This was a great chance for the students, staff and parents to meet each other. This is particularly helpful for the new students coming to MECS for the first time.

Our second Orientation event was on Friday night with the 2013 Year 7 students and their families getting together for a games and dinner night. The students played games together and had time to chat and get to know each other over a hot dog dinner. The parents were able to chat to each other and meet new families too. The younger siblings also enjoyed games which were supervised by some of our Middle School student leaders. The students were encouraged to remember 2 other names of people they had met on the night. They are looking forward to being together again on Orientation Day, Monday December 3.

We love to host these type events at MECS as they are great opportunities for families to meet each other and form new friendships and to rekindle with others in the MECS Community.

Amanda & Nicole
Community Relations officers
In the recent Association meeting (25 October) we presented the draft budget for 2013 and tried to explain the complexities of what makes MECS a financially viable and healthy school. One key issue that all parents are keenly interested in is: What are the school fees for next year?

Here’s the 2013 fee schedule that the Board approved at its meeting in October.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three year old kinder</th>
<th>$1,520</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four year old kinder</td>
<td>$1,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep</td>
<td>$2,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school 1st child</td>
<td>$4,930</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary school 2nd child</td>
<td>$3,690</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary school 3rd child</td>
<td>$2,970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary school 4th child</td>
<td>$2,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School 1st child</td>
<td>$6,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school 2nd child</td>
<td>$4,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School 3rd child</td>
<td>$3,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior School 1st child</td>
<td>$7,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior School 2nd child</td>
<td>$5,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior School 3rd child</td>
<td>$4,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum fees per family</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fees shown in the table have risen 5% above the 2012 rates. This is a similar rise to what has occurred for most recent years. It was easy to understand in previous years that an increase of 5% was justified when the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate was high, but with inflation down around 2% why are fees going up 5%? I want to share a few of our considerations.

### Education cost increases are greater than CPI.

Whilst the CPI rate is low, school business managers and education departments use a Bureau of Statistics measure called the Education Price Index (EPI). For quite a few years now this has been above the CPI rate. In the year up to June 2012 the EPI was 6.1% (in the previous year 5.9%). Over the last few years I have been trying to find analysis of why the EPI is higher than CPI, but no-one has done that research yet.

### Take a comparative look at local independent schools.

A look at the fee rates of other local independent schools will quickly show you that the MECS fee rate is more affordable. It would be convenient if you could do a simple comparison of fees between schools but it’s not quite ‘apples and apples’. Scholarships at other schools; discounts for 2nd and 3rd children and the family fee ceiling here at MECS don’t always lead to easy comparisons. Also, MECS works very hard at the ‘one fee pays all’ approach. We don’t want to advertise one fee rate and then later ‘load on’ a whole lot of ‘hidden extras’ that mean the real actual rate is a lot higher. The only extras you’ll see on a MECS bill are for optional things like Instrumental Music Tuition (if your child learns an instrument) or optional VET courses. Stationery costs apply and the only other items that may come as additional costs are items such as sports tops, a small number of textbooks in secondary, and if you use the bus – our very economical transport fees. Other than some Catholic providers, we are probably the least expensive provider of independent education in our immediate region.

### Government grants have a huge influence on our budget.

Each time we budget we have to make estimates of what we’ll be receiving through government funding. Although the EPI is over 6% we have been able to keep our fee increase at 5% due to some additional State government funding. We have been able to keep fees reasonably low because we receive this helpful government funding; we do not pay exorbitant wages; and we run a ‘tight ship’. Government funding is based on a system called the Socio-Economic Status (SES) model. Our region isn’t overly wealthy, so we receive more per child than for example, Donvale Christian College does. From the Commonwealth government MECS receives around 55% of the equivalent of what it costs the State government to educate a child in a State school, and from the State government we receive about 17% of that amount. You the parent community, of course, pay the balance.

### Viable financial planning.

The Board requires the Finance Committee to always plan for a modest surplus, a practice in keeping with a ‘not for profit’ organisation that seeks to be financially sound and viable for the long run. A modest surplus for us usually entails something in the order of 2% of income (some school economic advisors recommend 8 to 10%). This allows for the ongoing maintenance and development of our campus (preventing the run down school scenario so often seen on the news), and, providing there are no costly ‘unforeseens’, enables us to pay off debt. In a real sense then it is not a surplus but our investment in the school’s maintenance and development.

MECS has a significant but manageable level of debt because it has engaged in a building and development phase to create our vibrant learning environment. The Board has a very strict set of limits around how much debt the school is allowed to take on. Those strict limits mean that the infrastructure development that has taken place over recent years has not caused undue pressure on school fees. Of course, the present school community assists in paying off some of this debt (from each year’s modest surplus), but so will the future community, as they will also benefit from the new and refurbished facilities.

### Affordability

The Finance Committee and Board are very conscious of the MECS mission - “We provide Parent-governed, Christ-centred schooling… at a price affordable to those who are committed”. In order to make sure that Christian education is ‘affordable’, firstly, fees need to be kept as low as possible and secondly, a mechanism needs to exist where some help can be provided to those who are committed but who can’t afford it. Where the fee rate is beyond those who are committed, the school helps out. We do not use the allocated help to offer academic scholarships (a very selfish practice that we believe has no place in Christian education). Rather, once folk have shown they are committed they can apply for assistance through a confidential fee assistance mechanism that assesses need.

### Thanks

We appreciate each family in our community who makes the financial sacrifice to include their children in our learning community. We know it is not easy. We hope that we have struck the right balance between keeping the school affordable and keeping it viable. Thank you for partnering with us.

**Gerry**

*Administration Manager*
**JP Camp**

My funniest moment was when the teachers were racing in the billy carts.

*Joel*

I really enjoyed the camp food.

*Tom*

I really enjoyed playing soccer with the others.

*Sean*

I really enjoyed going on Puffing Billy because I like steam trains.

*Samuel*

The funniest moment on camp was when I woke up in the middle of the night and I found my feet on Jed.

*Cody*

I really enjoyed walking around the lake.

*Sophie*

The funniest moment was when Mr Turner was pretending to be Mr Old Man.

*Marina*

I really enjoyed going across the bridge.

*Charlotte*

I really enjoyed going on the ropes course.

*Maddison-Grace*

My highlight was when everyone was trying to steal Mr Turner’s things.

*Indigo*

My highlight was seeing the ducklings at the lake.

*Talitha*

I most enjoyed it when my dad won his race.

*Amaya*
The Children’s Progress

Last Thursday Performing Arts students in Years 8, 9 & 10 treated an audience of family and friends to a mini theatrical feast! An entrée of solo music and drama performances was followed by the main meal, *The Children’s Progress*, which was loosely based on the well known book, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and focused on the life journey of three children. The script was developed by Marlene and drama students through a series of improvisation workshops, while Annora and her music students added songs and dances.

Although the performance was not a large scale, polished production, it gave students the opportunity to contribute their own ideas, create a range of characters and develop their performance skills while devising an original theatre performance with a great message. Well done everyone and thanks to the audience for supporting the show!

Marlene
Drama Teacher

MECS Notes

Orienteering Championships

Two MECS students represented Victoria in the Australian Schools’ Orienteering Championships held recently in Tasmania. Asha (Year 9) won the Australian Schools individual championship (for her age group) and came second in the Australian long distance. Lanita (Year 11) came second in the Australian middle distance, third in the Australian Schools individual, first in the Australian sprint distance and third in the Australian Long distance. Both girls ran in the relay event for Victoria and this team placed third.

As a result of their outstanding performances, both Asha and Lanita have been selected to run for Australia in the Oceania Championships which will be held in New Zealand during January 2013.

We offer both girls and their family our heartiest congratulations. Well done!

Dr Roger
SS Teacher

Olivet News

In the Bible, Jeremiah encourages the faithful to seek the welfare, the shalom, of the city. This was one of the key values for many years behind the projects conducted by VCAL. The 3 November program of ‘Gardening Australia’ highlighted the beautiful sensory Garden the VCAL team worked on for four years at Olivet Nursing Home. You can see this show online through iview. To see the blessing this garden is to residents is inspiring.

Andrew
Curriculum & VET Coordinator
**Calendar**

**2012 Term 4 Week 5: 11 NOV - 17 NOV**

**Mon 12 - Fri 16 November**
Year 10/11 Exams
VCE Exams

**Thur 15 November**
Step into Prep 2013 Parent Information Evening 7.30pm

**2012 Term 4 Week 6: 18 NOV - 24 NOV**

**Mon 19 - Sat 24 November**
Year 9 Canberra Camp

**Mon 19 - Fri 23 November**
VCE Exams
Year 10 Work Experience Week 2
Year 6-MS Transition Week
Cycle A Prom Camp (Years 7 & 8)
Cycle B Ecology Camp (Years 7 & 8)

**Thur 22 November**
Kindergarten Information Evening 7.30pm
Primary Poetry Booklet Launch 11.30am
SS Theatrette

**Fri 23 November**
ELC Open Day TBC

**2012 Term 4 Week 7: 25 NOV - 1 DEC**

**Sun 25 November**
DAMOTE Family BBQ

**Mon 26 - Fri 30 November**
Year 11/12 Orientation Week 1

**Mon 26 November**
Year 9 Students not at school (in lieu of Canberra Camp)

**Wed 28 November**
Year 9 Open Village Information Evening 7.30pm Year 9 Rooms

**Thur 29 November**
‘Kids with Courage’ Parent Follow-up
Evening Pump room 7.30pm

**Fri 30 November**
Prep Big Night Out
Year 12 Graduation Dinner

**2012 Term 4 Week 8: 2 DEC - 8 DEC**

**Mon 3 - Fri 7 December**
Year 12 Orientation Week 2

**Mon 3 December**
Orientation Day
Stationery & Schoolwear in Canteen 9am-3pm

**Wed 5 - Fri 7 December**
MS Exams

**2013 Timetable**

We are delighted to announce that due to the wonderful response to the introduction of the MECS Kindergarten, we have been able to expand our 4 year old program to two groups in 2013. This gives us the opportunity to offer more places to your family and friends who might still be investigating Kindergarten next year.

The proposed Kindergarten Timetable has now been finalised and you will notice that there are minor changes to the program times.

Please note the 3 year old group has a waiting list for 2013, but there are still some positions available for the 4 year old program.

We would love the opportunity to show people around our beautiful school and Kindergarten on a personalised tour. If you know of anyone who would benefit from having a look around please contact our Community Relations Officers, Amanda or Nicole.

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**Found**

Tupperware lunch boxes Blue x 1 and Blue with purple lid x 1.
A blue coldbag containing soft toys & books.
Sony lithium camera battery found at PS Athletics day
Available for pickup at office

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**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

11am Tuesday on published week. Email articles (images attached as jpg) to the Newsletter Office

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**MECS COMMUNITY NOTICES**

MECS does not endorse the products or services of any private advertiser. No responsibility is accepted by Mount Evelyn Christian School for the accuracy of information contained in advertisements or claims made by them.

**Computer Desk for Sale.**
Very good condition. $60. Pick up in Mount Evelyn. Contact Alex.

**Queen Bed for Sale**
Queen size mattress and base set (4YO – originally cost $749) complete with electric blanket, doona, 2 sets of linen and 4 pillows. $300. Contact Rosalie.

**Second Hand Market**
Ringwood Community Church, 1 Tamar St Ringwood, are holding a Second Hand Market 17 November from 9am-12noon. All welcome.

**Michael Carr-Gregg**
Michael Carr-Gregg will present a seminar on ‘Building resilient and happy children and young people in a community’ at the Mooroobark Umbrella Group community forum.
Mooroolbark Community Centre, 125 Brice Ave, Mooroobark (behind Senior Citizens Centre), 7.30pm, Thur 22 Nov. Entry gold coin donation. RSVP appreciated.

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**Housemate Wanted**
My housemate and I are looking for a third Christian housemate to live in the Croydon area. We are both past MECS students in our 20s. If anyone would like more information they can call Mel.

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**NOTICES SENT HOME THIS WEEK**
(can also be downloaded from website)

• Yr 7 8 Inverloch Camp - Permission Letter
• Yr 6 Physical Development Info Session
• Yr 9 Parent Information Notice