MECS Kindergarten Opens!

Some of our new Kindergarten children enjoying the wonderful Kindergarten playground!
Welcome back to MECS for 2013! If you’re new to the MECS community, we hope that your first few days with us have been encouraging and welcoming, and that your children have settled in and are starting to feel comfortable in their new school environment.

With great excitement, we welcome our 65 new kinder students. It’s amazing to think that after so many years of dreaming and hoping, God has answered our prayers and enabled us to open the doors of a brand new MECS Kindergarten. If you haven’t seen the Kinder yet, pop past after school one day and check it out. It’s stunning.

It’s with excitement, but also a little sadness, that I pen this first ‘From the Principal’ for 2013. For eleven years, the voice of Martin has echoed through these pages, giving us a glimpse of a man passionately serving the MECS community and creating many wonderful memories that have contributed to the building of God’s kingdom. We recognise that for 2013 there will be a Martin-shaped-hole in the MECS community, but the vision and mission of MECS will continue as strongly and effectively as ever.

This year in MECS Matters we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of MECS by having an article reflecting on a MECS event from the last 40 years. To kick off, our first piece is from Melissa, a teacher who has been associated with MECS for ‘a while’. I feel there would be no better way to start the year than to enjoy her reflections on ‘new beginnings’.

So to quote another great man, Harry, who recently, tragically succumbed to an illness that has taken him from us and from Christian Education far too early, let’s ‘Get to work’.

**Paul**
Principal

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This year we celebrate 40 years of MECS. 40 years of first days of school. Boy, if we could bottle all the nerves and excitement from all those first days what a brew we would have! Every one of those years had new staff, new students, new parents, new buildings and new programs. And, for MECS as a school, every one of those first days have heralded an amazing year of learning and community. And the reason for this is simple. God was there. Present in every single one of those first days. He was with us in the nerves and the anticipation and in the promise of things to come. Not one person faced any of those new days alone. MECS, as a school, faced none of the years to come alone. Because this school is God’s school. And every MECS person, in whatever capacity they are at MECS, is God’s child. And He’s going to be there when we start, when we finish and everywhere in between.

As I wrote this editorial a verse kept popping in to my head. One we all know and love: ‘Be still and know that I am God’. Even though the first day has passed now, there is still a feeling of beginning in the air. Let’s, this first week, take the time and form the mindset to be still and remember that God is God and that He is with us in all of our days; that he will protect us and direct and keep us in the palm of his hand. Let’s acknowledge that we are His and that He is in control. Let’s know that He is God in our beginnings, our busyness, in our struggles and in our celebrations and joys of starting school. He was there in 1973, He is here in 2013 and will be for as long as MECS continues.

God has richly blessed me in my 21 days of starting school at MECS. And God has abundantly blessed MECS in its 40 days of starting school. My prayer is that your first days are blessed likewise as we celebrate a God who goes with us in each and every day of our own life and in the life of our school.

**Mel**
SP Teacher

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This week I had my first school day of 2013. If I’m counting correctly, I’ve had 27 first days of school as a student or teacher. 21 of these have been at MECS. In 1973, MECS began its first ever day of school and I was one of the students who started on that day.

All of you had first days this week also. For some, they were ‘bigger’ than others. Paul had his first day as Principal, Jacqui (Deputy Principal) her first day at MECS (with students there), Carmen (SP), Matt (JP), Duc (Middle School), Rebekah (Prep), Cherie (4 Y O Kinder), Lee (3 Y 0 Kinder) with Kinder Assistants Karen and Robyn all had their first day as new teachers. And this week MECS experienced a brand new first day. On Monday, MECS Kindergarten opened. After all the dreaming and planning and hard, hard work the dream was realised. What a day to celebrate! We thank God for our absolutely beautiful Kinder, the people who envisioned it, the people who designed and built it, the administration people who worked so hard to meet legal requirements, our wonderful teachers and precious new Kinder children.

Prep children stepped out into the big world of school for the very first time this week. Many parents had their first day as MECS parents, or Middle School parents or Senior School parents. Students began new Year levels. Teachers took on new roles. In some form or other we all had a first day this week.

First days are pumping with many emotions. Even after all my first school days, I still get nervous at the beginning of that first day. And excited. And hopeful. Each of us this week, experiencing our own first days, probably felt all of those things and more.

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‘Let’s, this first week, take the time and form the mindset to be still and remember that God is God and that He is with us in all of our days’
Meet the New Staff

Jacqui
Deputy Principal

Carmen
SP Teacher

Matt
JP Teacher

Rebekah
Prep Teacher

Cassie
Reception

Duc
MS Teacher

Cherie
4 Y O Kinder Teacher

Lee
3 Y O Kinder Teacher

Robyn
4 Y O Kinder Assistant

Karen
3 Y O Kinder Assistant

Olivia
MS Art Teacher

Derek
PS Sport

Andrea
4 Y O Kinder Assistant

Amelia
SS Careers

Welcome Back To...

A Redback in the Playground

Students were surprised and excited to discover a ‘redback’ in the playground when they returned to school. The redback is actually our fantastic new activity mast net that was installed over the summer. If you check out the photos on the MECS website you’ll see that the ropes are red and black, hence it has been dubbed, ‘The Redback’.

What is very special about this activity net is that the $26,000 it has cost has been funded by all the amazing efforts of the Parents and Friends group (which is being morphed into ‘Friends of MECS’ - more details coming soon). A huge thankyou to all involved.

Gerry
Administration Manager
**MUSIC Notes**

**Enrol in Music**

It’s time to enrol for instrumental music at MECS! Learning an instrument is wonderful. It’s great exercise for the brain – lots of studies have shown the educational benefits of playing music. It’s a joy to be able to play music with friends, in group lessons, duets and bands. It’s an immensely satisfying way to express your feelings and your creativity. And it’s good for the soul.

You can enrol if you’re a student or if you’re a parent – in fact, the older you are, the more options you have. Here’s a list of recommended instruments for different ages:

**Prep** – violin and piano

**Years 1 to 4** – violin and piano, drums, guitar, ukulele and cello

**SP, MS, SS, adult** – violin and piano, flute, bass, mandolin, viola, classical singing, contemporary singing, drums, guitar, ukulele and cello

We’d like to offer lessons in clarinet and saxophone - we just need 5 students to enrol so we can arrange for a specialist teacher to come to the school.

Lessons are held during school hours (and before school by arrangement). Half hour lessons are $31 per half hour for individuals and $20 each in a group of two. As students progress, they might need longer lessons. Once you start lessons, the school will send you an invoice for the term.

What if you don’t have an instrument? I’m happy to help you arrange hire or advise on purchase

What if you’re pretty good at your instrument already? There is always more to learn, more to enjoy, more to aspire to. Our instrumental specialists have an amazing depth and range of musical skills.

What if you’re still uncertain? You can enrol for just one term and see how you go. If you like the idea of an instrument but don’t know what it would be like to play, you can arrange to meet with a teacher and have a try.

Lessons have already begun so pick up a form at the office or download it from the website (under School Life - Extra Activities).

Kerrie
Instrumental Tuition Coordinator

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**The Canteen is Open**

The MECS Kitchen (canteen) is now open on Wednesdays & Fridays.

We desperately need some new helpers for Fridays. Contact Sheryl via the Main Office if you can help.

Please remember to use lunch bags which are available from Main Office or Canteen. $1 for 10.

The new menu is now out. A copy has been sent home and it is also available from the website in the ‘Download Centre’.

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**2013 School Immunisation Program**

Every year the Yarra Ranges Council runs a school based immunisation program for Students in Years 7 and 10. This year there is also a vaccine (HPV) being made available to Year 9 boys for the first time.

If you have children in these years you should be receiving a package of information with your newsletter about these vaccines and cards to return to school ,to indicate whether or not you want your child to receive them. Please read the enclosed information carefully and then fill in the cards and return them to the office. Even if your child is NOT receiving the vaccinations we still need the cards to be returned.

Vaccinations are held at MECS starting in March and the lovely nurses from the Yarra Ranges Council are very experienced at making these vaccinations as quick and painless as possible. If you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at school or talk with the council nurses.

Melinda
First Aid Officer

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**School Banking is back in 2013**

School Banking is back in 2013 with an exciting new theme and some great new rewards to earn!

Be on the look-out for your Savings Hunter Pack which will be sent home soon to tell you all about it and how to claim your rewards.

Banking will recommence on Wednesdays from 13 Feb.

Happy savings everyone.

Evelyn

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**Playgroup Vacancies**

Busy Bees Playgroup has a couple of vacancies this year in the Wednesday 9-11am and Friday 9-11am group. Sessions are held in our beautiful new Kindergarten building in the Gumtree Room. Fees are $40 per family per Term. To apply for a position please download a form from the website or pop into the office to collect one.

Amanda
Community Relations Officer
The Active After-school Communities (AASC) program is a major component of the Australian Government’s package ‘Building a Healthy, Active Australia’ that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Australian children.

MECS is once again participating in the AASC program in Term 1, 2013.

In Term 1 activities to be offered are:

Monday 3:45pm – 4:45pm: Netball
Thursday 3:45pm – 4:45pm: Martial Arts

The program will run for 7 weeks beginning 11 February.

Children attending will be offered fruit for afternoon tea prior to the activities commencing. Please ensure that your child brings a refillable water bottle to each session.

The program will offer fun, safe and inclusive activities which will provide children with the opportunity to develop their motor skills. It also promotes a healthy lifestyle in a comfortable, non-competitive environment.

If you would like your child to participate in this program, please complete a parental form (available from the office) and return this to the office by: Friday 8 February.

This is a free program and places are limited.

For further information, contact the Main Office.

### Education Maintenance Allowance for 2013

**EMA Eligibility** – The Education Maintenance Allowance is paid to parents of eligible students under 16 years of age, whose child is enrolled at a Government or non-Government School in Victoria on census day, February 28, 2013 for first instalment and August 2, 2013 for the second instalment.

The Education Maintenance Allowance will be paid in two instalments, and to be eligible the following must be true for you on these dates:

- on 29 January 2013 for the first instalment and on 15 July 2013 for the second instalment:
  - (a) be an eligible beneficiary of a Centrelink pension, allowance or benefit, that is, a holder of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holder within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004, OR
  - (b) be a Veteran Affairs Pensioner (TPI), OR
  - (c) be a (temporary) foster parent AND
  - (d) submit your application to the school by the date/s listed below.

Parents who receive a Carer Allowance (formerly known as Child Disability Allowance), or any other benefit or allowance not income tested by Centrelink are not eligible for the EMA unless they also comply with one of (a) (b) or (c) above.

**Submission Dates** – The application form must be lodged at the school by 26 February 2013 for the first instalment. LATE APPLICATIONS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED due to government rules. We urge all who believe they are eligible to apply as this also affects State government funding of the school.

EMA application forms will be sent out to existing families who have received EMA allowance for 2012. If you are eligible for the 2013 EMA please collect an application form from the main office. If you are uncertain about your eligibility or have any questions please contact Alison or Craig via the office.

### MECS Notes

**Drama for Everyday Life**

Drama for Everyday Life is a program that uses drama, games and role play to teach social skills and self-confidence in a safe and creative small group environment (4 or 5 students), and has been offered at MECS for the past 10 years. Parents, teachers and students themselves anecdotally report a significant improvement in social skills, behaviour management and confidence. In Term 1, a 6-week program will be offered, commencing Thursday February 14 at a cost of $105. Enrolment forms are available at the Main Office.

**Shirley**

**PS Support Coordinator**

**Emergency Alert System**

Emergency Alert is the government’s national telephone warning system used by emergency services to send voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobile phones about likely or actual emergencies. More information is available on www.emergencyalert.gov.au

If your child has a mobile phone you must explain to them the Emergency Alert system so that they can respond calmly to any alerts that are issued. If your child receives an alert on their mobile phone when they are at school, they must follow the MECS emergency management arrangements currently in place. The same applies to parents. If a parent receives an alert that they believe may affect the school they should check the school website or call one of the emergency contact numbers on the school calendar for further information.

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Teachers should ensure that students with mobile phones are aware of the system and can respond calmly.

If you receive an emergency alert on your mobile phone please note that it does not replace the MECS Emergency Management plan.

**Editing Volunteer**

I would love it if someone with editing skills could give an hour early Wednesday afternoons to help proof the Newsletter. If you can help please contact Heather, Mon - Thur, or contact the Main Office.

**Heather**

**Communications Officer**
MECS Kindergarten Opens!

How exciting it was to open the doors of our brand new MECS Kindergarten on Monday (I’ll confess to shedding tears!). This has been a dream of a number of people for a long time, and to see it happen is incredible. 3 years back when I was a board member, we discussed the desire to see Christian education extend to kinder aged children, and the board boldly committed to establishing the MECS Kindergarten.

Our initial expectation was that the kinder would take a few years to establish itself, with groups that were not full. We never dreamed that we would have 2 full 4 year old groups and 1 full 3 year old group, in our first year. And I don’t think any of us realised how beautiful the building, outdoor play area and the equipment was all going to be. Wendy Mason basically gave up her holidays to work tirelessly on getting things ready, with Helen Damster invaluable with getting all the policies and procedures ready. It wouldn’t have happened without them.

How richly God has blessed us. 65 precious little people starting their educational journey in a beautiful building, with beautiful new staff, learning about the God who created them and loves them. Praise God!

Natasha
Principal’s Assistant
MECS Kindergarten Opens!
**Calendar**

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**
11am Tuesday on published week. Email articles (images attached as jpg) to newsletter@mecs.vic.edu.au

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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.

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**Unit to Let**
Unit in Yarra Glen - quiet, modern, centrally located, 2 bedroom, single garage.
Available from 21/2/13. Inspections welcome. $250 per week.
Contact Thomas 0467 580 445.

**Come & Try Calisthenics**
Montrose Calisthenics Club
or
Boronia Fernleigh Calisthenics

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**Music For Young Children**

Last year we introduced a music awareness program for young children. The music program presents flexible, weekly, hands-on sessions which develops music concepts and general life skills, using a combination of speech rhymes, action songs, games, finger plays, drama and stories.

Children get to play a variety of non-tuned and tuned percussion instruments. The program also includes creative movement and dance, listening games, improvisation using creative imagination and free expression. If your child loves music then this program would be lovely for you and your child to participate in. There are a couple of vacancies available in the 2 different sessions. You are also welcome to come to a ‘Come and Try’ session – bookings are made through the office.

This programme was written by MECS teacher Wendy Mason and will be led by Music teacher Rachel Hook. Held on Tuesday mornings, session times are 9-9.30am or 9.45-10.15am. Fees are per child and are paid per term; additional participants are $5 per session per sibling (over 2 years), siblings under 2 Free).

Term 1 $70 7 sessions
Term 2 $90 9 sessions
Term 3 $80 8 sessions
Term 4 $80 8 sessions

For a brochure with more information see the MECS website or contact the Main Office.

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

- Year 8 Boys Camp
- Kindergarten Letters 1 & 2
- Drama for Everyday Life Letter
- Music Bowl Excursion
- SS Letter
- SP Swimming
- MPO Parent Letter
- MP Afternoon Tea Letter
- Year 9 Open Village Letter

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**Celebrating 40 Years**