Dear Parents,

Your children have done so well since they've started school! They have already experienced an amazing learning curve, and have coped really well. If they are exhausted and seem to need more space, rest and quiet at home than in the past, there are very good reasons for that!

Sometimes you’ll find that they can’t tell you what they did or learned during the day. This is usually because they have participated in quite a number of different learning activities and have been busy playing and making new friends. Often Prep children can’t yet distinguish between, identify or name all the different activities they have engaged in, so they struggle to articulate a particular highlight. It may help to ask specific questions such as “What did you like best?” or “Tell me what you did outside.”

**Parent Information Night**
We would like to invite you to an important information night on **Wednesday Feb 11 7.30pm, in the PUMP room.** At this session we will cover Literacy and Numeracy expectations and talk about helping at home and in the classroom. We will introduce the LEM phonics program that we run at MECS, which will hopefully ‘demystify’ some of the concepts that we teach. It will be a lovely evening of connecting, information, fellowship, supper and communication. We will meet in the PUMP room, up the stairs alongside the Prep rooms.

**Some Important Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday February 11, 7.30pm</strong></td>
<td>Parent Information night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday February 13, 10.00am</strong></td>
<td>Whole School Assembly in the gym (coffee/tea available in the staffroom from 9am so you can stay after drop off)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday February 19, 9.00am</strong></td>
<td>Prep Parents Connect Morning tea – invitation to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday February 27, 6.45pm</strong></td>
<td>New Parents' Dinner (For families new to the school - invitation to follow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday March 5</strong></td>
<td>Grandparents &amp; Special Friends day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday 11, Monday 16, Thursday 19 March</strong></td>
<td>Parent Teacher Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday March 16</strong></td>
<td>School Photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday March 27</strong></td>
<td>Last day of Term 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Arrival at School**
The children can come into the classroom when their teacher opens the door from 8:45am, which is when they hear the bell. This means the children all come into the classroom together, ready for a crisp start, beginning on the mat. Please remind your child to bring in their boomerang bag and place it in the box, which is on the bench next to the door, and to put their chair down. Lunchboxes should stay in their bag outside. It is helpful if you talk to your child about zipping up their bag, and to ask for help if they need it.
Our lovely Learning Assistants Joya and Sandy will be available at the door to assist if your child needs extra reassurance to settle in the morning. Saying goodbye to your child before they enter the classroom can help them to be brave and avoid them having too much time to hesitate about separating.

**Communicating with Teachers**

The start of the day is a very busy time for us while we settle the children in order to make a good start to the day. If you need to communicate with us first thing in the morning, a good way to do this is to write a note and put it in your child’s boomerang bag. As we are still establishing routines in these first couple of weeks and have not yet assigned helpers to check boomerang bags for notes, it would be appreciated if notes of any urgent information could be written on the sticky notes in the tray by the door. Please leave them there for us to collect as we start the day. That way these bits of important communication won’t be lost in the busy time of greeting children and beginning the day.

If you need to chat with your child’s teacher, it is better to do this after school when we are more available. Please don’t feel that any concern is too trivial - the contact helps us to be better informed about your child. Please also come in and look at your child’s work and pictures. Chatting with other parents at pick up times and meeting your child’s friends is a good way to build relationships.

**Library**

Library classes will usually be taken by Mrs Marrie Distefano, one of our teacher-librarians. We will begin library borrowing in week 2, on Feb 12. In Term 1, the children will be able to borrow one book each week. From Term 2 onwards, they’ll be able to bring home two books each week. Please check that your child’s library book is in their library bag each Thursday morning. It can take a while for Preps to understand ‘borrowing’!

**Boomerang Bags and Readers**

It’s great to see the children getting into the important routine of bringing their boomerang bags from home each day. Reading books will go home early next week - please return them daily. Sometimes there is an opportunity at school to read the child’s new book to him or her before the book goes home, but as this isn’t always possible, it is always good at this beginning stage for you to read the book to your child first, modelling to them what to do. At this stage, your child will probably just be remembering the story. That’s fine. They should be experiencing success! So if they are able to hold the book themselves, look at the pictures and point to the words one at a time, that’s excellent. Recognition of words will come in time. Please record your child’s reading in the record book each day, which should always remain in their boomerang bag.

**Pooh Bear Share Bag**

One thing that can help a class get to know one another is to have a shared experience. One of these is taking turns to have Pooh and Tigger come home in the special ‘Pooh Bear Bag’. This has other activities in it as well, and a display folder for you or your child to add a reflection of the adventure. You may add photos or drawings by your child. Your child will then have a Show and Tell time to share the experience and their special page with their class.

**Sounds and High Frequency Words rings**

Next week your child will take home a named key ring with some ‘sounds’ cards, in their boomerang bag. Each week a new sound or two will be added to the ‘sounds’ key ring. The other key ring (to be sent home in week 3) will be ‘High Frequency Words’ for your child to practise reading at home. Every so often the words will change to new ones, or new words will be added. These particular words are added and changed according to each individual child’s needs, so please do not be concerned if your child has the same words for a longer period of time as the learning process is different for everyone. Frequent practise helps the children to consolidate and retain the knowledge they have gained in school.

Please help your child learn to:
• **Recognise** the letter/sound when you say it (the rhyme on the back will help you to say the sound(s) accurately, it is sung to the tune of ‘Skip to My Lou’). We will be teaching this tune to parents at our Parent Information Evening.

• **Point** to the letter/sound to say the sounds

• **Practise writing it accurately.** Note that letters should be written beginning at the top of the letter (*never* at the bottom!)

It would be good for your child to practise writing each letter/sound. Any scrap or recycled paper will do, or they could use a whiteboard or old scrapbook. At this stage, they should have **big** hand movements, rather than writing the letters in small print, or on lines, to get the formation accurate. The correct starting point and direction is vitally important.

Encourage them to identify words where they see the letter or hear the sound. For example, next week our sound is ‘a’. Is the letter/sound in their name? Is it on a cereal packet? Is it on your car’s number plate? Playing ‘I Spy’ is another good way to practise thinking of the names and sounds of different letters. We will focus on the lower case initially and later will introduce uppercase.

**Literacy**

These first 2 weeks in literacy we are focusing on what a word is – as compared to a letter or a sentence. Many words that we discuss are related to our topics of interest e.g. Summer, summer food, sports, clothes, activities, etc. We will also be singing nursery rhymes, talking about temperature (hot in Summer) and thermometers and experimenting with ice cubes to compare hot and cold. (A great idea for bath time is to put some ice cubes into the bath to watch them melt!)

**Show and Tell for the ‘Letter of the Week’**

It would be appreciated if you help your child to choose and bring along an item from home that begins with our letter for the week. This item should be brought along on Mondays.

This activity kicks off this coming Monday! Please assist your child to bring something beginning with the letter ‘a’. The items will stay on display for the week, and we will send them home on Fridays.

**Other Show and Tell**

We will have some specific show and tell times for ‘letter of the week’, and we will also have show and tell for VIP items (see below). Please do not send other show and tell items during the week as this can be very time consuming.

**V.I.P**

Each week, one student from each Primary School class is selected to be the class V.I.P. We will send you a note when your child is selected to be our V.I.P. and will let you know what she/he will be doing as part of this. For Preps this will start in Term 2, as it gives the children time to settle into school and to begin to understand what being the V.I.P. means.

**Buddies**

During the Buddies program older students (Year 6) and Prep students participate in sharing activities that encourage each other at school. This occurs approximately once every 4 weeks. We will begin our Buddies program shortly.

The Preps also have the opportunity to have a Year 12 buddy that they will meet in week 2. The children will see their Year 12 buddies at library time on the 6th week of each term also. Occasionally the Year 12s
pay incidental visits and join in with Prep activities to get to know their younger buddies better. The children develop a good sense of whole school community through these buddy activities.

**Fruit Snack (Brain Food)**
The children stop for a short break mid-morning to eat ‘brain food’. It has been great to see the children bringing along a lovely variety of fresh foods for this first snack of the day. It is helpful for you to show your child their fruit/veg snack before school, so that they are clear about what to eat when. Brain food is fruit or vegetables only. Biscuits, yoghurt and other snacks can be eaten at morning tea or lunchtime. Some children may be confused when they have fruit or vegetables for morning tea also; taking the time to explain each of the three different foods for the day and the containers they are in can be very helpful.

**Water bottles**
It would be great if your child’s labelled water bottle could stay in the classroom so that they have access to water any time during the day. **This bottle needs to be taken home on Fridays** to be washed and returned again on Monday morning. Another bottle of drink can be sent daily with something different to drink if you wish, however water is the preferred option both for health reasons and to prevent attracting wasps.

**Our Units: ‘Summer’ and ‘God made all things and God made Me’**
In the first 2 weeks we are learning about ‘Being at School’ and ‘Summer’. We focus on one season during the first weeks of each term. As we progress into the term we will focus on the days of Creation and exploring God’s world, the things that He made, and ways that we can look after our world, school and classroom. We will end up discovering that He wonderfully made us in His image. We are all special and loved, the same in many ways and yet unique and different.

**Prep Testing**
On Wednesdays we will be testing the Prep children to determine what they already know and are able to do, particularly in Literacy and Numeracy. This enables us to establish further goals in these areas. Such testing occurs in most schools.

Please bring your child to school to spend an hour with their teacher for this purpose on one of the Wednesdays. Please indicate your preferred time slot on the schedule posted outside the class door. We request that parents who do not have other children at school avoid choosing time slots during the first or last hour of school.

As children often perform better when we spend time together one on one here are some suggestions to keep you entertained while you wait:

- Feel free to have a cuppa in the staffroom
- Visit the library (introduce yourself to the library staff)
- Go across the road to Kuranga nursery for a cuppa
- Stay near the classroom, or leave the school to do some shopping etc.

*If you plan to visit other parts of the school, please obtain a visitor’s badge from the office.*

**Junk Collections**
We are always involved in a number of activities that re-use junk materials. You can help us by collecting items such as snack sized yoghurt containers, balls of wool, beads, buttons, corks, film canisters, cardboard rolls (not toilet rolls), foil tins, shiny paper and **small cardboard boxes** suitable for construction (i.e. toothpaste boxes, muesli bar boxes, etc).

**PMP**
PMP is a Perceptual Motor Program designed to enhance the children’s ability to determine their body in space. This ability to ‘perceive’ where their body is has links to ‘cross patterning’, which is both sides of the brain working together with gross motor functions.
These exercises have fantastic benefits for fine motor skills, which is also linked to eye-hand coordination and cognitive (intellectual) thinking. Growth in these areas is critical for developing Literacy and Numeracy skills! Other benefits are improved concentration and ability to focus.

We plan to run PMP exercises for 30 minutes at the beginning of the day, every second Monday and every Tuesday. It is a great benefit running this before our literacy program starts, as it clearly helps the children to settle and concentrate. We will need volunteers on these mornings to help us. One of the benefits of participating in this program is that you get to see the activities the children are involved in and can follow up at home with simple things like:

- “Can you balance on that rock?”
- “Can you stand on one foot while I count to 5?”

This gives children lots of opportunities to practise these important skills!

**Parent Help in the Classroom**

We would love to have your help in our classroom. Tasks range from cutting up materials, working with small groups of children in Literacy and Numeracy, helping with PMP, hanging up children’s work, helping with crafts, wiping tables, reading with children and changing Boomerang books. As you know, the children are still settling into school and need time to experience their parents leaving and arriving to pick them up at the end of the day. For this reason we plan to start the Parent Roster in Week 3. Helping in the classroom is such a valuable experience for your Prep child. They love to have you come into the class. It is best if possible to have your toddler cared for while you come to Preps, however some activities such as PMP are suited to toddlers also. Please speak to us if you are unsure of what activities are better suited with small children. This ensures that the Prep children are less likely to be distracted. It may help to swap with another parent and help fortnightly.

All parents helping in the classroom, or who attend any excursion must have a ‘Working with Children Check’ (commonly abbreviated to WWCC). Please organise this immediately if you intend on helping at school. Forms are available online. When completed the form needs to be lodged at the Post office, where you will be issued with a receipt. Bring the receipt to the school office and you can start helping straight away. Once you receive your card, please bring it to the office and a photocopy will be taken for our records. If you already have a WWCC card please take it to the office so that you are registered.

If you can help us out in any way it would be greatly appreciated. Please see the attached timetable to see where you might be able to join us. If you wish to help please return the attached form to us as soon as possible.

We look forward to a great year with your Prep child.

Yours sincerely,

*(Mrs) Jan Ormrod & (Mrs) Rebekah Clark
Prep Teachers*
**Parent Classroom Assistance**

**NAME:** ______________________________________________________

*Please circle your preference to help and return this form to your class teacher.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9.00am</th>
<th>8.50-9.30am</th>
<th>9.00-11.00am</th>
<th>11.30-12.50pm</th>
<th>2.30-3.00pm</th>
<th>1.50-3.00pm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>PMP</td>
<td>Investigations and classroom tasks</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>PMP</td>
<td>Literacy Groups/ other classroom tasks</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>CS/Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong> (from Term 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Wonderful Wednesday” (reading and writing activities) / other classroom tasks</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>CS/Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy Groups/ other classroom tasks</td>
<td>Newsletter and notices into Boomerang bags</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy Groups/ other classroom tasks</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your help, it is very much appreciated!