Dear Families,

We have had a wonderful start to the term in Junior Primary with lots of exciting learning already taking place. Our students have thoroughly enjoyed launching into learning about mini beasts. We have been amazed at how many mini beasts we can find in our school during our Creation Garden Hunt and School Yard Safari. We were also enthralled by the fantastic presentation *Insectomania* during our recent Incursion.

In Week Three, we launched our Junior Primary Guided Reading Program. This is a wonderful opportunity for all our students to work in a small group with a teacher or learning assistant to target the development of reading skills at their own level. Our students have settled quickly into this new routine and some great learning is already taking place. This week we begin our Numeracy Workshops across JP and we look forward to our students hitting their learning targets in Numeracy.

The Junior Primary staff were very pleased to have so many people attend our Information Afternoon. It was great to have a chance to chat to the parents in attendance. We were thrilled to be able to share some of the programs we have for our students this year. Below is a summary of the information presented for those who were unable to attend. We particularly focused on four aspects of our Junior Primary program: 1) Socialisation and Communication, 2) Literacy, 3) Numeracy and the 4) Frill Neck Lizard Enrichment Program.

1. **Socialisation and Communication**

**Socialisation**

Junior Primary is a wonderful time for our children to grow in independence and in their understanding of themselves and others. A significant part of their learning in JP is social learning as they begin to develop the lifelong skills that enable them to successfully work and play with others. This is a long journey and we do not expect any of our students to already have all these skills or to achieve them in two years. Our children develop at different rates, have different personalities and respond to events in different ways. It takes a lot of practice to learn to:

- Play and work together
- Speak kindly and nicely
- Solve problems in positive ways
- Develop a range of friendships
- See the perspectives of others
- Become more resilient
This takes a lot of practice and needs both help and encouragement from home and school. We spend a lot of time working with our students on strategies to resolve the conflicts that arise. Learning to share, take turns, listen, speak kindly and compromise, are skills that we regularly overtly model and practise.

**Restorative Practice:**

When problems do happen, we use Restorative Discipline. This involves all parties and goes through the process of:

- What happened?
- Who was hurt?
- How can we make it right?
- How can we make sure it does not happen again?

**Friendships and Play:**

In JP, children socialize in different ways. Some children are happy to play in a large group, or with one or two peers and some children are very happy to play on their own near other children. These are all normal stages of development for a JP student. Not all students develop firm friendships in their JP years. We need to keep encouraging them to have lots of opportunities to play and work with others.

**Home Encouragement:**

At home our children need encouragement, guidance and support as they begin to build their social skills. The words and strategies that we use with our children are really important to help them develop these skills. Speaking positively to your child about problems when they occur is very important. For example: If your child has had an unkind comment using words such as “That is upsetting and those were not nice words to use,” is a very helpful response. Give them some positive reassurance and then a positive strategy to use such as “It’s ok that you do not like my sandwich because egg is my favourite and I like it.”

Please remember that all our children are learning to speak and act appropriately. Using words such as they are a Bully or a Bossyboot is not helpful. This can be very challenging especially when our children are very upset.

When your child is upset, it is very easy to have a reactive response without being aware of the context of an issue or how it may have been dealt with. We would like to encourage you to speak positively to your child with words like, “I can see you are upset and that this is a problem. We are going to all work together to work this out.”

**Zones of Regulation:**

In Junior Primary this year, we have introduced the Zones of Regulation. This is a program that enables students to identify their feelings using a range of colour zones.

- Blue: Feeling tired or unwell.
- Green: Calm, relaxed and happy. This is the good learning zone.
- Yellow: Bored, frustrated, worried, stressed and unsettled.
- Red: Angry and very upset.

Learning about the Zones, helps students better identify how they are feeling and enables them to seek assistance and develop strategies to help.
Communication

MECS is a special place where we see our role as teachers as a privilege and partnership with parents. It is a privilege for us to share in your child’s journey. We love our JP children and we love learning about who they are. We enjoy learning about their hobbies and interests and celebrating their achievements. We have already had a wonderful beginning to the year getting to know our new students. We work hard to develop the curriculum and spend many hours thinking about what will help a particular class or student progress. The children that we teach are very special to us.

Our Parent-Teacher Partnership is a relationship in which we all work together to help our children thrive. One of the most essential things for a good relationship is good communication. Like any relationship, sometimes we come across issues or have something that goes wrong. We believe that keeping short accounts is really important, so we encourage you to come and see us or give us a phone call. We will respond to messages as soon as is practical in our teaching day. It is always best to come and see us about the smallest question or concern that you may have as soon as possible.

*Email:* Can we please encourage you to speak personally or on the phone before you send an email, particularly in the heat of the moment. Emails can have a tone that we may not have intended, whereas a discussion is much more personable. Please remember that teachers are people too and we genuinely care for your children. It is our prayer and our hope for all our words at MECS in all our relationships to be encouraging and hope filled. This is what we aim to encourage and develop in all our students.

Sometimes an issue may need further follow up so that it can be resolved. We would like to make you aware of the following procedure:

1. Speak to the teacher involved always in the first instance.
2. Secondly, speak to the cluster leader.
3. Thirdly, issues can be then be directed to Di Emery as head of the Primary School.
4. Finally, to Narelle Sketcher as principal of MECS.

2. **Literacy**

We are very excited about the Junior Primary Literacy Program and some new opportunities we are able to offer to students this year.

**Guided Reading:**

- Targeted Guided Reading program across the whole of JP.
- Groups will meet 3 sessions per week.
- Each small group with have a learning assistant/or teacher with them.
- Working on developing decoding skills, comprehension (inferential and literal comprehension skills) and building their skills to make connections between texts and the world/themselves.
- Often Junior Primary children have built fantastic decoding skills to read texts, however, it does take time to also build their comprehension and understanding texts.
- We want to ensure students have a rich bank of skills to connect with and understand different types of texts.

**Writing:**

- Writing is taught in all different contexts with children creating drafts, editing their work with support, and publishing their masterpieces.
- We model and guide students in writing in many different genres.
Smart Spelling:

Smart Spelling is a phonics program developed by Spelling Consultant Michelle Hutchinson.

- The SMART acronym is the process the teacher uses to teach spelling words. It stands for: Say, Meaning, Analyse (This is the step students break up their words into sounds and letters), Remember and Teach.
- The program focuses on identifying sounds in words, looking at the pattern in which we use those sounds and growing vocabulary by explicitly teaching the meaning of different and new words.

3. Numeracy

Numeracy sessions run everyday in Junior Primary. Numeracy Workshops are on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. These Workshops cover areas such as Place Value, Money, Addition and Subtraction. Class Numeracy, with their own class teacher, will be twice a week. These sessions will cover other numeracy topics as per the Australian Curriculum. In Junior Primary, our Numeracy sessions have lots of hands on learning that builds up strong foundations.

You may be wondering why we have Numeracy workshops? There are so many benefits to these workshops. Student learning will be targeted at their level and need. They will be grouped to target their next step of learning rather than by their class. Within a grade of students, the diversity of skills and understandings is quite broad. By offering Workshops, it allows your child to have their learning needs met in a more targeted manner. We will be offering four Numeracy workshops, which will make the class sizes smaller and more targeted to children’s individual learning needs. Our Workshops develop strong foundations for Place Value and Numeracy, which helps them in all areas of their mathematics. Place value is the core of mathematics and by building a strong grounding this will enable your child to succeed in all areas of Numeracy.

4. The Frill Neck Lizard Extension Group

This year in Junior Primary, we are very excited about being able to offer the Frill Neck Lizard Enrichment Group. Mrs Daniela Repse will be leading this wonderful program for six Literacy and six Numeracy sessions per week, which coincide with our JP Literacy and Numeracy sessions. This is a great opportunity to enrich and extend the learning journey of our students with challenging problems and beautiful ideas.

- Numeracy Enrichment- during Numeracy workshops (Tue, Wed, Thu) Covering Pattern and Order as well as Place Value in Term 1.
- Literacy Enrichment- after Guided Reading until recess (Tue, Wed, Thu) examining the work of author/illustrator Eric Carle and learning how to analyse and write interesting stories.

We hope that you are excited as we are about the Junior Primary Program for 2016 and we look forward to partnering with you during your child’s junior primary years.

The Junior Primary Team
Mrs Daniela Repse, Miss Fiona Murray, Miss Viv Theunissen and Mrs Kaye Smith