The word ‘Kindergarten’ is a German word and translates to ‘child’s garden’; MECS Kindergarten is named deliberately because we aim to be a place where children (and families) can delight in God’s presence, play in His wonder- and awe-filled world, and grow and learn in a secure and loving environment.

Welcome back to families already connected to MECS Kinder and welcome to our new families!

**Orientation**

The year has started extremely well, with the children settling into their groups with happy, enthusiastic and smiling faces! We are delighted to see the children walking so confidently into Kindergarten. Orientation day was a great success. Thanks to Andrea North and Lynda Barendregt who stepped in to make the day run smoothly.

While the beginning of the year may seem to start slowly, the orientation weeks allow staff to quickly get to know each child, be available to meet children’s needs and help develop ideas in play, as well as allowing the children to get to know other children in their group. We spend time during these early weeks introducing our class guidelines and how to be safe and caring at Kinder. These guidelines are based on the ‘We choose virtues’ program which focuses on 12 virtues that come under 3 headings: ‘We Obey; We are Kind; We are Helpers’.

**Community Noticeboard and Parent Library**

We have a common space for notices and information on the Community Noticeboard near the entrance of the Piazza. Pamphlets and notices are available for you to help yourself. Remember if you are borrowing from the Parent library to enter your book and date when you take and return a book.

**Kinder Windcheaters and Muddlarks Wet Weather Clothing Orders**

We are making available the opportunity for you to purchase a Kinder jumper (Windcheater) with our printed logo. There are a selection of colours and sizes. You can view them online at [http://www.ramo.com.au/category/hoodies/sloppy-joe](http://www.ramo.com.au/category/hoodies/sloppy-joe). An order form will soon be available. Please fill it in and take it with your payment to the office by Friday March 3.
Research has shown that outdoor play is vital in early-childhood. Consequently at MECS Kindergarten we like to use the phrase “there is no such thing as bad weather, just poor choices for clothing”.

Orders and payment for good quality wet weather gear can be made online at [http://www.muddlarks.com.au](http://www.muddlarks.com.au)
Enter the code MECS when ordering for a 20% discount.

**Piazza**

Please remember to supervise your children in the Piazza area. The time waiting for your session to start should be calm and engaging for the children, so that when they enter Kindergarten they are ready for learning. *Children should not be jumping or climbing on furniture or under tables*, but waiting quietly with you or talking with a group of friends. We have one cupboard with some picture story books and toys that you can access, however please make sure you and your child puts them away once they have finished with them.

**Arrival and Departures**

Please remember that the Kindergarten staff are very busy at the beginning of each session and their first priority is the needs of the children arriving. Speaking with the staff after a session is best, or please arrange a time with us. This way we have the least amount of disruptions at the beginning of a session.

When departing, we would appreciate you coming to the door one at a time, and we will send your child to the door to meet you when we see you. We have asked the children to wait with us until we say their name. This ensures your child is handed over to you safely. Please let your child’s teacher know if one of your authorised nominees is going to pick up your child, via a short message in the attendance book.

By having parents wait in the Piazza we avoid congestion in the playroom and are promoting independence and self-help skills in the children – they are already showing us how capable they are! Once all of the children have been dismissed, the staff are then available to chat with you. Thank you for your cooperation with this process.

**Seesaw: The Learning Journal**

We hope you have had a chance to download the seesaw app and have a look at your child’s first week at Kinder. Follow the instructions on your handout and hover over the QR code to go to your child’s learning journal. If you have already been using the app, you will need to add a child even for the same child, as your child is now in a different class.

**Kinder Connect Morning Tea**

Our wonderful Community Relations Officer, Nicole Nyhouse, organises a morning tea for the parents in your group where you can relax, have a cuppa and connect with each other. The dates for this term are displayed at the top of this newsletter. The K4 Connect Morning Tea will take place in the main staffroom but the two K3 Connect Morning Teas will be in the Piazza. We hope you can come!

**Lunchbox Ideas**

Thank you for sending healthy options for children, including some whole foods such as fruit and/or vegetables. *We are amazed at the wonderful variety that children have in their snack/lunch boxes.* We are also appreciative of you considering our reduce rubbish policy. It is easier (and way cheaper) to purchase larger packets and tubs and divide them into the lunchbox containers than it is to buy small pre-packed foods, and generally loads healthier options! Please keep special treats for after Kinder.
If you are looking for healthy eating ideas have a look at these websites:
http://raisingchildren.net.au/nutrition_fitness/preschoolers_nutrition.html

Helping at Kindergarten
Thank you all for placing your name on the roster to come and help us. The ‘Helping at Kindergarten’ list is displayed in the Kindergarten playrooms, which outlines some duties in which you could be involved.

The following pages will give you a brief update on what’s happening in each section of the Kindergarten.

Blessings,

Wendy Mason – Early Years Coordinator

Possum and Koala News
The 4 year old children have been exploring their sense of belonging at Kindergarten as they get to know their Educators, space and play mates.

God made people special - we are the crowning glory of creation, and we are designed to work in community with each other. During Term 1 we want to continue to build a sense of belonging, a place where children feel happy and safe, where learning together is fostered. As the children become familiar with their new routine, classroom, teachers and classmates, we work towards a classroom community where each child is known, respected and valued. Group rules are established together, giving children ownership over their own behaviour at Kindergarten.

Social Skills Program
Good social skills are essential to how well a child adapts to Kinder, and further down the track, school. Throughout this term we will be systematically teaching fundamental skills such as looking at people when talking to them, listening and not interrupting, following class rules, sharing and taking turns. Complex skills can then follow such as identifying emotions in themselves and in others and responding appropriately, managing conflict without aggression and asserting their own needs appropriately. With these skills children are able to develop positive relationships with other children and adults and learn how to express their feelings safely. As a result children develop a strong sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. Topics covered this term will be:
1. Greeting others
2. Taking turns: talking and listening
3. Taking turns at play
4. Sharing
5. Asking for help
6. Identifying feelings
7. Empathy

We have looked at the BIG book, the Bible, where we find God’s story. Because God created us He knows us - our lives have meaning because we are known by God. We are all made uniquely in the image of God, with different gifts and talents. God’s intimate knowledge of us is beautifully described in Psalm 139. It is important that little children begin to explore who they are, what they like and dislike, and work towards an understanding that we are all made by God. We want children to realize the wonder of their own creation by God, and their importance to God.

During these orientation weeks we have explored the idea of holidaying with our family, and heard from each other about the types of things they did over
the summer. From these discussions we have moved from familiar, family discussions to areas of interest, such as the beach and sea creatures.

On **Friday 10 February 10**, both K4 groups will attend together for the first time. We want to celebrate the day with a Teddy Bears’ Picnic, as we meet new friends and begin to build our classroom culture. Please send along one Teddy on that Friday.

Over the next few weeks we will be looking at our family as a Community, where God has given parents the special job of caring for their children as they grow. We will also look at ourselves, our emotions and how we affect others around us.

We are looking forward to a wonderful term.

*Wendy, Karen, Cherie and Lee - 4 year Old Program Educators*

**BLUEBIRDS AND ROSELLAS NEWS**

A BIG welcome to all the new families joining our Bluebirds and Rosellas this year. It was great to meet everyone on Orientation Day and the children have begun to settle into their Kinder environment. The children are quickly learning many new skills, meeting new friends and building relationships with the teachers and each other.

We have also been learning each other’s names and the teachers whilst in their small groups. They have met their special Kinder pet friend (Bluebird/Rosella) that they will have an opportunity to take home throughout the year for a week. The children have begun to learn their group song creating a sense of belonging for the children to identify with. Hopefully you will become quite familiar with it in the coming weeks too.

“I’m a little Rosella/Bluebird

So are you,

We love Jesus

And He loves us too

When we get together

Then we sing

Thank you Lord for everything!”

Sung to the tune of “I’m a little teapot”

This term we will be learning about how our awesome God created colour and beauty and in His Image we are also creative beings. Please take the time to read the term overview displayed near the program book and loaded on to Seesaw. It has become a tradition for K3’s to celebrate God’s creation of Colour through
some dress-up days. Please take note of the dates and the colours that you can dress your child in. This is not compulsory and children are invited to wear as little or as much colour as they would like.

**Colour dates to remember:**

- Tuesday 21 February - Blue
- Thursday 23 February - Red
- Tuesday 28 February - Yellow
- Thursday 2 March – your favourite colour or rainbow colours

We are so looking forward to sharing this journey of kindergarten with your child and your family. We pray it is a wonderful year ahead and remind all parents that if you have any questions or queries please come and speak to us.

*Naomi and Sandy - 3 Year Old Program Educators*

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**Busy Bees News**

Welcome to 2017. I hope you all had a wonderful and relaxing break. It was wonderful seeing you all again with your beautiful children. We welcome new families starting in each group, lots of new friendships to be made.

Please remember to apply sunscreen on your child before coming and it would be great to encourage your child(ren) to wear a hat while playing outside. Also this year I would like to encourage ‘nude food’ for our morning tea or lunch. This means bringing food without plastic wrapping and remember the Kinder has a no nut policy so please no peanut butter, nutella or muesli bars with nuts. Also if your child has any food allergies, please let me know.

I’m looking forward to an exciting term.

*Lynda - Playgroup Leader*

Blessings from all of the Kindergarten Staff,

*Karen, Cherie, Naomi, Lee, Sandy, Susan, Lynda & Wendy*