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 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 12 7.30pm**. 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>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday Feb 12, 7.30</strong></td>
<td>Parent Information night</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday 27 February 9.00am</strong></td>
<td>Prep Connect Morning tea (a chance for Prep parents to chat over a cuppa in the staffroom)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday 6 March</strong></td>
<td>Grandparents &amp; Special Friends day</td>
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<td><strong>Monday 17 March</strong></td>
<td>School Photos</td>
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<td><strong>Friday 4 April</strong></td>
<td>Last day of Term 1</td>
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**Arrival at School**

The children can come into the classroom at 8:45am when they hear the bell, which is when their teacher will open the door. 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.

**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 13. 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 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.

Sounds and High Frequency Words rings
Next week your child will take home two named key rings in their boomerang bag. Each week a new sound or two will be added to the ‘sounds’ key ring. The other key ring 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. Please practise these words and sounds every day. 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’)
- **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 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.

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date to bring item</th>
<th>Letter for the week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 Feb</td>
<td>A (reading shape ‘a’, writing shape, a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17 Feb</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>24 Feb</td>
<td>C and S</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3 Mar</td>
<td>O and G</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>11 Mar (Tues)</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>17 Mar</td>
<td>H and T</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>24 Mar</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>31 Mar</td>
<td>R and N</td>
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</tbody>
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**Other Show and Tell**
As mentioned above, 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 in to 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 3 weeks. We will begin our Buddies program shortly. The Preps also have the opportunity to have a Year 12 buddy that they will meet next week, prior to taking part in a special walk in the whole school assembly the following Tuesday. The walk celebrates the journey children take through school from the beginning (Prep) all the way to the end - Year 12, and honours the very significant Prep or final year they are commencing. The Preps will meet with their Year 12 buddy once each term, as well as when their buddy comes to visit occasionally during normal classroom activities. 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 water bottle could stay in the classroom so that they have access to water any time during the day. This bottle can 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, small boxes suitable for construction, corks, film canisters, cardboard rolls (not toilet rolls), foil tins, shiny paper and small cardboard boxes (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, which is critical for developing Literacy and Numeracy skills! Other benefits are improved concentration skills 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 from the office. 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.*

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<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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td>Changing Boomerang Books</td>
<td>PMP (every second week)</td>
<td>Investigations and classroom tasks</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>Changing Boomerang Books</td>
<td>PMP</td>
<td>Literacy Groups/ other classroom tasks</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>CS/Art</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>Changing Boomerang Books</td>
<td>“Wonderful Wednesday” (reading and writing activities) / other classroom tasks</td>
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<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>CS/Art</td>
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<td><strong>(from Term 2)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Thursday</strong></td>
<td>Changing Boomerang Books</td>
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<td>Literacy Groups/ other classroom tasks</td>
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<td>Newsletter and notices into Boomerang bags</td>
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<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td>Changing Boomerang Books</td>
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<td>Literacy Groups/ other classroom tasks</td>
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**Thank you for your help, it is very much appreciated!**