12 February 2015

YEAR 9 OUTDOOR EDUCATION 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians

Your son/daughter has elected to undertake the “Outdoor Education” course in Year 9 in 2015. I hope that they will get the most out of the fantastic learning opportunities that the program offers. The program provides learning experiences aimed to provide personal and group challenges that will develop resilience, problem solving skills and promote social skills, as well as the practical skills and knowledge necessary to safely participate in a variety of outdoor activities.

I am writing to explain the expectations, requirements and costs of the course. There are two compulsory 3 day camps; a winter camp during Term 2 and a summer camp in October/November. In addition to this there may be half or full day excursions throughout the year. Details of these camps and excursions will be sent to you in letters or in your son's/daughter's planner closer to the time.

Costs and Equipment
There will be an Outdoor Education levy to cover all camps and excursions for the whole year as outlined in the Subject Selection Handbook that was distributed in 2014. The costs associated with running these camps include transport, hiring facilitators, gear, and accommodation. This fee will need to be paid whether regardless of a students attendance or no-attendance to camp.

The levy for this year will be $280, which similar to previous years. This amount needs to be made in full by March 11 2015

Students will also require a long sleeved thermal top and thermal pants or long-johns at the beginning of the year. These are usually made from polypropylene or wool and can be purchased from any outdoor activities store. Their cost would start at about $60, and they take the place of text books. They are essential for your son/daughter's safety.

Other major items of gear (more detailed equipment lists will be sent home prior to camps) which will be required for the camps include a sleeping bag, rain jacket and backpack. It should be the responsibility of the student to organise their own gear as well as the collecting, packing and care of their own equipment. These are important skills which are practised in the course.

Participation in all activities (with the exception of absence due to illness) is an essential requirement on the course.
Activities and Risk
I would also like to inform you that the class will be taken off College grounds for the majority of weekly practical sessions throughout the school year in order to participate in activities including surfing, kayaking, navigation skills, mountain biking, and rock climbing. It is important to consider that all adventure-based activities involve some degree of risk, which may in extreme cases include serious injury or even death (as do most everyday activities, such as driving in a car). However, I assure you that a meticulous risk analysis of each activity is completed prior to any activities being undertaken as well as detailed plans to manage any critical incidents. All activities are run by suitably qualified instructors with appropriate staff-student ratios, as governed by the Tasmanian Education Departments’ “Procedures for Planning Off Campus Activities”.

I would therefore ask that you complete the attached blanket permission slip and return it to me at the College if you agree to allow your son/daughter to participate in these practical sessions. This form must be returned by Friday February 27th as we will soon be starting practical units which will be run off-campus.

Medical Issues
Of course it is vital that students bring any necessary medications with them for these practical sessions and it is imperative that the medical information forms sent out at the beginning of the school year are accurately updated and returned to the College as soon as possible. It is also essential that the College is notified of any changes in your son/daughter’s health information during the year.

It is very easy to get burnt outdoors in Tasmania, even in cooler temperatures. Please ensure that your son/daughter is equipped to avoid sunburn. A hat, proper clothing, good, water-resistant, long-lasting sunscreen and frequent hydration is essential. Please discuss with your son/daughter the importance of frequent application of sunscreen as we don’t want any cases of sunburn or sunstroke.

Electronic Equipment
An important part of the Outdoor Education philosophy is that students undertake adventure-based activities in a wilderness setting where they can fully focus on the challenges and opportunities for personal and social development with which they are provided. In this type of learning environment it is detrimental and distracting to have electronic devices such as phones and personal music devices. Staff will have emergency communication available (such as satellite phones) at all times during camps. Should you need to communicate with your son/daughter during these times it should occur through the contact persons who will be identified in the camp information. It would be appreciated if parents could support us in this matter by ensuring such devices are not brought on camps and activities.

Behavioural Expectations
Obviously during adventure-based activities it is essential that teaching staff get full compliance from students for safety reasons. We therefore ask that parents take the time to read through the following Code of Conduct for Outdoor Education and sign where indicated, to show support for the type of reasonable, safe behaviour that is expected of students enrolled in Outdoor Education. Please sign and return this contract to the College along with the permission form by Friday February 27 2015 as we will soon be starting units involving off-campus travel and activities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at the College with any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely

Mr Justin O’Brien
Outdoor Education Teacher
Attn: Mr Justin O’Brien

Outdoor Education Agreement

Date____________________

I agree to abide by the following Code of Conduct for behaviour in Outdoor Education.

- I will listen to and follow all instructions given to me by the teacher at all times. I realise that this is for my own safety and that of the other students in the class.

- I will stay with the class group during all activities, except where directed by the teacher.

- I will use positive and respectful communication when interacting with both fellow students and the teacher at all times.

- I will use school equipment with respect and consideration for others.

- When in the Outdoor Environment, I understand the need to follow the Minimal Impact Practices that I have learned in class.

In signing this agreement I realise that if I disregard any of these guidelines I may miss out on future practical sessions and camps, or be sent home from a camp.

I realise that these guidelines are essential for myself and others to participate in Outdoor Education safely and to maximise the learning opportunities given to me.

Student signature____________________  Print Name:________________________  Dated:__________

Parent signature____________________  Print Name:________________________  Dated:__________

Teacher signature__________________  Print Name:________________________  Dated:__________
Permission Slip

Attn: Mr Justin O'Brien

I…………………………………………….. give my son/daughter …………………………………………………permission to participate in all practical activities that are run off-campus as a part of the MacKillop College Year 9 Outdoor Education program in 2015.

In the event of an accident I understand that treatment is at the teacher’s discretion and an ambulance, first aid, or doctor may be sought and treatment administered. I have updated my son/daughters medical information and will advise the school if there are any changes.

Please note that all medication including paracetamol (except Ventolin) are not to be in possession by students. If your son/guardian needs to take medications parents must provide it to the teacher in a resealable bag with instructions on times to be taken and dosage.

Parental/Guardian Signature: ………………………………………..Date:………………………………………………..