



Marryatville Governing Council

School Bag Investigation 2015

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1 - AIM:

The aim of this investigation was to follow up on a letter sent to the MHS Governing Council in late 2013. The letter was from a parent who was expressing concern that with the addition of the new compulsory laptop, the total weight for the school bag appeared to be excessive. It was stated that this excessive weight may contribute to future health issues of their child.

2 - PROCESS:

This investigation was to determine a base-line within the MHS student population on the current weight of the student and their bags, with the intent to determine the extent of the problem. This was initially done with the online tool *Survey Monkey*.

The data gathered from this survey was analysed and the results published in this document.

Based on the data observed, short and long term recommendations have been prepared by Governing Council in collaboration with the Principal.

2.1 - Survey Monkey

An e-mail notification was sent to the whole school population on Monday 1st of June 2015, explaining what information we were seeking and why.

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As a result of a request from a MHS parent regarding the weight of school bags, we the Governing Council are asking for your co-operation in helping us gain some pertinent knowledge on the ability of students to safely carry their current school bag.

We have been asked to consider the impact (if any) on the health of students now that laptops are carried in their bags. All data gathered is anonymous and can in no way be linked back to a child. The data will be used by the Governing Council to show trends and allow us to prioritise short and long term goals

Please follow this Survey Monkey link to supply some baseline data (all weights need to be rounded up to the nearest Kilogram). If you have multiple children currently attending Marryatville High School, please complete one survey per child. The target date for the survey completion is the end of June.

Your prompt assistance in this matter is appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

MHS Governing Council

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/B2DXDJG>

The parents were given four weeks to respond, with a reminder sent out a week prior to the closing date.

3 – SCOPE (of this report)

This investigation and the resulting report are focused on the weight of students' school bags, and recommendations about how we, as a school community, may assist in reducing the weight of students' school bags. While useful feedback about laptops and the laptop program was also prevalent in the survey data, this feedback will only be addressed in part in this report – primarily where the laptop feedback is aligned with the weight of students' school bags.

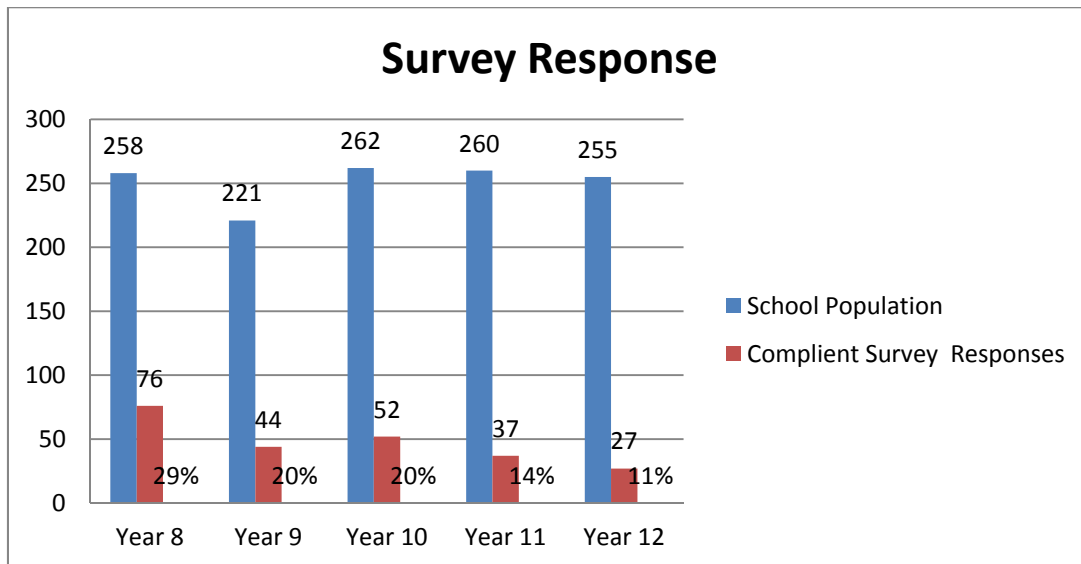
Other feedback received about the student laptop program and the laptops themselves has been taken on board and will be addressed in a near future review of the Laptop Handbook.

Data summary:

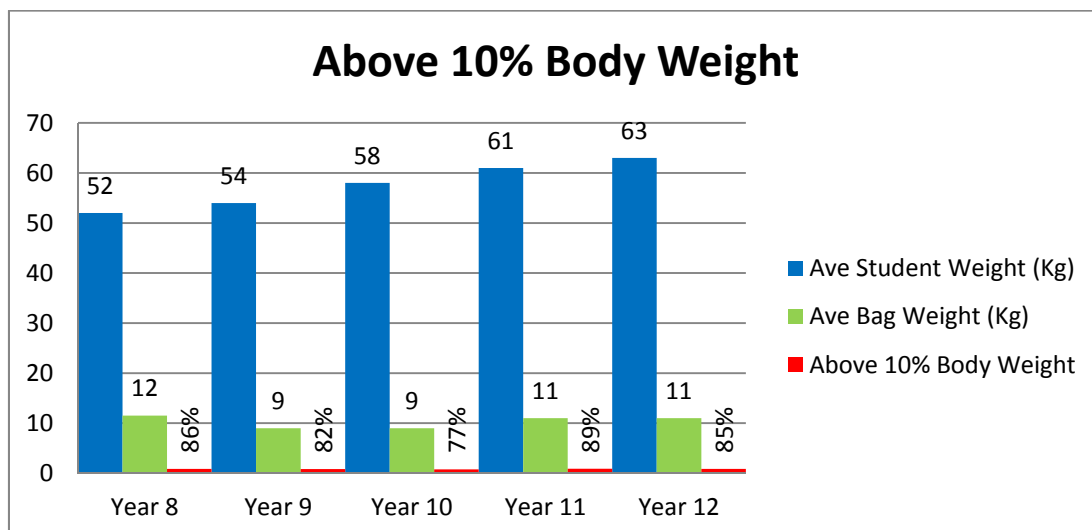
This summary is taken from the compliant responses received from the survey.

Year	School Population	Compliant Survey Responses	% of the School Population who Responded	Ave Student Weight (Kg)	Ave Bag Weight (Kg)	Above 10% Body Weight
Year 8	258	76	29%	52	12	86%
Year 9	221	44	20%	54	9	82%
Year 10	262	52	20%	58	9	77%
Year 11	260	37	14%	61	11	89%
Year 12	255	27	11%	63	11	85%

1. Graphical overview of Survey Response



2. Graphical overview of bags greater than 10% body weight.



5 - Frequently Asked Questions:

Question	Response from the Principal
ICT	
Did the school have a plan to offset the added weight (to the school bags) of the Laptop?	At that time the weight of school bags wasn't a prominent issue. It was expected that the weight of the Laptop would have been offset, to some degree, by a reduced need to carry textbooks but that hasn't eventuated to the extent that we expected.
Can the student's diaries be online?	Yes, at some time in the future following a successful trial.
Can all notices and assignments be sent online?	Yes, using Daymap, our Learning Management System, at some time in the future.
Text books	
Will all the text books be available as PDF's (or e-Books) to be loaded onto the Laptop?	No, not at this time. There are complex issues associated with costs and licensing.
Can text books be broken into chapters so the student is only given what is needed and not have to carry the whole book?	I assume this question refers to printed books. The answer is no because books come in bound form and it isn't possible for chapters to be separated.
Bags	
Is the current school bag design endorsed by any associations?	I understand the bag has Chiropractic approval but would want to confirm it.
Can we have different styles of Bags (e.g. Roller style, lighter or one with many small compartments)?	Yes we could.
Why did MHS make a school bag with a "Laptop" pocket compulsory when the school Laptop & Case does not fit in that pocket?	The bag was specified before the Laptop Program was introduced.
Lockers	
Are there enough lockers at MHS for every student?	Yes.
Can the school install bigger lockers so that sports gear can fit too?	No. We have purchased new lockers and have to balance locker size with the significant space required for 1400 lockers.
Can the lockers be more secure so students can	No. There are significant logistical issues

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leave items safely?	associated with this.
Education	
What can parents do to help reduce the weight of their students' school bags?	Check bags, particularly when students come home to ensure that what is in a bag is actually required that night.
What can students do to help reduce the weight of their own school bags?	Only carry what is really required for that night.

6 - Recommendations:

1. Short Term Goals for action:

- 1.1. The development of an education program about safe load carrying, and the risks of non-compliance, to be included in the Student Life program for commencing Year 8s, with a refresher program run every year.
- 1.2. Educational information (based on the Student Life program) to be included with other MHS information for parents of commencing Year 8 students.
- 1.3. Investigation into the possibility of scanning textbook pages set for homework and uploading these for online access (where copyright allows) rather than textbooks being carried between school and home.
- 1.4. Parents to take greater responsibility for reminding students each morning to empty their bags of all items not needed at school that day.
- 1.5. Last lesson teachers to take greater responsibility for reminding students to return all items to their lockers if they are not needed for homework that night.
- 1.6. Consider offering parents/students a choice of either the current approved MHS backpack, or an identified wheelie bag model.

2. Long Term Goals for action:

- 2.1. Upgrades to IT infrastructure at MHS, allowing for a future direction that will support a move to greater online resources and activity, such as:
 - 2.1.1. Increased online access to homework and assignments, as well as an ability to submit assignments online (perhaps via a Learning Management System like Moodle)
 - 2.1.2. Increased online support for accessing notices and other parent/school communications
- 2.2. An ability to access an increased range of resources online (e.g. online databases, subscriptions and publications). This may result in a decreased need for hard-copy text books for students.

7 - Conclusion:

The survey results show that concerns about the weight of bags are valid. The onus is not only on the school but also on parents/guardians and students themselves to ensure that all possible steps have been taken to reduce risk and prevent possible injury.

The weight of MHS student bags appears to have been an issue prior to the introduction of the Laptops. The introduction of the laptops has compounded the issue of bag weight but is not the only cause. Many students are carrying bags that exceed the recommended weight by well over the 1.8 kg weight of the laptop. In 2015, Year 12 students have not been required to carry a laptop in their bags, yet their bags do not weigh less than students in the lower grades.

While the laptops are not the cause of the problem, the recommendations included in this report highlight the opportunities the laptops present to support a reduction in the weight of other items carried in students' school bags

Load carrying guidelines are dependent on the varied nature of students' weight, but as a general rule, the school community should aim for a situation where every student is carrying a bag that weighs in at around 10% of his/her body weight. Following the implementation of short term strategies, consideration should be given to a suitable timeframe for a follow-up audit or a second survey to occur. This will allow for monitoring and the further improvement of recommended strategies.