Welcome to the new school year @ Balmain Public School!

Even though our Years 1 - 6 students braved the elements to start the 2015 school year last Wednesday, including our new Year 5 OC students, our Kindies had a perfect first day on Thursday!

The sun shone brightly, as our 45 youngest members of the Balmain PS family, all dressed in their brand new uniforms, arrived all bushy-tailed and raring to go!

The children met up with their Year 6 buddy and have been getting to know each other better over the last few days.

Amongst other activities, Kindergarten and Year 6 have been enjoying lunch together...
**This Week:**

- **Wednesday 4th February** ~ 7pm ~ P&C Meeting ~ Main building ~ 1R’s classroom (ground floor)

  ALL WELCOME, ESPECIALLY OUR NEW FAMILIES!

- **Friday 6th February** ~ Years 3 – 6 Swimming Carnival

**Next Week:**

- **Friday 13th February** ~ *WELCOME BREAKFAST* ~ P&C event ~ 8am – 8:55am ~ Playground ~ EVERYONE WELCOME!

- **Friday 13th February** ~ Term 1 Sport commences for ALL students K-6 ~ *Dance2bfit* ~ 8 week program

**Coming Up:**

- **Tuesday 17th February** ~ “Meet & Greet” ~ Parent – Teacher Information Sharing – TBA

- **Wednesday 25th February** ~ Cross Country Carnival

- **Friday 27th February** ~ “Parents, Drinks, Canape” P&C Fundraiser

- **Tuesday 3rd March** ~ District Swimming Carnival

- **Thursday 12th March** ~ Selective High School 2016 testing

- **Wednesday 18th March** ~ Regional Swimming Carnival

- **Thursday 19th & Friday 20th March** ~ Stage 3 Camp
27 Feb

Parents Drinks Canapé Fundraiser

An Evening of Music and Entertainment
Men Dress in Black / Navy - Women Dress in Colour

$40 per person includes 2 drinks and canapés, the Bar will also be open. Tickets available via www.flexischools.com.au. A Social Evening - Come and meet your child’s classmates Parents for the New Year. A chance to mingle with Teachers. Good Food, Drinks, Music, in The School Hall.

Strictly No Children - so come and kick your heels up for a Fun Night out.

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A Batman P&C Event
New classes commenced yesterday. Currently, the structure is as follows:

KC – Ms Katina Comino
KD – Miss Ariana Davis
(KA – Miss Angela Curry ~ when 13 classes are formed)
1R – Miss Lauren Read
1/2P – Mrs Jenny Parkes/Ms Sophie Parsons
2B – Miss Jessica Butler
2E – Ms May Ellwood
3B – Mr Sean Baumann
3/4C – Mrs Victoria Clay
4/5MG – Ms Belinda Mikhail Gogos
5N (OC) – Mr Blake Nuto
5/6D – Miss Jackie Dufty
6L (OC) – Mrs Lynda Lovett

Dr Elisabeth, our band director, resigned at the end of last year, as she and her partner, John, have a fabulous opportunity to travel to Vienna. We are sad to see Elisabeth and John leave us, although looking forward to our new Band/Ensemble program at Balmain. We are currently interviewing for a new Band Director.
Composites – Stages not Ages

At the beginning of a new school year, many parents might suddenly find their child in a composite class. Naturally, questions arise: For the older group - will my child be held back? For the younger group - will my child be able to keep up?

In primary schools, classes are organised in a wide variety of ways. Stage/Composite classes are one such type.

Background

Classes that are made up of children of different year levels have traditionally been called composite classes. In recent times, these classes have also been labelled stage-based classes, multi-aged or family classes.

There are two reasons why these classes are formed:

- Administrative – this is where there is an uneven enrolment in school years and classes need to be formed across a number of school years. This occurs in most primary schools and especially in smaller primary schools
- Educational – where classes are formed on the basis of educational rationale as they are seen to have educational benefit for the student.

Classes are formed following either of the above criteria or a combination of these criteria.

Composite classes have been the source of much controversy over the years, with parents often believing that their child is being disadvantaged in some way by being in one. The key to understanding composites is realising that growth is determined in stages and not magically by ages.

Some points worth noting are:

- **Children have always been in multi-aged classes anyway.** The ages of kindergarten students range from four and nine months to six and six months, an 18 month difference! Some children start school barely toilet trained where others are quite mature and are already reading at an advanced level. Same class but different stages.

- **Older students are not held back in composite classes.** In teaching we accept that different children learn at different rates. Separate programs are often used in many curriculum areas for the different groups of students according to their level of development. There are also some joint activities such as in art and drama. Expectations for each child differ and will be measured against the ability of the child. This tends to be focused on more so in a composite class situation.
• Composite classes can provide significant benefits to both the younger and older students in the class. Older students can benefit from helping younger students in co-operative learning situations. The younger students have the opportunity of enhanced learning experiences where they are ready for it. Through multi-age learning groups, students begin to see themselves and others more realistically. They come to appreciate the diversity of talents, skills, and abilities of their classmates. This leads students to use more appropriate and varied criteria than just age as a basis for building relationships and learning from one another. The multi-age learning groups provide additional opportunities for children to develop a wider range of social skills.

• Children in composite classes do no better or worse academically than their peers in straight grade class, but that, socially, their development is enhanced. They are more confident, can operate better as part of a group, are more assertive, become more independent learners and better problem-solvers. They also make friends outside of their standard age-groups.

• The greatest impact on student learning is the quality of the teacher not class composition. Managing stage/composite classes requires experienced teachers, who are well-practised in conducting programs in these classes. Teachers recognise that children will be at different levels within the same class. They are able to cater for this through differentiation of the curriculum. Extension of work occurs for those who learn more quickly, with more attention given to children who are a little slower. The class then becomes outcomes based rather than competition based – this method of teaching also applies to straight classes.

The good thing about stage/composite classes is that it draws attention to individual needs and development and facilitates individualised learning.

In all NSW schools, including Balmain Public School, classes are taught according to Stages, regardless of whether they are a stage/composite class, or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Stage 1:</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 1:</td>
<td>Years 1-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 2:</td>
<td>Years 3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 3:</td>
<td>Years 5-6</td>
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Teachers within each Stage work together to ensure that every child participates in a learning program that is both challenging and supportive, regardless of their age, individual needs or skills.

When organising classes, staff consider the academic, social and emotional needs of each student to facilitate placement in a classroom environment that will help them to develop confidently in their learning.
FROM THE OFFICE

Any monies/notes coming into the school are required to be in a school money envelope or envelope from home. It must be clearly marked on the front of the envelope, with the child’s first and last name and class, as well as amount of money in envelope. Please place in the white box which is located in the office foyer. Thank you.

All notes sent home will also be sent via email. Permission notes will also be found on our website for printing.

Please check your email regularly, as this is our main form of communication.

If your child is going to be absent, please send an email to balmainps@gmail.com

Leaving your child at home alone

Making some clear ‘home alone’ rules with your child gives them an understanding of their boundaries and can also keep you from worrying. Most kids will be fine on their own when the appropriate time comes, so long as some guidelines are followed.


Printable 2015 homework calendars

Kids and families run more smoothly when there’s a plan - so print out School A to Z’s 2015 homework and study calendar, which includes key dates and school holidays.

Find out more at http://bit.ly/2015SchoolCalendar

Swim and survive program

Lessons are for beginners through to confident swimmers keen to practise their technique (from infants to 12 years). See the map to find the pools where friendly swim teachers with AUSTSWIM accreditation teach across NSW.


Are active kids less likely to be bullied?

Researchers have found kids who do extracurricular activities (such as sport or voluntary work) tend to be safer online, encounter less cyberbullying, and are more resilient to harassment if it occurs.