Welcome to 2015! Year 3 is a big year at school, with many “firsts”...it’s the first year of primary school, the first year for NAPLAN testing, the first year for participating in a variety of new and exciting school activities (band, choir, primary sports carnivals, e-team...) and a change in some school routines and expectations. It’s an exciting year, and I am very much looking forward to guiding your children’s learning and watching them grow.

Here is a brief outline of some of the things that your children will experience this year...

Primary Assembly: These will be held on Monday afternoons at approximately 2.15, and you are warmly invited to attend the special class assemblies in Weeks 4 and 8 each term. At this stage, 3S’s assembly will be Term 2 Week 4.

Sport: This will be held first thing on Thursday mornings for about an hour. The children (Years 3 – 6) will be organised into groups and will participate in a range of physical activities, all carefully chosen to increase the children’s co-ordination, athletic and social skills. Please ensure that your child is wearing suitable footwear, and that they have hat!

Library: The children will go to our wonderful library for borrowing and research skills on Fridays with Mrs Eggins.

Scripture: Scripture will take place on Thursday morning for half an hour, straight after Sport.

Literacy Groups: Literacy groups will take place 3 times a week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday), and will involve the children in a range of stimulating and enriching activities such as guided reading (with me), spelling reinforcement tasks, group games, comprehension work, individual contracts, literature activities and writing workshops.

Spelling: We will be following a fortnightly spelling cycle this year, with a more concentrated focus on the strategies used to spell unfamiliar words. As such, we will be explicitly teaching four different aspects of the spelling process: visual (what words look like), phonological (what words sound like), morphological (how words can be changed) and etymological (where words come from). Sounds a bit scary I know, but I love words and I am really looking forward to revealing their magic to your children!

Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) and Science: This term we are doing an integrated unit focusing on National Parks and the impacts that local weather conditions can have on native plants, animals and habitats. We are planning an excursion to Sea Acres National Park in Port Macquarie as part of our study. Stay tuned for more information....

Maths: Year 3 is the first year of Stage 2, and consequently the mathematical content for teaching and learning takes a bit of a step up. The children will be working with 3-digit numbers and beyond, and they will be learning how to perform a range of increasingly complex mathematical operations. Year 3 is also traditionally the year for learning times tables, especially the 2x, 5x, 10x, 3x and 4x. There are many CDs available which have catchy little tunes to help your children learn their tables...great for long car trips!

NAPLAN: In May this year the children will be sitting their first NAPLAN tests. These tests provide a snapshot of your child’s learning – they are NOT a predictor of future success or failure, and they will sit alongside a wealth of other assessment material to help us find the best way to support your child’s education. It is important, but it is not everything. Please don’t stress about it!

Homework: Homework is always a tricky topic. Some parents love it, some don’t and the children respond in different ways as well. We are trying hard to come up with a format which provides the children with a chance to consolidate their learning in a relatively stress-free manner for all involved (teachers included). I see homework as a chance for children to develop sound work habits and time management strategies, and also to demonstrate and practise learned skills at home. I am well aware, however, that different families have different schedules and priorities, and homework can be very problematic! At this stage, homework will go home on Monday, and return to school on Friday to be marked together. This is an important lesson in itself.
Creative and Practical Arts: Your children will make music, sing, dance, create vivid artworks, participate in readers’ theatre and drama activities and explore the wonders of poetry this year in 3S. I regard all these activities as essential for emotional, intellectual and physical wellbeing.

Personal Development: These programs are conducted across the whole school.

- Term 1 – Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), a KidsMatter initiative
- Term 2 – Drug Education
- Term 3 – Child Protection
- Term 4 – Safety: Sun, Water and Road

Classroom routines

- Fruit time – first thing every day (except for Thursday)
- Classroom jobs – every child, every week
- Cultural Diversity calendar – daily investigation of significant world dates
- The Word Spy – awarded weekly to someone who has clever things with words
- The Brainiac – awarded weekly to someone who has done some clever problem solving
- House points – collated for Primary Assembly
- DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) – own book/magazine/comic for silent reading
- DEAL (Drop Everything And Listen) – music, story, poetry, soundscape
- Relaxation time – gentle music, breathing techniques, visualisation

Home Reading: Reading is wonderful, and daily reading is vital for the development of literacy skills. I would encourage you to visit the local libraries with your children regularly to help them choose reading material that excites them and keeps them motivated. Read with your child, read to your child, let them read to you, read your own books alongside your child, and perhaps even make up stories together. The best thing you can do for your children is show them that reading is fun and worthwhile.

Fridays: Friday is band day, and as the band co-ordinator I will be involved in band activities for most of the day. Mrs Di Eggins will be teaching 3S, and she will be following the teaching program which we have devised together.

Stage Collaboration and Supervision: Mr Murray McGrath is the Stage 2 leader, and we will be working very closely together to plan effective and interesting lessons for your children. As one of the school’s Assistant Principals, he is also deeply involved in the behaviour management and student welfare processes of the school. We are both available to chat about any concerns you may have about your children and their education, but if possible please try to arrange a time with us in advance.

Independence: Your children are growing up fast, and every day they are learning more about themselves and the world around them. They feel grown up when they are given roles and responsibilities, and it increases their resilience and confidence. We know you will understand when we ask that you wait for them in the undercover area of the playground if you are picking them up, and that you encourage them to be responsible for their own belongings and handing in notes/homework/money/lunch orders etc.

Useful Websites

http://www.schoolatoz.nsw.edu.au/ (everything you need to know about how we teach things these days)

http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/ (student wellbeing and mental health program)

Mrs Liz Skerritt (February 2015)

“Education means inspiring someone’s mind, not just filling their head.” (Katie Lusk)