KINDERGARTEN

A Survival Guide for New Parents
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For the parents of kindergarten children, learning to interpret what their child tells them about school can be puzzling at best, until someone who “knows the ropes” steps in to clarify things. This person is often one of the staff or sometimes even an older student such as a child’s buddy. If you are lucky, you already know a parent of older children at the school who is happy to explain things to you when necessary.

It is sometimes hard for a kindergarten child to understand what is going on at school when they have never experienced anything like it before. The following list is a record of some things about the first year of school that will be helpful. It is by no means exhaustive but we hope it may help you (and your child) to navigate the confusions of the first year of school life!

SCHOOL TERMINOLOGY

Q. What are these mysterious “stages” of learning to which the newsletter refers?

A. The school years are divided into four bands for organisational and teaching purposes:

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<th>Kindergarten</th>
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<td>Stage 2</td>
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<td>Stage 3</td>
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See your orientation and school information package for further details of these and the support class programs.

Q. What is ‘K-6’ and a ‘K-6 assembly’?

A. The term ‘K-6’ refers to the whole range of the school years from Kindergarten (K) to Year 6. Accordingly, a ‘K-6 Assembly’ is an assembly involving the whole school.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Apart from your child, the Principal, teachers and office staff, there are a number of helpful sources of information about the school and upcoming events. These are:

1. The weekly newsletter, is emailed home every Monday. Should you wish to come and collect a paper copy, there are always some available at the office. It summarises events both for the week and throughout the term. This is your lifeline with regards to any events at school. But sometimes new parents and students need help to understand school proceedings and terminology that are listed in it. Once
you have got the hang of those things, and if you read the newsletter carefully, your child will never forget to bring cakes on the right days, or accidentally wear the school uniform on a ‘mufti’ day (mufti in school life means casual clothes not uniform), or forget money for a special event. Like the Mother’s Day Stall.

2. The ‘Skoolbag’ Mobile phone application can be downloaded for free to your phone. Messages and reminders are often sent directly to your mobile phone and a copy of the newsletter is sent each week via this mode as well. In the event of an emergency, parents will be regularly kept informed of the situation via this means.

3. Honour Assembly at the end of each term which the whole school attends. Parents and carers are invited to attend this special assembly as it provides a snapshot of school activities and special interest groups such as choir, drumming groups etc. It is usually held on a Tuesday and lasts an hour or more, depending on the schedule of events. Check the newsletter for details of who will be demonstrating their activities at each assembly.

4. The website: www.springwoodpublicschool.com This gives an important insight into school activities including an up to date calendar of events. Most notes can be found on this site as well should your child have misplaced theirs.

5. Notes home. There is often at least one extra information letter that goes home each week concerning anything from Health Department alerts (re: whooping cough outbreaks etc.) to homework instructions or excursion permission slips. Most notes come home via the email. Hardcopies are occasionally sent home, so Check your child’s school bag regularly: they don’t always remember to give them to you!

6. The School Electronic Sign – located on Macquarie road is a regular source of reminders of upcoming events.

7. Special Events held throughout the year, such as Information Night, (held in your child’s classroom early in Term 1) . This provides an important chance to look at your child’s classroom, talk with the teacher and see the children’s work to date.

8. School Reports (end Terms 2 and 4.) These give insight into academic and social progress. Interviews with teachers are available concerning these reports. Parent teacher interviews are also held at the beginning of Term 1.

9. The Parents and Citizens’ Association (“P and C”). Meetings are held in the evening once a month – please check the newsletter for upcoming dates. Membership is encouraged (currently $5 per year), attendance at meetings is not compulsory (minutes can be e-mailed to members) but membership gives parents an
opportunity to get involved with the school activities. Handy Hint: Park in De Chair Avenue if attending meetings!

10. There are also lots of other informative handouts provided throughout the year. The orientation materials and school information pack are very helpful. Notable handouts include:

- Springwood Public School Information Booklet (in your orientation information package)
- Parent’s Guide to the NSW Primary Syllabuses (distributed early in the school year)
- Yearly Outline- Kindergarten (handed out at the first information evening hosted by your child’s teacher early in term 1)

11. Another great way to find out how things work is to volunteer! There are many areas in which the school needs help. For example:

Canteen, uniform shop, making cakes or gifts for fundraising stalls, reading with classes, helping the environment committee in the garden, or simply donating to fundraisers and periodic clothing appeals held on behalf of Stewart House. You can also join the P and C.

SCHOOL ROUTINES

DROP OFF AND PICKUP

These procedures are confusing for everyone at first, especially as the kindergarten children and teachers are all grouped together for the first few days until class numbers are finalised.

The first thing you need to know is what the ‘Coolibah’ is! This is the covered hall between the main school building and the library. (You may have noticed it during orientation).

Drop off

Buses drop children in De Chair Avenue and limited parking is available. Watch out for cycling students, this is a very busy spot.

Burns Rd has two car parks, a small one closest to the school for staff and a larger one further down Burns Road for parents and visitors. This is not nearly as busy as the De Chair Avenue drop off zone. Parents are encouraged to utilize this car park when visiting the school and at pick up and drop off times. The School can be accessed from this car park via a gate located near the Kindy rooms.

All the children congregate in class lines under the Coolibah Hall when the first bell of the school day rings at 9.25am. Luckily the school buddy will be there to help your child with
lining up and at recess and lunch during the first weeks. Even so, it takes a while for the children to recognize the other children in their class (especially as for the first week the classes are not necessarily finalized). There are children everywhere, rushing for their lines at bell time! So for a few weeks the big anxiety is: which line is my line? Where do I put my school bag? Buddies reduce the stress of this worry dramatically, but some buddies are more attentive than others.

After a few days the parents are encouraged not to stay for too long at the assembly point, so that the children can settle in to the day more quickly.

Pick Up

As for pick up after school, the children are not left to find their own way to Mum or Dad, or the bus! For the duration of the school year the kindergarten children are taken to their bus line or, if they are being collected by parents or carers, they are assigned to De Chair Avenue or Burns Road pick-up points and led to these and supervised by a staff member until collected. *If it is raining, the supervisor will stay with the children under the Coolibah Hall until they are collected, rather than leading them around to the pick up point.*

There are a lot of ‘notes home’ explaining these arrangements in the first few weeks.

SPECIAL NOTE: If your child needs to leave school early or arrive late for any reason, you need to sign a note at the front office before you can collect your child.

Just as a note - for OH&S reasons dogs are not permitted on school grounds.

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY

Obviously from time to time living in the mountains we may be subjected to emergency situations, whether directly related to the school or in our local area. In the event of such a situation as a fire, all students in the outside classrooms are moved to the hall inside the main building. All other students remain locked down in their classrooms. Parents will be kept informed via our Mobile Phone ‘Skoolbag’ application of updates regarding their children, and in the event of evacuation, Skoolbag, email and Facebook will be utilised. As you can imagine having over 400 students in the school, phone calls to the front office to check on children becomes unmanageable, and as such the above mentioned modes of communication keep our phone lines open to updates from emergency services.

WEEKLY ASSEMBLY

Apart from little announcements made daily at line up each morning before the children are dismissed to their classes for the day, the children attend a weekly formal assembly for Kindergarten, Year 1 & Year 2. General school activities are discussed and teacher’s class awards are given out (for reading lots of readers, or doing good work etc.). So every now and again your child may come home with a certificate of merit presented at this assembly and signed by their teacher. Parents do not usually attend this Assembly.
LOST PROPERTY

There is a lost property box on the verandah of the main building, outside the School Office. Please label everything your child takes to school!

LUNCH

Most of us new parents quickly discovered that children quickly get the hang of finding a place to eat with their new friends. Buddies help out a lot in the beginning. But a lot of parents have found that throughout the year the children are so busy enjoying school lunchtime that they don’t actually eat their lunch!

While there is no foolproof way of ensuring that lunch gets eaten, some Kindergarten teachers suggest that parents try encouraging their children to eat their main lunch at recess, when there is a longer designated eating time than there is at ‘big’ lunch. Good Luck!

Note: The school can not enforce a no nut policy, but we do enforce a NO FOOD SHARING policy. Most parents elect not to send peanut butter to school with their children, because we can never be sure that they don’t share lunches and there are anaphylactic children at the school.

SPORTS

Children are assigned to a sporting house at the beginning of the year. There are four of these. Each house has a coloured t-shirt which children can wear to school sporting events. Check with the front office to find out to which house your child has been assigned.

The four house teams are:

Blaxland - Green
Lawson  - Yellow
Wentworth - Red
Macquarie - Blue

Once a week children should wear general sports uniform to school for sporting activities. (This is different from their ‘house’ colour uniform.) A note will be sent home early in the year explaining which day sports day will be.

In general it is also a good idea to keep a set of extra school pants and underwear tucked in your child’s bag, in case of accidents. Sick bay have a limited supply.
SCHOOL CLUBS AND GROUPS

The school has a large variety of group activities such as a choir and band which run weekly practices. Some are before or after school. These are all detailed in the information already given at orientation and the Annual Report. Often the participants are older children but if your kindergarten child is interested in joining one of these groups, just ask to see if they can join in! Some groups meet before or after school or at lunch time and some involve a weekly fee (for example for instrument rental, or language instruction.) Consult the school for current group learning opportunities.

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

Notes home will keep you up to date on any extra activities. Check your child’s schoolbag for information sheets. Kindergarten children have the opportunity to participate in extra programs, such as AFL or Dance2BFit (Dance) depending on what is being offered in that year. These activities are held in school hours. ALL children are expected to participate in these activities which are created in-line with the current School Curriculum.

Various optional extras are available after school once a week for all age groups, such as African Drumming, Guitar Lessons or yoga classes all year round.

Most of these activities involved a small extra term fee. Notes home inform the parents of fees and uniform etc.

There are also multiple opportunities to purchase books from book clubs throughout the year: these are entirely optional.

SCHOOL EVENTS

These are listed in (roughly) chronological order as they occur in the year and of course they are subject to change due to weather etc. Watch the newsletter for details and if in doubt, check with the school in advance.

Here we’ve only listed the events that involve Kindergarten children, (not special interest group events such as those involving the choir or band.)

- K-6 Information Evening (Term 1) A very important event, held for an hour in the evening by your child’s teacher. Important information is given out here and it’s a good opportunity to ask questions relevant to the parent group as a whole. Don’t miss it!

- Parent Interviews Term 1 At the end of Term 1 each year, Parents are invited to attend a parent interview to discuss their child’s progress. A booking sheet will advise the day/s and times available to meet with the teacher. Interviews are held at 15 minute intervals. Should you require a longer meeting with your child’s teacher, it is advised
that you contact them via email or through the office to organize an alternative day and time.

- **Billy Cart Derby** This is a great fun day but very confusing for new children and parents. The most important thing to remember is that it is a *fun* day. Children each build their own Billy cart at home and bring it on the day, and for the kindy children this may mean bringing a cardboard box without wheels. Kindergarten can have a Billy cart and are not restricted to a wheel-less box. Scooters can also be brought in – all transport with wheels require a helmet to be worn to be able to participate. Cardboard boxes can be fun too: have fun painting them with the children, or designing them into animal shapes etc. A timetable of events is usually sent out prior to the day. This is a mufti/dress up day.

- **Cross Country** Held during normal school hours. The kindergarten children wear sports uniform and run a shortened course. (Older children who compete may go on to regional competitions.)

- **Mother’s Day and Father’s Day** Fundraisers for the school in the form of gift stalls held during school hours on a day just before Mother’s/Father’s Day. Children can purchase a small gift for Mum/Dad.

- **School photographs** Children have class and individual photographs taken during the course of a normal school day. Sibling Photos are available by obtaining a separate order form from the office. Parents are subsequently given the opportunity to purchase photo packs. Send your child to school appropriately dressed. School will advise whether the summer or winter uniform should be worn.

- **Education Week** - Two main events:
  a) **Book Fair** – An opportunity to visit the library and purchase books for the school and/or your child.
  b) **K-6 Assembly** Celebrating education week. Lots of performances and demonstrations from each school stage, all of which give a very good snapshot of school life.

- **Athletics Day** - There is a main competition for the older children but for the Kindergarten and Year 1 children, there is a mini carnival held between recess and lunch. Children wear sports uniform. It is not competitive but FUN. ‘Races’ consist of things like silly walks or bean-bag balancing etc. Even preschool siblings get to have a go at the end of events.

- **Australian Poetry Competition** - Kindergarten children are sent home with a letter explaining this competition. It is an effort to encourage the reading of Australian poetry and some sample poems are provided. Children learn and then perform their poems for their classmates. A selected group of students from each year are rewarded with a place in the finals (held at a special assembly). The winners for each year (and sometimes runners up) may be given the opportunity to perform their piece at the next
K-6 Assembly or the Springwood Spectacular. (Check with teachers for details so you know if your child is involved or not.)

- **Term 1, 2 & 3 Honour Assemblies** - At the end of terms 1, 2 & 3 an Honour Assembly is held to recognize excellent Academic Achievement, Outstanding Effort and Most Improved from each class group. Parents are sent invitations to attend this assembly.

- **Premier’s Reading Challenge** - This is a yearly event open to all ages and is set up to encourage children to read. Google ‘Premier’s Reading Challenge’ for details. Note: “The Challenge runs from 1st February to 1st September. Ongoing reading is encouraged. Books read from 1st September of the previous year can count towards the next year’s Challenge.” Check with the school library for details.

- **Premier’s Sporting Challenge** - This is a yearly event open to all ages and is set up to encourage children to participate in physical activity both at school and at home.

- **Springwood Spectacular** - This is a talent show held on one day of the year. This is an evening show which will be held in the Springwood High School Auditorium, so that working parents can have the option to attend. Some children enter individual acts and some classes perform plays or songs. Staff will advise in advance if your child is involved in an act. Not every class or child will be involved each year. The show lasts up to 90 minutes.

- **Hire a Helper Day** (Term 4) - This is a fun end-of-term day, centered around a mock-auction of Year Six students in which everyone can participate. It is a fund-raising event for these Year Six students, who will use the funds generated to help buy a gift for the school at the end of the year. The children can (singularly or in a group) bid for a Year Six student and if their bid is successful then they have that student at their service for the rest of the day. Note: Don’t send a fortune to school with your child! There is no obligation to bid, but if your children do, a few dollars (up to $10) is considered reasonable. Staff will advise to this effect in advance.

- **Orientation Weeks** (Term 4) - Hopefully you and your child have attended these in November. They are information and orientation days staggered over three weeks. You and your child get a chance to meet your child’s buddy and teachers, and see inside the classrooms. You will also receive your indispensable information packs and have the chance to ask all the questions you can think of (for now…)

- **Celebration Assembly** (Term 4) - A special end-of-year presentation assembly at which awards are presented, school captains are named for the next year etc. Parental attendance encouraged by invitation.

There are also other end-of-year fun activities... watch the newsletter for details. By the time you get to this stage of the year, both your child and you will be much more savvy about what things involve.
• **Grandparents Day & Harmony Day** Grandparents are invited to attend a morning tea and concert before visiting the classrooms to see their grandchildren. All are encouraged to wear Orange for Harmony Day.

• **Year 6 Fun Day** Year 6 children organize activities for the rest of the school. It is a fund raising event for Year 6. Children buy tokens which they spend on the activities as they wish. Tokens are $0.50 each – we recommend around $5 worth of tokens being enough for Kindergarten children.

• **Green Team Breakfast BBQ’s** are run once a term, egg and bacon rolls are available before school to both students and families, and all proceeds go towards funding our kitchen garden program.

• **Various fundraising events** These vary from year to year. Gold coin donations are encouraged. Fundraising is organized by the Student Representative Council (SRC) or the P&C and includes events such as:
  - Periodic raffles (Easter, Christmas);
  - Discos raising monies for selected charities. The Kindy disco is usually straight after school for an hour (Kindy’s can wear mufti i.e. non uniform) and the children give a gold coin donation to the cause. The Disco for the older children usually takes place after the Kindy’s event has finished.

**SCHOOL EVENTS YOUR CHILD DOESN’T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT**

Talking about the weekly newsletter with the children can be useful, because it can help identify anxieties the children have about school events.

So, to help avoid confusion, here are some of the events at school which do NOT tend to involve the kindy kids:

• Swimming Carnival (Term 1. **Stage 2 and 3 children only**);
• NAPLAN testing (Only for Years 3 & 5);
• Regional sporting events,
• Poetry Writer’s Competition;
• Writing camps,
• Special programs for older children involving visiting scientists/authors etc.

Now that you’ve reached the end of this document, you’ll be ready for anything the school year can throw at you. We hope this summary is helpful, and that your child’s start at school is a happy one!
Star Students

What is a STAR STUDENT?

A Springwood STAR STUDENT displays the following behaviours:

- Excellent Manners and Behaviour at all times!
- Happy and Pleasant Nature and a good Role Model!
- Excellent Level of Effort in Class Work!
- Proudly Wears Correct School Uniform!
- Helpful To Others!

How does a student become a STAR STUDENT?

A Springwood STAR STUDENT is chosen by the class teacher each month and at a morning assembly each of the Star Students are presented with a badge and certificate and also join the Principal for a special luncheon later that same day!

What does a STAR STUDENT badge look like?

As well as the teacher’s choice, librarian’s choice and an office award each month, there is also a Principal’s Award!

Good Luck Everyone!!