The Middle Schools Years at Castle Cove
Our successful Middle Schools program for Years 5 and 6 students continues this year, providing a smooth transition from primary to high school. This program caters for students, being grouped with like-ability peers, and aims to equip them with a sense of responsibility and independence. We find that through grouping we are better able to differentiate learning experiences for the range of abilities through the provision of a stimulating learning environment. Teachers support the students in managing their own learning. We also have a keen awareness of the changing emotional, social and physical needs as students move from childhood to adolescence and how these changes impact the students as learners.

Ability grouping occurs in both Literacy and Numeracy lessons. We structure the three classes into four groups, with an additional teacher. The advantage of this is that students are grouped with like-ability students and groups with fewer students than in a regular class. The structure consists of dedicated groups for both Years 5 and 6, a small group for those requiring greater support and a group for those who are capable of extension, enrichment or acceleration. There is scope for students to change groups throughout the year as appropriate. The programs across the groups are similar, but it is the depth and breadth of learning experiences which vary from group to group.

Stage 3 students are encouraged to develop their leadership skills. Within the first few days of the school year the students completed a leadership course which involved teambuilding activities, group-based problem solving and encouraged new friendships across the two grades of Stage 3. The students were introduced to the skills involved in leading a peer support group as part of our peer support program.

Key Learning Areas (KLAs)
English
All areas of the English program are integrated with each other and across the KLAs.

Reading
In Years 5 and 6 students are developing the skills of critical analysis through novel studies, increased awareness of inferential meaning and learning a variety of strategies to develop understanding at a deeper level. Reading at home is highly recommended and all students are required to complete the Premier’s Reading Challenge as part of their Literacy program. Parents are encouraged to monitor their child’s daily home reading and are asked to sign off their Stage 3 Reading Card, which is to be returned to school each Friday. As part of our Library program students will learn to locate and evaluate information from different sources, including the internet.
Talking and Listening
Students will learn effective strategies for oral presentations, public speaking and debating. The Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition is held in Term 2 and all students will participate by preparing and delivering speeches on a selection of multicultural-themed topics. Learning to be an effective listener is also an important part of the program. Presentations may be linked to HSIE themes or other KLAs.

Writing
In Term 1 our focus for all Stage 3 students will be persuasive writing. This is particularly important for our Year 5 students, who will be participating in the NAPLAN tests early in Term 2. Persuasive writing includes exposition, response, reviews and letters. Students will learn to draft, revise, edit and publish their writing, with increased focus on higher level vocabulary, a variety of sentence structures, correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. This term Year 5 students will be participating in the Willoughby Council Local Wildlife Poetry Competition, while Year 6 students will be entering the Australia, My Country writing competition. In Term 2 we will be attending workshops at the Sydney Writers Festival.
Neat, legible handwriting is expected in all written work.

Mathematics
Students work on a variety of tasks selected from the syllabus. The syllabus divides this subject into five content strands: Number, Space and Geometry, Measurement, Chance and Data, and Patterns and Algebra. Working mathematically encompasses five interrelated processes (questioning, applying strategies, communicating, reasoning and reflecting) across the content strands. Students will also apply their knowledge to solve problems through mathematical investigations. Explicit instruction of problem solving strategies is fundamental. Our mathematics program is complemented by the Go Maths program and the online website, www.mathletics.com. Students are expected to be able to quickly recall times tables facts up to 12 as it is essential for fast mathematical processing.

HSIE
This year students will study units to develop their knowledge and understanding about Change and Continuity, Cultures, Environments, Social Systems and Structures. Students will acquire skills in locating, evaluating, interpreting and presenting information. Stage 3 units include: Australian Identity and Values, Democracy, State and Federal Government and Global Connections. As part of our Term 3 unit on Government, students will participate in a three-day camp in Canberra from 9-11 September, 2013.

Science and Technology
Stage 3 students attend a weekly 80 minute Science lesson with Mrs Rao in their home classes. The Term 1 topic is Robotics.

ICT outcomes are embedded in all KLAs. Foundation computer skills are taught in home class lessons and cover skill development and application in a variety of programs. We plan to participate in an excursion to MACICT.

Creative and Practical Arts (CAPA)
The Creative Arts program provides opportunities for students to learn to work within and learn about the art forms of visual arts, music, drama and dance. These will complement and enrich areas of study in other subjects.
**Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)**

Students commence the year with the Save Living program. Our valuable Peer Support program provides students with the opportunity to lead a group of younger students and this year’s core theme is Values.

In Term 1 Friday sport involves a variety of skill development activities, which will work on a rotational basis, and team games. The PSSA inter-school competitions commences in Term 2.

**Homework**

Homework is a valuable part of education as it allows for practising, extending and consolidating class work. It trains students to plan and organise their time and to develop a range of skills in identifying information resources. It establishes good study habits, concentration and self-discipline and aids students in their transition to high school.

All Stage 3 students are expected to maintain their diary and manage homework commitments from their Literacy, Numeracy and Home Class teachers. Parents are requested to sign their child’s diary on a weekly basis and diaries are checked each Friday by Home Class teachers. **Students are expected to bring the diary to school each day and take it to each lesson throughout the day.** Homework should not exceed 45-60 minutes over four nights a week. Parents are encouraged to communicate with the teacher concerned if there are issues with completing work within the set time.

**Extra-Curricular**

Students are offered a broad range of extra-curricular activities, including dance, debating, chess, band, library monitors, sport, Carbon Cops, Robotics and Earth Kids, and are encouraged to participate to enrich their final Castle Cove years.

**Academic Competition Dates**

Participation in the University of New South Wales (UNSW) competitions is optional. Students are entered if their entry fee has been paid prior to the closing date. While competitions are optional, participation is encouraged as it provides valuable experience in taking multiple choice tests.

2013 competition dates are:

- **Computer Skills** Tuesday, 21 May
- **Science** Wednesday, 5 June
- **Writing** w/b 17 June
- **Spelling** Tuesday, 18 June
- **English** Wednesday, 31 July
- **Mathematics** Tuesday, 13 August

**NAPLAN** dates for Year 5 students are 14, 15 and 16 May.

**Year 7 2014 Selective High School Placement Test** (Year 6) is on Thursday 14 March.
**Stage 3 Timetable**

Roll Call occurs in the Home Class at 9.25am each day.

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We look forward to a stimulating and rewarding year ahead.

Mrs Anne Layton-Smith  
Mrs Sue Hiblen  
Mr Trent Moses