

Toohey Forest Environmental Education Centre

Executive Summary





Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands from across Queensland. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state.

A better understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures develops an enriched appreciation of Australia's cultural heritage and can lead to reconciliation. This is essential to the maturity of Australia as a nation and fundamental to the development of an Australian identity.





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1. Introduction

This report is a product of a review carried out by a review team from the School Improvement Unit (SIU) at **Toohy Forest Environmental Education Centre** from **19 to 20 August 2019**.

The report presents an evaluation of the centre's performance against the nine domains of the [*National School Improvement Tool*](#). It also recommends improvement strategies for the school to implement in consultation with its regional office and school community.

The report's executive summary outlines key findings from the review and key improvement strategies that prioritise future directions for improvement.

Schools will publish the executive summary on the school website within two weeks of receiving the report.

The principal will meet with their Assistant Regional Director (ARD) to discuss the review findings and improvement strategies.

For more information regarding the SIU and reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the SIU [website](#).

1.1 Review team

Sue Gibson	Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Andrew Travis	Peer reviewer
Norman Hunter	External reviewer

1.2 School context

Location:	South Ring Road, Nathan
Education region:	Metropolitan Region
Year opened:	2000
Year levels:	Prep to Year 12
Enrolment:	n/a
Indigenous enrolment percentage:	n/a
Students with disability enrolment percentage:	n/a
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	n/a
Year principal appointed:	2007
Day 8 staffing teacher full-time equivalent (FTE):	3
Significant education partners:	<p>Griffith University</p> <p>Queensland Government Metro South Health</p> <p>Columboola Environmental Education Centre (EEC)</p> <p>Students Performing Advanced Research Queensland (SPARQ-ed)</p> <p>Brisbane Urban EEC and Moreton Bay EEC</p> <p>Science and Technology Education Leveraging Relevance (STELR)</p>
Significant community partnerships:	<p>No formal arrangements with specific community organisations; consultation occurs with a number of external groups as required including:</p> <p>Butterfly and other Invertebrates Club (BOIC)</p> <p>Queensland Museum (QM)</p> <p>Oxley Creek Catchment Association (OCCA)</p>
Significant school programs:	<p>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)</p> <p>Horizons for High Achievers</p> <p>International Students</p> <p>Refer 'Programs' page</p> <p>http://tooheyforesteec.eq.edu.au/activities/</p>



1.3 Contributing stakeholders

The following stakeholders contributed to the review:

School community:

- Principal, Business Manager (BM), four teachers and unit support officer.

Partner schools and other educational providers:

- Griffith University Dean – Learning and Teaching and EcoCentre Manager, Stretton State College teacher, All Hallows' School Head of Department (HOD), Queensland Academies Health Sciences Campus principal, Cavendish State High School teacher, Indooroopilly State High School teacher and Holland Park State High School HOD.

Government and departmental representatives:

- ARD.

1.4 Supporting documentary evidence

Annual Implementation Plan 2019	Strategic Plan 2018-2021
Investing for Success 2019	School website
Headline Indicators (April 2019 release)	School budget overview
School pedagogical framework	Curriculum planning documents
School Opinion Survey	Professional development plans
Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students	Semester 1 Interim Data Report (self-generated)



2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

The centre principal and teachers recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning.

The principal takes a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. The centre staff are united in their commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and a sense of optimism for the current strategic direction is apparent. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods to maximise student learning. The centre staff members value active participation from students and visiting teachers that respects self, others and the environment.

The centre sets high expectations for students and for staff who indicate that a culture of continual improvement pervades the centre.

The centre promotes a culture of inquiry and innovation, with teachers encouraged to explore different approaches to enrich the learning of students. Teachers indicate that they frequently have informal discussions regarding what has worked for them, or to share a problem and explore solutions.

There is a strong collegial culture across the centre, including between the principal and teachers.

Staff members report they are valued by the principal, and that they are encouraged to make professional decisions aimed at improving the quality of learning of the students. A process of focused peer observation and feedback is in its early stages. The principal and teachers acknowledge that it is yet to be embedded in the professional culture of the centre.

The centre principal has developed and is driving an Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA) to achieve the centre vision of *'Inspiring Science beyond the Classroom'*.

There is clear alignment between the priorities documented in the centre's strategic plan, Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), pedagogical framework, Investing for Success (I4S) and budget. The improvement agenda is embraced and articulated by all centre staff members. An implementation plan for the EIA focus regarding the Collegial Mentoring Program (CMP) that includes a timeline and explicit and clear targets for improvement is in its early stages.

The centre has established a centre-wide professional team of highly capable teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom.

Centre staff members are experts in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and environmental education. Visiting school principals contacted praise the quality of teaching and the skills of centre staff. The centre targets the retaining and employment of the best possible teaching staff with funds allocated to further develop the knowledge, skills and teaching capability of all staff to the highest levels. The centre is yet to develop, implement and document a professional learning plan.



Prior to a visit, centre staff request student learning information from visiting schools to assist in developing strategies to differentiate for individual students.

This includes specific learning requirements, medical conditions, and particular group characteristics. Centre teachers articulate the current process of requesting information is yet to deliver the necessary depth of information required to enable them to plan for differentiation for specific groups.

The centre has established a thriving network of partnerships geared at enriching the quality of learning by the students who experience the programs offered by the centre.

The main partnerships are with the schools whose students attend for the various programs offered with many having long-term relationships with the centre. In 2019, students from 67 schools will participate in programs offered by the centre. The centre's internal data indicates consistently high and very high levels of satisfaction with the centre's offerings.



2.2 Key improvement strategies

Engage staff in working to ensure that the process of focused peer observation and feedback becomes embedded in the professional culture of the centre.

Monitor the implementation of the CMP to ensure that it develops in keeping with the documented timeline and targets.

Develop, implement and document a professional learning plan and associated budget that supports the centre's stated priorities.

Revisit the current communication requesting student learning information prior to a visit, to ensure that schools are better able to respond with the necessary detail to allow planned differentiation by centre teachers.