

2022 Annual Report

Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre



5691

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2022 is provided to the community of Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the Strategic Improvement Plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

School contact details

Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre 159 Farnell Avenue ROYAL NATIONAL PARK, 2232 https://royalnatpk-e.schools.nsw.gov.au/ royalnatpk-e.school@det.nsw.edu.au 9542 1951

Message from the principal

It was a fantastic honour to facilitate fieldwork programs for students after years of significant disruption. Teachers were highly motivated to get their students out for enriching experiences. During the second semester we facilitated the first excursion for many students in 3 years!

We approached programs with a wellbeing focus, which was needed for both students and visiting teachers.

It was a hectic end to a very fulfilling year. We too experienced the staffing challenges due to COVID, but we engaged flexible program and staffing modifications to overcome these challenges. At times, visiting schools needed to reschedule at short notice due to illness and staffing issues themselves. Our staff rose to the occasion and worked tirelessly to facilitate high quality learning experiences.

Reestablishing a working relationship with Dharawal Elder Uncle Shayne Williams was a highlight. Having an ongoing contact has enriched the learning experiences of students, initiated Cultural Education programs in schools and professionally developed our teaching staff. Uncle Shayne has been generous with sharing authentic local content.



Students capturing nature on the Honeymoon Track

School vision

At the Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre we aim to facilitate the highest quality education programs. We foster a culture where students, and their wellbeing, are at the centre of everything we do.

School context

The Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre (RNPEEC) is located in the Royal National Park, in the Sutherland Shire, southeast of Sydney. We facilitate programs for K-12 at our centre, throughout the Royal National Park, in other reserves and in schools.

RNPEEC provides authentic, curriculum-based fieldwork experiences which enable students to explore, investigate and understand the natural and human environments. Students are immersed in nature through hands-on inquiry learning.

We have active partnerships across participating schools, local schools, the Environmental and Zoo Education (EZEC) network and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).

Through our situational analysis we identified a need to concentrate on explicit teaching practices to improve teacher quality. We plan to incorporate the use of data to inform planning. Work will take place on developing quality formative and summative assessment tasks and data collection practices.

In addition, we have identified a need to deepen the focus on student wellbeing and to develop planning in wellbeing across all our programs, K-12. We aim to increase student engagement through an intentional focus on wellbeing.



Leaf skeleton captured by a student on a nature photography workshop, NSW AECG STEM Camp

Self-assessment and school achievement

This section of the annual report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. The Framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

Each year, we assess our practice against the Framework to inform our Strategic Improvement Plan and annual report.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine our Strategic Improvement Plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework: https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2022 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Excelling
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Excelling
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
LEARNING: Assessment	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Reporting	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Delivering
TEACHING: Professional standards	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Learning and development	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: Educational leadership	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Delivering
LEADING: School resources	Excelling
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Sustaining and Growing

Strategic Direction 1: Explicit teaching

Purpose

In order to improve student learning, we will implement explicit teaching practices.

Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year Strategic Improvement Plan and the achievement of system-negotiated and school-determined targets.

- · Improving quality teaching practice
- · Improving student success through explicit teaching

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Professional learning: \$3,050.00 **6300 Excursion fees:** \$550.00

Summary of progress

We have never been busier, with a large volume of requests for facilitating programs both in the field and in schools. It was an exciting time to have the opportunity to get students outside for authentic experiences.

There were also opportunities to develop new programs for Stages 5-6 that supported emerging needs. This included Stage 6 Earth and Environmental Science, Stage 6 Investigating Science and Stage 4 Mathematics of Fire, for a group of high potential and gifted students from rural NSW.

However, due to staffing challenges and ongoing illnesses, it was challenging to fully embrace planned activities.

Some activities have been implemented, including:

- peer observation
- additional opportunities for student feedback
- professional dialogue around formative assessment, success criteria and the use of rubrics

Other activities have been postponed to 2023, such as implementing quality teaching rounds and incorporating the use of rubrics in Geography for Stages 2-6. We will also begin implementation of structured observation and feedback sessions with our teaching staff to improve practice.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the Strategic Improvement Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
Maintain sustaining and growing in the theme of explicit teaching within the element of 'Effective classroom practice'.	Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of Explicit teaching to be sustaining and growing.
Teachers collaborate across faculties/ stages/teams to share curriculum knowledge, data, feedback and other information about student achievement, to inform the development of evidence-based programs and lessons, which meet the needs of all students.	
Maintain sustaining and growing in the theme 'Data use in teaching' within the element 'Data skills and Use'.	Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of Date use in teaching to be sustaining and growing.

Assessments are developed/sourced and used regularly across stages/year levels/ subject areas or the whole school to help promote consistent and comparable judgement of student learning, monitor student learning progress, and identify skill gaps for improvement and areas for extension.

Maintain sustaining and growing in in the theme of 'Formative Assessment' and 'Summative Assessment' within the element of 'Assessment' Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the themes of Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment to be sustaining and growing.

Teachers collect and use assessment data that monitors achievements and identifies gaps in learning to inform planning.

Assessment is planned and undertaken regularly and data is systematically collected.

Maintain sustaining and growing in collaborative practice/feedback within the element of 'Learning and development'.

Teachers engage in professional discussion and collaborate to improve teaching and learning in their classes This includes negotiated observations of classroom teaching practice, with feedback, to improve professional knowledge and practice.

Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of Collaborative practice and feedback to be sustaining and growing.

Strategic Direction 2: Wellbeing

Purpose

In order to ensure all students feel prepared and safe on programs, we will develop resources and improve communication with participating schools.

Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year Strategic Improvement Plan and the achievement of system-negotiated and school-determined targets.

· Supporting wellbeing

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

6300 Excursion fees: \$2,500.00 Professional learning: \$1,100.00

Summary of progress

Our plan to approach wellbeing through specific program and resource development was very much interrupted by the emerging needs of participating schools and students. Students were coming out for their first excursion experience in 2-3 years. For students from special education schools, it was the first time they had even been off the bus. Some students were less physically fit. There were many that had less resilience. Keeping walking achievable meant at times adjusting programs to plan for success. Many primary schools requested time for whole grades to gather and picnic together.

Rather than developing new targeted wellbeing programs and toolkits, we responded by:

- reducing the pace of day
- lowering the volume of program activities
- allowing students to have down time, group work, time to look around and be on Country
- · responding to individual school and class needs

There was a need for greater flexibility to assist students to feel comfortable in a different environment. In-school programs also had a focus on visual arts and wellbeing.

Having Uncle Shayne work with students, staff and schools had a wellbeing impact of increased respect for Country through incorporating local language and Dreaming in an authentic way.

In 2023, we plan to work on the wellbeing toolkit for use in fieldwork activities. We will also work on how to better prepare teachers and students with additional needs to feel supported and informed prior to attending fieldwork excursions.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the Strategic Improvement Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
Maintain 'sustaining and growing' in the theme of 'A planned approach to wellbeing' within the element of 'Wellbeing'.	Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of A planned approach to wellbeing to be sustaining and growing.
The school collects, analyses and uses data including valid and reliable student, parent and staff surveys/feedback to monitor and refine a whole school approach to wellbeing and engagement, to improve learning.	
Maintain 'delivering' in the theme of 'Caring for students', in the element of	Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of Caring for students to be delivering.

'Wellbeing'.

The wellbeing of students is explicitly supported by identified staff.

Student information

Attendance

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to previous years due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NSW Government encouraged students to learn from home, where possible, for a seven week period from 24 March to 22 May 2020. During this period, schools monitored engagement with learning to determine whether students were marked present. This changed the attendance measure. There was also some evidence of varied marking practices as schools adjusted to the learning from home period, with some schools recording higher attendance rates while others recording markedly lower rates.

Attendance figures from 2021 were calculated differently to align with the third edition of ACARA's National Standards for Student Attendance Data and Reporting. Changes include treating partial absences over 120 minutes as a half day absence (instead of their actual value, calculated as a proportion of a nominal 6-hour day) and covers all weeks during Semester 1. Prior to 2021, the final week of Term 2 was excluded.

Furthermore, the department implemented an automated attendance feed (AAF) system in Semester 1 2021. AAF transfers data automatically from third-party attendance management systems to the department's centralised data warehouse every night. The AAF significantly improved data quality in 2021, which has affected data comparability with previous years.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2021, COVID-19 continued to affect student attendance. Analysis of attendance codes showed a change in the structure of absence reasons in 2021.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2022, student attendance was impacted by a range of factors:

- · Families evacuating and relocating due to NSW floods
- Sick students staying at home until a negative COVID-19 test was returned
- Household members testing positive to COVID-19
- The easing of COVID-19 border controls at the beginning of 2022 which allowed families to travel inter-state and overseas.

Management of non-attendance

Attendance at school has a big impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people. When a child is not at school they miss important opportunities to learn, build friendships and develop their skills through play. Regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working together we can have a positive effect on supporting our children and young people to regularly attend school.

Our teachers promote and monitor regular attendance at school and all our schools have effective measures in place to record attendance and follow up student absences promptly. They are guided by the School Attendance policy which details the management of non-attendance.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	1
School Administration and Support Staff	1.19

^{*}Full Time Equivalent

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce composition

The department actively supports the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees through the use of identified positions, and scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2022, 4.6% of the department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school workforce composition

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2022 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.00%	4.10%
Teachers	3.00%	3.30%

Note 1: The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019-2025 takes a career pathway approach in that it sets an ambitious target of 3% Aboriginal employment at each non-executive grade of the public sector by 2025.

Note 2: Representation of diversity groups are calculated as the estimated number of staff in each group divided by the total number of staff. These statistics have been weighted to estimate the representation of diversity groups in the workforce, where diversity survey response rates were less than 100 per cent. The total number of staff is based on a headcount of permanent and temporary employees.

Teacher qualifications

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers in NSW public schools must hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach. Teachers with approval to teach must be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, and hold a recognised teaching degree. All NSW teachers must hold a valid NSW Working With Children Check clearance.

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional learning is core to enabling staff to improve their practice. Professional learning includes five student-free School Development Days and induction programs for staff new to our school and/or system. These days are used to improve the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff in line with school and departmental priorities.

Aboriginal Educator on staff

From April we have been fortunate to rekindle our working relationship with Dharawal Elder and Cultural Knowledge holder Dr. Shayne Williams. Uncle Shayne's weekly presence in our school has had a significant impact on teaching through:

- · sharing of Cultural Knowledge
- in-house professional learning
- regular consultation for both our centre teachers and those from visiting schools
- providing visiting students and teachers with contact with an Aboriginal Educator
- enriching the practice of other schools

Although this represents a staff composition of 6.70% for 2022 we would like to explore expanding on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation throughout the week to enhance the opportunities for visiting students.

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with department policy requirements.

	2022 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	123,217
Revenue	604,059
Appropriation	515,035
Sale of Goods and Services	225
Grants and contributions	39,035
Investment income	2,406
Other revenue	47,358
Expenses	-542,131
Employee related	-521,549
Operating expenses	-20,583
Surplus / deficit for the year	61,928
Closing Balance	185,145

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

Financial summary - Equity loadings

The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2022 SBAR Adjustments (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	466,244
Base - Per Capita	15,161
Base - Location	0
Base - Other	451,083
Other Total	11,391
Grand Total	477,635

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Teacher feedback

The following comments are representative of 107 responses to post fieldwork evaluations:

our programs support classroom learning

It provided students a holistic experience and helped them in understanding the biophysical interactions in real life.

Helped students gain skills in acquiring primary data and assist with understanding the relationships between organisms in ecosystems and the factors affecting biodiversity on a rock platform ecosystem.

Students were given practical experience to help them use geographical tools that facilitate their knowledge of location, GPS. Satellite etc.

The data collected will lead to a depth study on introduced species. The students were able to experience the environment they will be studying, rather than just relying on research.

.....practical experience of environmental science and relevant tools and measurement.

Clear connections to the guiding inquiry questions. Strong link to ATSI perspective. Hands-on geographical skills acquisition. Questions guided students to explore their own understanding of the topic and connect those understandings to real-life context.

Aboriginal perspectives of (the) environment. Using weather measuring tools that were hands-on inquiry learning. Access to binoculars, GPS tools and compass made learning more engaging. Outdoor learning experiences with field sketches brought Geography to life! Followed up with field sketches on iPads back at school.

Reinforced how humans impact the environment. They could see it for themselves.

This program is awesome as it allows students to get outside and actually participate in the biological concepts they are learning about.

It was all about the classification of living things (both plants and animals). Students learned about classifying in informal ways (colour, texture) and formal ways (animal groups e.g. mammals, marsupials, monotremes). Students had really tactile experiences with knowledgeable leaders. There was also authentic integration of Dharawal language and Dreaming stories. My students loved the day and got a lot out of the sensory experiences. I also really like that all groups learn about worm farming, composting, recycling and soft plastics. Very worthwhile!

It reinforced what the students have covered and made the classroom work more meaningful.

Strong links to the course as well as an appreciation and respect for our National Parks.

Met the outcomes of the syllabus, great tactile experiences, students saw the relevance of what they were learning about.

The excursion was perfect for us. A great mix of written tasks, practical tasks, creative tasks and listening tasks. The level was perfect for Year 3. They thoroughly enjoyed being out in the open and observing (the) real life environment. The coast is always such a spectacular spectacle!!! Seeing the Weather Station and using the scientific equipment to record data.

Seeing a real compost tub with worms and a hands on activity brought it to life....support students in implementing composting at the school.

strategies that work well

Hands-on activities that ..(students) ..could relate to.

Allowing the students the initial rock ramble to engage with the space & observe in closer detail the organisms found on the rock platform.

Small group discussions.

.....modelling the fieldwork measurements were highly useful.

Movement breaks, short and succinct explanation of activities.

Post COVID, short, sharp and frequent activities work well. Tactile and sensory experiences are very beneficial too. My students LOVED the hands on worm activities and seeing the live phasmids. The range of activities offered and regular breaks work well for students like mine with short attention spans.

Differentiating the program to suit the needs of my students. Pointing out interesting things as we walked. Having only one class with each educator so that all students could see and learn. Ensuring there was enough equipment for all students.

Smaller group learning, providing explicit instruction at the beginning for the GPS and the first site study (equipment) which allowed students to just get into the work. Having students responsible for the resources and carrying it throughout the day.

Allowing the students to get dirty and have hands-on experiences. It allowed them to make real connections.

One on one support when required. Very patient and informative. Engagement of all students due to consistent attempts to interact with all students.

Having a mixture of informative and engaging activities for the students.

Wallaby ears worked well to have students stop, look and listen.

Interactive tasks, well explained information, group management.

Strategies were inclusive for all students.

The students were really enjoying being outside and touching the rocks, and clay and seeing the different kinds of rocks in the area and the effect of wind, running water and wave erosion on them.

Clear instructions, Fun activities, Inclusivity.

Positive reinforcement. Highly engaging and fun.

.....programs support student wellbeing and special needs.

Accommodated for our student with type 1 diabetes, making the day easy to communicate and make reasonable adjustments where required.

The whole program was excellent. We have students who have complex needs...(the teacher) asked for our recommendations on activities she had planned and there was something to engage everyone in the group.

This program was highly beneficial for the students at Bates Drive, as we have been focusing on a rainforest unit of work this term. The bush walk allowed students to immerse in nature and explore key elements of Australian flora and fauna. Furthermore, the majority of the students who attended the excursion had never been off the bus before and to see how well they adapted to conditions outside of school made it an invaluable experience.

The RNP teacher was super understanding of students with special needs and got onto their level and I think that this strategy of understanding the children's additional needs and the way of educating and interacting was the most valuable strategy.

our teachers are high quality

All teachers brought their passion to the experience.

Amazing amount of thought, time and effort put into planning some engaging activities. Well done!

.....knowledgeable about their subject and were very approachable.

Excellent manner and communication skills which were appropriate for the group.

They interacted well with each other, the students and the school teachers. They were attentive and flexible.

Our supporting teacher was Jill. She was fantastic at having our students with special needs participate and structured the lesson to our abilities.

Informed, engaging, patient, flexible. INCREDIBLE!

Teachers were very relaxed and easy going which allowed students to discover the local environment and ask questions.

..(the teacher's) passion, She knew the syllabus outcomes well, doing a zoom meeting after the excursion was brilliant as the students consolidated all they had experienced. The students were totally into the experience, they keep talking about this.

All (teachers) related well with the students and were able to keep them interested. They also had good behaviour management skills.

.....the...educators...had a good understanding of the organisms found on the rock platform.

My class are tough inside the classroom, so (your Centre teacher's).... control of them outdoors was fabulous.

Clear instructions, positive and calm nature.

They were informative, engaging and inclusive. Helpful with my challenging student.

Professional, friendly and really engaging. Their passion for the environment and education was evident which our students really enjoyed.

The teachers were very knowledgeable and were fantastic in explaining the concepts.

They were very engaging towards the teachers and students.

.....worked wonderfully with support unit students, was able to make adjustments to activities as needed, allowing extra time for personal needs etc. The day ran smoothly and all students had the most wonderful time.

Exceptional teachers who all engaged with students and worked at appropriate stage levels.

.....tried very hard to interact appropriately with our nonverbal students with a range of special needs and challenging behaviours.

Great !! Very understanding and flexible to our needs.

Friendly, organised, punctual, flexible.

.....was clear and set firm expectations. Build a good rapport with students in a short period of time.

.....the most amazing teacher. The students were totally engrossed in this experience. The communication before-hand was brilliant, she totally met the needs of the kids, before, during and after the excursion. She followed up the "egg find" sending us links to the lizard, and the zoom meeting a few days later really tied up everything for the students. I loved her adaptability. The students keep telling me it was the best excursion they have ever gone on and I am so happy that they have absorbed and applied so many of the syllabus outcomes.

.....was sensational. Kind, patient, knowledgeable and relaxed. She was open to team teaching where she led and we contributed to the lessons. She responded patiently and positively to students who needed a little more attention than the others by involving them in demonstrations or tasks. She made students feel valued through her enthusiastic feedback she gave them when they were able to contribute to discussions or when they had an accurate response. She adapted the timeframes according to our student's physical capacities and allowed the children's interest to determine how tasks were paced and adjusted. 10 thumbs up - that's a lot when you when you really only have 2!

.....engaging....encourage all students....well planned and supportive.

EEC teachers were awesome! Knowledgeable, friendly, connected with both students and staff.

our programs meet and exceed expectations

A wonderful nature experience.

FANTASTIC!! Engaged students in all activities and were receptive to their needs. THANK YOU!

Student feedback

Inspired by Nature Stage 2 Visual art Program

Students provided feedback through exit slips. They expressed that they learned:

- How to print using gelatin plates
- How to create ephemeral art
- Different types of drawing techniques
- New ways to create art and strategies

How to paint on gelatin blocks and drawing what I heard.

You can draw wherever you like. It is like being rich.

Sustainability Science Stage 2

Workshops were facilitated by students from Engadine and Heathcote High Schools plus our staff. Students provided feedback through exit slips. Following are sample reflections from the 24 participants on their learning from the day:

I learnt a lot about bees, butterflies and other insects. Also a lot about recycling.

I learned how to take really good photos.

I learnt how to use a map and compass. And about solar, wind and using a bike for energy.

Hiking is a good way to explore.

How to compost....how to be sustainable..

You can make things with rubbish..

How I can care for the environment even more.



Gelatin prints created on Inspired by Nature

Policy requirements

Aboriginal Education Policy

The responsibility for enacting the Aboriginal Education Policy rests with all departmental staff. The policy should underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

Evidence of effective implementation of the policy included:

- Establishing, building and strengthening relationships with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal people and communities.
- Providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population.
- Implementation of Personalised Learning Pathways for all Aboriginal students in a school culture of high expectations.

Anti-Racism Policy

All teachers are responsible for addressing incidents of racism and supporting students to develop an understanding of racism and discrimination and the impact these may have on individuals and the broader community. The Principal is responsible for examining school practices and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policy. The school has an Anti-Racism Contact Officer who is trained to respond to concerns in relation to racism.

Multicultural Education Policy

Teachers are responsible for addressing the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that school policies, programs and practices respond to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the school community, and provide opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes.