



# **The Rainforest School** Annual Report 2020

*Grow Slow, Grow Strong*



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### School Sector

Independent

### Total Enrolments

13

### Year Levels Offered

Prep – Year 4

### Co-educational or Single Sex

Co-Educational

## **School Background**

The Rainforest School is a government approved, independent, co-educational primary school located in the hinterland of Mission Beach, Queensland.

In 2018, the Non-State School Accreditation Board approved our Prep – Year 3 application. We opened our doors in 2019 for a small cohort of students. In November 2019 our application to extend our accreditation to include Year 4 – Year 6 was approved.

### **Mission**

Our mission is to deliver a child-centred and holistic approach to education which considers the individual needs of the child: academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

### **Vision**

Our vision is to provide a safe, natural and nurturing environment that promotes self-confidence, fosters authentic relationships and encourages within the child a connection with nature and a love of learning.

### **Motto**

Grow Slow, Grow Strong

### **Pillars**

Connection – Community – Conservation – Creativity

## **Social Climate**

The Rainforest School is an independent primary school, located in the beautiful hinterlands of Mission Beach. Our school is a high-set Queenslander that is surrounded by lush rainforest. The Rainforest School is intentionally small by design. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, with consideration given to beauty, simplicity and the use of natural materials. We encourage intrinsic motivation so that our learners can reach their full potential.

Fostering authentic relationships and the use of restorative practice assists our students to build on their social and emotional knowledge. Each learning space is designed to support unity and collaboration. Student wellbeing is a priority at our school as we understand that it leads to successful learning. Our wellbeing program provides valuable life skills and promotes a growth mind set, while our daily circle time encourages student voice.

During this circle time we promote and support a growth mindset and focus on relationship building to instill a sense of belonging. Our relaxation enables our students to calm and clear their minds. It is this unwritten curriculum that helps to create the unique culture of The Rainforest School.

## **Characteristics of the Student Body**

In 2020 we taught a small composite cohort of 13 students. All our students live regionally and in the vicinity of Mission Beach, Tropical North Queensland.

*Boys: 8*

*Girls: 5*

*Indigenous: 0*

## **Our approach to curriculum delivery**

We deliver the Australian Curriculum in a unique and vibrant way. Our teaching is child-centered, with a balanced mix of hands-on, real-life and explicitly taught lessons. We deliver an education that is inclusive of all students at our school. We strive for our students to become creative, innovative and resourceful individuals who can draw on their knowledge and experience to solve problems. Our subject units and student projects are selected or developed around our distinct local context, student interests and alignment to our school values.

The classroom layout is designed to support our teaching practice and has many learning spaces for our students to utilise. Our flagship Kitchen/Garden Program provides students with real-life skills and daily nutritious vegetarian meals. Our whole school reading program gives students access to the essentials of effective, evidence-based reading instruction matched to their level of reading development. We believe that learning is a continuum and we strive to ensure that every student experiences success as they progress on their own individual learning progression.

## **Distinctive Curriculum Offerings**

### **Kitchen – Garden Program**

Our Kitchen - Garden program provided our students with daily real-life learning. Students and staff engaged in planting and tending the vegetable garden as well as harvesting and using the ingredients in the kitchen to cook lunch for the school community. Our students were active participants in the full food cycle experience, from preparing the vegetable beds all the way through to composting the food scraps left after food preparation. This program provided students with important life skills and integrated various subject areas such as, English, Maths, Science and Design Technology.

### **Wellbeing Program**

Our students participated in daily mediation practices, where students were taught breathing techniques to the sound of a gong and mindfulness with the aid of visualization stories. Student voice was encouraged during our circle time, where they could decide on topics ranging from finding solutions to problems to the planning of the following term's menu.

### **Swimming Program**

As part of our HPE program we ran a weekly swimming program at our local aquatic centre. These lessons were subsidised by Sporting for Schools Grants and provided our students with valuable water safety and swimming skills.

### **Instrumental Music**

Under the professional guidance of a music teacher, our students have taken part in a weekly Instrumental Music Program focusing on percussion and ukulele in lower primary and guitar in upper primary.

### **Dance Lessons**

As part of our 'Dance' and 'Physical Education' Program our school provided weekly lessons with a professional dancer. During these lessons our students learnt dance elements and movement skills.

### **Thomas Talk**

Professor Dr. Thomas Bauer has broadened our students' domain knowledge about the world through weekly presentations with a focus on a different country. Topics were plentiful, and included countries and their people, history and culture, geography, biology and botany.

### **Artist in Residence**

Each year we invite a local artist to show our students how they produce their art. In 2020 we had the pleasure to have a felting artist. Students created individual wall hangings with the theme "Where the Rainforest Meets the Sea". The students were also involved in the creation of felted classroom resources for our imaginative play area.

### **Art Workshop**

Our students worked collaboratively with a local mural artist to plan and paint extensive murals on our new classroom. The theme for these murals was also 'Where the Rainforest Meets the Sea'.

### **Indigenous Djiru Culture**

In 2020 our school connected with the local traditional owners, and our students benefited from this cultural immersion of Djiru history and culture. Through a series of workshops our students learnt to various cultural and historical elements significant for the Djiru people.

### **Chinese Culture**

We ran a series of cultural workshops with a Chinese tour guide. The focus areas were historical and cultural in nature.

### **Excursions**

Due to Covid19 we had to reduce the number of excursions. In 2020 we facilitated an excursion to attend a Tropical Fruit Forest Farm tour as an extension to our 'Seed to Seed' unit in Science. We also had an excursion to significant historical sites in our region (Historical Museum El Arish, Paronella Park and the Innisfail Chinese Temple) to broaden our knowledge about early British, Chinese and Italian settlement in North Queensland as an extension to our History unit.

## **Extra-curricular Activities**

### **National Parks Ranger**

A local ranger has provided our students with rich local knowledge about the property 'Dundee Park' where our school is situated and taught our students how to make a traditional shelter and to start a fire using a stick and bush tinder.

### **Nature Walks**

Our weekly nature walks around the property of Dundee Park included highlights such as the largest butterfly aviary in the Southern hemisphere and a Bush Tucker Track created through a local Djiru project.

### **Morning Circle**

Each day began with an all-school Morning Circle, where we promote and support a growth mindset and relationship building by providing a safe space to reflect. Our

students are given the opportunity to share ideas and speak freely about their experiences and feelings.

### **Relaxation Time**

During our daily relaxation time – either inside the classroom to the sound of live classical piano or outside in the rainforest to the sound of bird song and the meandering creek - our students were able to clear their minds and still their bodies.

### **Parental & Community Involvement**

Our school welcomed parent and community volunteers to assist with our art workshops, project time and gardening.

Parents were invited to join our excursions, which included a visit to a local tropical fruit forest farm as well as a visit to significant historical regions in our region.

Twice per term we conducted ‘Parent Circle’ meetings where ideas for parent fundraising and short- & long-term projects that relate to our four Strategic Pillars were generated. Teachers and students used this time to ask parents for advice or assistance with student-led projects. It was also an opportunity for the principal to give a school update and for parents and carers to give feedback and ask questions.

Our school has a Private Facebook Group for current staff and families. This group was created to share our school news in an interactive way. It is a platform to inform families of events, collaborate on projects, to discover ways to volunteer, celebrate our achievements and to organize social gatherings. It is also a place for staff to showcase what our children have learnt and enjoyed at school and a place where parents can view these special moments.

We also have a public Facebook Page to connect with our wider community, which reaches to Victoria and South Australia and as far as England and The Netherlands.

Another initiative to connect with the local community has been achieved through the hosting of the Mission Beach Boomerang Bags movement. We took over this project in 2019 and welcome community members to monthly sewing bees at our school. The project aims to recycle donated fabric into funky bags to reduce the use of plastic bags, which aligns with our four pillars ‘Connect, Conservation, Community and Creative’.

### **Parent, Teacher and Student Satisfaction with the School**

Satisfaction Data derived from the 2020 quantitative Parent and Student Survey show a high to very high average satisfaction. The Student Survey had a 100% participation rate, whereas the Parent Survey had a 90% return. Our school community is very small, and this means the results should be read in that light.

### **Student Conclusions**

The 2020 Student Survey had a 100% response rate. Students were asked to rate statements on the following scale:

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Score</b>
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Not Agree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Generally, our students experience a high to very high satisfaction, with an average score of 4.8.

<b>Average Ratings Student Survey 2020</b>	
1. I like being at my school	4.8
2. I feel safe at school	4.8
3. My teachers care about me	5.0
4. My teachers motivate me to learn	5.0
5. My teachers expect me to do my best	5.0
6. My teachers provide me with useful feedback about my school work	4.9
7. I can talk to my teachers about my concerns	4.8
8. Student behaviour is well managed at my school	4.8
9. Teachers at my school treat students fairly	5.0
10. My school takes students' opinions seriously	4.9
11. My school looks for ways to improve	4.9
12. My school is clean and tidy	4.6
13. I like the cooking we do at our school	4.7
14. I like Morning Circle	4.5
15. I like the Relaxation Time we do at our school	4.5
16. I like the Swimming program	4.7
17. I like the Dancing program	4.5
18. I like the instrumental music program	4.9
19. My school gives me opportunities to do interesting things	5.0

### **Parent Conclusions**

The 2020 Parent Survey had a 90% response rate. This is combination with other qualitative feedback we believe the below results are indicative of the total parent body. Generally, the Parent Satisfaction score averages 4.6.

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Score</b>
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Not Agree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

<b>CARE FOR STUDENTS</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>	<b>4.9</b>
My child likes being at The Rainforest School	5.0	
My child feels safe at school	5.0	
My child has a positive relationship with his/her teachers	5.0	
Teachers at The Rainforest School treat my child fairly	4.8	
My child feels nurtured and cared for at school	4.8	
I trust that the staff have my child's best interest at heart	4.8	
My child feels comfortable to approach his/her teachers	4.8	
My child is making good progress socially and emotionally	4.8	
<b>TEACHING AND LEARNING</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>	<b>4.5</b>
I am happy with the quality of teaching at The Rainforest School	4.7	
Teachers at The Rainforest School inspire and motivate my child to learn	4.7	
Teachers at The Rainforest School expect my child to do his/her best	4.7	
My child is making good progress with their learning at school	4.6	
My child's learning needs are being met	4.4	
Teachers provide my child with useful feedback about his/her learning	4.3	
Teachers meet my child's specific needs	4.2	
The combination of hands-on, real-life and explicit learning contributes to my child's educational development	4.6	
<b>BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>	<b>4.7</b>
Student behaviour is well managed at our school	4.6	
I value the implementation of restorative practices rather than punitive consequences for behaviour	4.9	
<b>RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>	<b>4.2</b>
I can talk to my child's teachers about my concerns	4.4	
My opinions are taken seriously by the school	4.2	
I am well informed about what is happening at school	3.9	
I feel comfortable to approach staff	4.4	
I believe any concerns that I raise are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner	4.2	
I feel part of the school community	4.1	
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>	<b>4.7</b>
The Rainforest School is well maintained	4.4	
The Rainforest School looks for ways to improve	4.7	
At The Rainforest School my child is able to connect with nature	4.6	
The Kitchen/Garden Program adds value to my child's education	4.8	
Daily Relaxation time contributes to my child's well being	4.8	
I value the 4 pillars of the Rainforest School (Connection, Community, Conservation & Creativity)	5.0	

## **School Income Broken Down by Funding Source**

School income, reported by financial year accounting cycle using standardized national methodologies and broken down by funding source is available via the <http://www.myschool.edu.au/> website.

## **Staffing Information**

### **Staff Composition, Including Indigenous Staff:**

Description	Teaching staff*	Non-teaching staff	Indigenous** staff
Headcounts	2	2	0
Full-time equivalents	1.6	1.5	0

\*Teaching staff includes School Leaders.

\*\* *Indigenous* refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

### **Qualifications of all Teachers**

Qualification	
Masters	50%
Bachelor's degree	50 %

### **Expenditure on and Teacher Participation in Professional Development:**

#### **a) Teacher Participation in Professional Development**

Description of PD activity	Number of teachers participating in activity
Child Protection	2
NCCD	1
Leadership	1
AUSTSWIM	2
First Aid	2
Forest Learning	2
<b>Total number of teachers participating in at least one activity in the program year</b>	<b>2</b>

#### **b) Expenditure on Professional Development**

Total Number of Teachers	Total expenditure on teacher PD	Average expenditure on PD per teacher
2	\$2,767.48	\$1,383.74
The total funds expended on teacher professional development in 2020		\$2,767.48

The proportion of the teaching staff involved in professional development activities during 2020	100%
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**Average staff attendance for the school, based on unplanned absences of sick and emergency leave periods of up to 5 days:**

Number of Staff (FTE)	Number of School Days	Total Days Staff Absences	Average Staff Attendance Rate
1.6	384	2	99.5%

For permanent and temporary classroom teachers and school leaders the average staff attendance rate was 99.5% in 2020

*\* Where staff means permanent and temporary classroom teachers and school.*

**Proportion of teaching staff retained from the previous year:**

Number of permanent teaching staff at end of previous year	Number of these staff retained in the following year (the program year)	% retention rate
2	1	50%

From the end of 2019, 50% of staff were retained for the entire 2020 school year.

**Key Student Outcomes**

**Average student attendance rate (%) for the whole school:**

The average attendance rate for the whole school as a percentage in 2020 was 90%

**Average student attendance rate for each year level**

The Rainforest School had 13 enrolments in 2020. For privacy reasons we are unable to disclose attendance rates for all year levels.

Year levels	Average attendance rate for each year level as a percentage in 2020
Prep	90%
Year 1	91%
Year 2	Data withheld to ensure confidentiality
Year 3	86%
Year 4	92%

The attendance roll is marked twice a day and parents are contacted in case of an absence. In 2020 all students did meet the attendance requirements for compulsory schooling and no further action had to be taken.

### **NAPLAN results for Years 3 in 2020**

There are no 2020 Naplan results available.

### **Contact Person for Further Information**

For further information about The Rainforest School, enrolment information and policies, please contact [admin@trs.qld.edu.au](mailto:admin@trs.qld.edu.au)