

# The Small School Prospectus

**Effective from August 2018  
Review due January 2020**



# The Small School Prospectus

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## Introduction

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The Small School is a new independent school in the heart of Murwillumbah. It has successfully completed its registration with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and will begin operation in 2019.

The creation of The Small School is the culmination of a three-year project to bring evidence-based, progressive education to Murwillumbah.

We will be offering 12 places in Years 2,3 and 4 in 2019. In 2020, we intend to expand to 36 places from Kindergarten through to Year 6.



## Educational Philosophy

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The Small School is a child-centred school, strongly focused on the experience each child has with the world of learning and going to school. We believe children's innate drive to be curious and explore, to create and invent is at the heart of their learning success.

We use project-based and play-based learning and an emergent curriculum (child-led learning) as much as possible. We also use many age-old wisdoms in how children learn, namely through their love of a good teacher and adventurous, hands-on learning.

We aim to foster a lifelong love of learning for children, which we believe comes about by creating joy in learning and protecting children's natural sense of curiosity and inventiveness as they progress through formal education.

A lifelong love of learning also requires a sense of agency in one's own learning. Agency and motivation to learn requires practice in self-directed learning, which is achieved when using an emergent curriculum. By allowing children to practice self-directed learning children develop an understanding of *how* to learn and what they *love* to learn and experience more joy in learning.

We are committed to democratic education and encourage children to be involved in decision-making at our school. We want children to feel respected and heard, and to have some say in how they spend their day and what they learn. Decision-making, learning and the culture of our school are guided by relationships and connection, with ourselves, each other and our environment.

We truly value and welcome parents and community mentors to participate in our school. We want children to experience being at school and learning at school in connection with their families and wider community as much as possible.

### Education for the Future

The future world in which our children will live will look very different from today's world. New and rapidly advancing technologies are increasingly changing the way we live and learn. Simultaneously, our natural world is changing due to shifts in the earth's climate, and because of significant losses in biodiversity and natural resources.

Faced with these challenges, we believe it is vital for children to have the ability to envisage a positive future and feel empowered to contribute to it. This will require skills in imagination, collaboration and inventiveness and qualities such as kindness, courage and perseverance. We will foster these skills through a dynamic, child-centred, project-based curriculum and nurture these attributes by living them in our school community.

When children leave our school we want them to feel empowered by their love of learning and their ability to envisage and understand the possibilities of a better world.

## **Guiding Principles**

The Small School has 6 guiding principles which underpin the school's philosophy and guides the development of both the Learning Program and the school culture. They are:

1. Relationships with each other and with the environment are of paramount importance.
2. Learning is theme-based (integrated and emergent curriculum) and real-world focused (experiential).
3. Children thrive when they have some say in how they spend their day and what they learn (Democratic Education).
4. Families are part of the school (family-centred education).
5. We learn cooperatively not competitively (non-competitive environment).
6. Playing is learning too (free play and play-based teaching and learning).

### **1. Relationships with each other and with the environment are of paramount importance.**

Fostering relationships with each other and with the environment is central to the school culture and the Learning Program at The Small School. Our small size creates a nurturing environment for students where each child can know and be known in their community. The Small School has participatory processes in daily Circle Time, Special Circles and Whole School Meetings aimed at developing skills in building relationships, collaboration and conflict resolution.

Children's relationship with the local environment will be nurtured through place-based learning projects. Developing a connection to their local environment through place-based, environmental education is important to children's propensity to be in relationship with and think sustainably about the environment in the long term. We believe deliberate immersion in nature-based learning is also important to bring balance to the dominating effect of technology in contemporary life. We take every opportunity to learn outdoors, on excursions and on overnight camps in the rich and diverse northern rivers region.

Although we have a plan for growth (see section *Future Plans*), staying a small school where relationships are given priority and where we can achieve flexible, responsive, human-scale solutions to problems is central to our philosophy.

## **2. Learning is theme-based (integrated and emergent curriculum) and real-world focused (experiential).**

Our approach to learning is theme-based and real-world focused. Each term a theme is identified in a collaborative process by the teachers. This forms the basis of the central learning unit for the term.

The selection of the theme is based on the richness and diversity of the subject matter allowing for an emergent curriculum within the theme which will provide for each child's individual interests. Children can engage in both individual and collaborative, project-based learning of their own selection within the theme. As teachers and students across the school will be working on the same theme each term, theme-based learning is central to creating a school culture based on collaboration.

By using a theme-based approach, learning is integrated and holistic. The separate disciplines (Key Learning Areas) are experienced together, and the broad nature of the themes is designed for learning opportunities to emerge from the children themselves (an emergent curriculum). By choosing only one theme each term we are aiming for children to experience depth in their learning. Teachers prepare their knowledge base and educational resources for the theme to provide a rich platform from which children's projects can emerge.

As much as possible our learning is real-world focused or experiential. We want children to experience learning in a hands-on way, to build and create as part of their learning experience, so the learning process comes alive for children through their concrete experiences of it.

For more information on thematic learning see section *Overview of Learning Program – Frame 2 Thematic Learning Units*.

## **3. Children thrive when they have some say in how they spend their day and what they learn (Democratic Education)**

Across all school contexts, we create opportunities for children to express themselves. Democratic education involves children in class and school meetings, creating the environment for them to have a say in some aspects of how the school is run and what they learn. Children also have responsibilities in caring for the school.

Democratic education is also child-centred education as children are engaged in learning exercises in which they have had a say in choosing and defining, i.e. self-directed learning. In consultation with their teacher, children's choice of their learning vehicle (within the school theme) is part of the democratic education process and is seen as the right of the child to learn according to their own needs.

Practice in reflective discussion and decision-making in democratic, participatory processes

gives children the opportunity to learn how to explore their own thoughts and feelings and to gain experience in articulating them. We want children to understand how they think and why they think in a particular way. This is the precursor to children's ability to think critically. We believe it directs children toward a meaningful life and it underpins our educational philosophy.

Our willingness to hear children's voices is at the heart of our school culture. Its deepest purpose, along with empowerment and critical thinking, is to create a feeling of being valued and of belonging. When children feel this, they have ownership and agency in their world of learning.

For more information on participatory processes used see section *Overview of Learning Program – Frame 3 Core School Community Program (The Mind Program)*.

#### **4. Families are part of the school (family-centred education)**

We truly welcome parents and community members to participate in our school. We want children to experience being at school and learning at school in connection with their families and wider community as much as possible.

We acknowledge and value the important role of families as children's co-teachers and have designed our Learning Program to allow space for family participation in everyday school life, learning and assessment, as well as in school events and celebrations. (See section *Becoming Involved* for more information.)

#### **5. We learn cooperatively not competitively (non-competitive environment)**

Central to our school philosophy is to create a non-competitive environment for children in our approach to learning and more generally across the school culture. Collaboration is considered a core skill and children will be encouraged to work collaboratively in problem-solving and project-based learning. Assessing how children are progressing with their education is done in a non-competitive way, without ranking students comparatively with each other. (See section *Assessment and Reporting to Parents* for more information.)

#### **6. Playing is learning too (free play and play-based teaching and learning)**

We believe playing and play-based learning is vital to development in childhood. The need for play extends beyond the preschool years and into and throughout the primary school years and it is an entirely appropriate developmental activity for children.

The evidence is clear about the crucial role of play in physical, social and emotional development. It is also fundamental to how we learn. Our innate drive to explore and create, expressed through play in children, is our innate drive to learn. Without sufficient autonomous, unstructured play children's curiosity, creativity and ability to find joy is developmentally compromised.

Play is not always about free play. For teachers it also means taking a playful approach and being willing to experiment and to enter children's worlds this way, a child-centred way of teaching. Playing with children and bringing a playful attitude to teaching is deeply valued by children and builds trusting relationships between teachers and children.

Many of the things we want for our children's future, to be able to solve problems, to be willing to experiment, to be self-aware and imaginative, to know how to take measured risks and to get along well socially, are all things that children learn through play.

## Overview of the Learning Program

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The Learning Program at The Small School is made up of three learning frames. They include:

- Frame 1: Focused Key Learning Areas (KLAs)
- Frame 2: Thematic Learning Units
- Frame 3: Core School Community Program (CSCP).

### **Frame 1: Focused Key Learning Areas (KLAs)**

Stand-alone English and Maths lessons will take place daily. This brings a sharp focus to literacy and numeracy skills and provides time for teachers to make careful observations of how children are progressing with their foundational skills in these Key Learning Areas (KLAs).

Music lessons in the form of singing also occur daily, in addition to a dedicated music class once a week.

### **Frame 2: Thematic Learning Units**

The majority of guided learning time at The Small School occurs through the thematic learning units. Themes are selected to provide rich and diverse learning opportunities. They will include most, if not all, the KLAs (integrated curriculum) and are designed to be broad enough to cater for each child's particular interests and needs (emergent curriculum).

Each theme has a strategic focus, key concepts and an assessment task in the form of a presentation or performance at the end of each term (see section *Assessment and Reporting to Parents* for more information).

In addition to the strategic focus, there will be a *continuing focus* for teachers to identify and use English and maths learning opportunities within thematic units.

The inclusion of Aboriginal culture will be included in each of these themes, not tokenistically, but as a needed way of knowing the world and the environment around us. Consultation and

guidance from local elders will be sought in the telling of Aboriginal stories.

The first theme in Term 1 in 2019, will be *Gardens, Seasons and Rainbows*. The strategic focus is establishing the school community and gardens and the key concepts will include colour, weather, seasons, life cycle of plants and world mythology.

This particular theme has been chosen as our first theme as a means by which to develop relationships across our school community as the school is founded. We will continue this theme across two terms as we establish the school, our gardens and our school community.

The maintenance of the school garden will form an important part of The Small School's Core School Community Program (Frame 3).

***Themes for the remainder of the year include:***

*Term 3: Castaways*

The strategic focus will be on materials and building. The key concepts will include self-sufficiency, awareness of nature, building shelter and co-operation.

*Term 4: Migration*

The strategic focus will be on using technology as a research tool. The key concepts will include defining migration, the reasons people and animals migrate, the history of migration to Australia, family history and stories of migration.

**Frame 3: Core School Community Program (CSCP)**

The CSCP consists of 3 parts and has a strong focus on skills development, family involvement and community building. The 3 parts are: Nourishment, Mind and Tinkering.

***1. Nourishment: Food and Gardening Program***

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The food and gardening program is intended to provide a vital link to the Earth. Research abounds on the benefits to children of connection with their natural world in terms of their long-term choices as well as habits of mind such as resilience, collaboration and confidence.

This program includes our lunch program and gardening program. It will assist students to develop a practical understanding of sustainability and food production and a greater appreciation and enjoyment of food.

Students will be involved in planting a variety of food plants, watering, fertilizing, and protecting them from pests. They will also be involved in harvesting, preparing and cooking food, eating together, and in composting organic waste.

Morning tea and lunch are prepared each day for children and staff in the school kitchen. Meals and snacks are eaten together in the dining room or outdoor eating area.

Parents are welcome to join in gardening activities, or to help prepare and share in lunch, as well as make use of the school dining room to meet and talk with teachers and other parents.

The cooking program will make use of foods grown at the school as well as purchased items from weekly farmers markets. Organic food is used as much as possible. Students will learn practical life skills as well as maths and science concepts.

## *2. The Mind Program*

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The Mind Program includes daily mindfulness exercises and the development of skills in participation, conflict resolution, leadership and critical thinking.

### *Mindfulness Exercises*

Yoga, meditation and relaxation techniques to develop mindfulness, will be practiced with students on a daily basis. This will be approximately 15 mins each day and teachers may choose to do one of these activities for refocussing students after a break time, or as a way to bring the school day to a close.

### *Participatory Processes for Children*

Learning how to participate in and take responsibility for their school community is an important part of daily life at The Small School. Participatory processes include daily Circle Time, Special Circles and Whole School Meetings.

These processes are designed for children to learn to express themselves, to have some say in decision-making in the school in an age appropriate way and to develop a strong sense of agency and belonging in their learning environment.

Not all aspects of decision-making in the life of the school are suitable for children's involvement. However, the purpose of this practice is to introduce children to the value of being active in a participatory, democratic environment and the workings of such an environment.

Circle Time is an informal gathering of all students, staff and parents (where possible) each morning to begin the school day. It consists of a brief discussion and some decision-making about the day, general school matters and a song.

The Whole School Meeting will usually take place once or twice per term and involves discussion and decision-making about how the school is operating. More formal meeting procedures will be followed, including having a chairperson, procedures for negotiating consensus and recording undertakings. Children will be expected and encouraged to participate in an age-appropriate way. It will involve all students and staff and parents where available.

Conflict between students or a behavioural/bullying problem will be discussed in a more

private environment in Special Circles. Special Circles include children involved in a particular incident, friends or other children who have witnessed an incident, a staff member (teacher or School Manager) and possibly a parent/guardian, if required.

Restorative justice principles are practised in Special Circles, allowing a child who has been hurt or offended to discuss how they feel, and for a child who has hurt or offended another child to consider their actions while being present to the other child's feelings. Staff will aim to empower children to listen and talk through the situations with the children involved.

Serious or repeated misbehaviour or bullying may not be discussed in a Special Circle but in private discussions between the School Manager and parents/guardians as per the school's *Behaviour Management Policy*.

Adults will model procedures and communication and conflict resolution skills in the various circle times. Most importantly, children as well as adults will be involved in discussing, changing and deciding on some school rules, such as who should help with various aspects of clean-up or how a particular piece of equipment should be used. There will be other school rules such as ones related to safety and supervision, which are non-negotiable. While these will be discussed with children, they will be explained as adult-only decisions. Decision-making is seen as a privilege which comes with responsibilities to participate in relationships with each other and with the school as a whole.

All children at The Small School are encouraged to care for and take pride in their environment and will share responsibility for tidying their workspaces and playground each day. This will be modelled and supported by staff.

Circle Time is also an important part of our approach to student leadership. At The Small School all children have the opportunity to develop leadership skills. There is no elected school captain or prefects, but a range of leadership duties which older children are expected to carry out on a rotational basis, allowing for each child to practise being a leader and to experience the rewards, privileges and responsibilities of leadership.

### *3. Tinkering*

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Tinkering includes the development of skill sets (involving wood and metal work and repurposing of materials) and opportunities for experiential learning and creativity. The school will maintain a tinkering workshop which will provide students with the opportunity to experiment with and learn to use a variety of hardware materials and tools. Most of the materials will be re-claimed and recycled items.

While a non-teaching staff member will have responsibility for maintaining the workshop, learning how to properly care for and store tools and materials will be an important part of the program for students.

The tinkering workshop will be available for students to make their own creations in their unstructured play times and will feature as a major component of thematic learning units, such as the *Castaways* theme where students will be looking at and assessing different building materials and techniques. It is also anticipated that student work in tinkering will significantly contribute to learning outcomes under the science and creative arts syllabi.

## Combined-Age Setting

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The Small School will have a combined-age setting in varying degrees across the Learning Program. There will be broad scope for mixing age groups across the school in Frames 2 and 3 of the Learning Program. Frame 1 will be delivered separately to the different stage groups of children. Although teachers will modify or extend material commensurate to a child's capacity and interest, blending stage groups as required.

Teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum with this kind of flexibility allows for a wider spectrum of abilities which is not defined by age.

The combined-age setting at The Small School is also an important part of the school culture we wish to create. Older students are involved in helping to care for younger students and younger students benefit from the role modelling they receive from older students. Mixing age groups helps to create a broader range of friendships. It also contributes to our non-competitive culture as expectations of skills and abilities are less age-based.



## Assessment

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At The Small School, we view our students' development holistically and respect them as individuals. We wish to make assessment as non-competitive and non-stressful for students as possible. As such, observations and portfolio assessments form a large part of the assessment process.

Experienced teachers will carry out assessment of students' progress through our everyday practice of working with and observing children, recording their progress in teacher records and maintaining a portfolio of work samples. Each child will have a Learning Plan. It will be used to guide and monitor progress within thematic project-based learning as well as the daily Focused KLAs. Learning Plans, teacher's records and portfolios will correspond with the learning outcomes in the NESA syllabus.

There are also regular opportunities for students to meet challenges and the culminating event of each term is a performance or presentation which is a special occasion for children in which they must endeavour to explore their own potential as they bring their term project to an end and present it to their school community.

Teachers will also rely on standardised mechanisms for assessment where necessary to ensure appropriate stage-based development is occurring.

Parental engagement is also a key component in ensuring student success. The knowledge teachers gain through their communication with parents contributes to their assessment of a child's learning progress.

## Reporting to Parents

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At The Small School, reporting on assessment is about communicating what children understand and can do; to the students themselves and to their parents/guardians. Effective reporting involves parents/guardians, children and teachers as partners. There are 4 main mechanisms for reporting to parents.

### **I. Portfolios –**

These are made up of purposefully selected and annotated work samples which evidence the learning journey of the individual child. The portfolio is used to show the development of knowledge, understandings, and skills, over a period of time.

Annotation will come from both teachers and students themselves, and will include commentary on:

- The NESA syllabus outcome/s a sample relates to.

- How the sample provides a baseline or shows skill or knowledge development.
- The child’s feelings about the work or the process involved in its creation.
- A teacher’s feedback as necessary.
- Possible future learning directions.

## 2. Written Reports

Written reports are a summative record for children, parents and The Small School itself of a child’s progress. Reports clearly indicate areas of strengths, areas for improvement and are helpful aids to a child’s development.

## 3. Parent/Teacher Meetings

We have built into our daily drop-off routines opportunities for parents to chat with each other and with teachers to ensure parents feel welcomed and that information sharing is structured into the operation of each school day.

Additionally, there are formal and informal meeting and reporting structures at The Small School for parents and teachers to discuss a child’s development and their learning progress throughout the year.

## 4. Three-Way Conferences –

A child, parent/guardian and teacher together share an individual child’s progress and view and discuss their portfolios. The participants collaborate to establish and identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. These conferences include an opportunity for students to lead the discussion and engage in self-assessment.

## Reporting Time Line

REPORTING PROCESS	DATE
Portfolio	Week 8 Term 2
Written Report	Week 8 Term 2
3 Way Conference	Week 9 Term 2
Portfolio	Week 8 Term 4
Report	Week 8 Term 4
3 Way Conference	Week 9 Term 4
Parent/Teacher meetings	As required / requested



## Enrolment Process

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In our first year of operation in 2019, 12 enrolment places will be offered in Years 2,3 and 4. Enrolments will expand to include approximately 36 places in Kindergarten to Year 6 in 2020 and 2021.

The Small School's guiding principles and broader educational philosophy need to be understood and carefully read by parents and carers so that they can gauge if the school represents a good match for themselves and their child. This is the foremost consideration in the enrolment process. We believe when families appreciate and support these principles that the foundation is created for a good match between a child/family and our school.

Families are invited to make enquiries about enrolling at the school at any time. If the school has a waiting list this will be posted on the website. Upon making contact, families will be directed to the website where they can download a copy of the prospectus or a hard copy can be mailed to them.

**Interested parents are asked to engage with the following enrolment process:**

**Read** - Firstly, parents are asked to read the educational philosophy and guiding principles, contained in *The Small School Prospectus* thoroughly.

**Visit** - Attend the school either through a school event, held several times throughout the year where parents and children can spend time in the school, have a tour and talk to staff or where no events are scheduled, take a tour of the school with the School Manager. School events include open days, play groups and visits from local preschools. These will be advertised on our website. If no events are scheduled, parents should contact the School Manager to arrange a tour.

**Write** - If, after reading the prospectus and visiting the school, parents would like to proceed with an enrolment they should complete the Enrolment Form, available on the school's website or in hard copy upon request.

**Interview** - Attend an interview with the School Manager.

Further detail about the enrolment process is contained in *The Small School's Enrolment Policy for Families*.

## School Fees

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Upon the offer of a place a payment of \$150 per child or \$250 per family is required to confirm your acceptance. This deposit will appear as a credit on the family's first school fee invoice or will be forfeited if an offered place is not taken.

The Small School fees in 2019 are \$3,200 per year (\$800 per term) and will be set at each Annual General Meeting of the School Board. Fees may increase at a minimum of the rate of the Education CPI per annum.

Fees include all educational materials, meals and snacks and most excursions. Full or partial contribution to school camps will be required.

Students cannot attend The Small School unless all current term fees are paid **before the commencement of each term** or an arrangement has been made with the School Manager. It's very important to the viability of the school, particularly as the school is established, that parents who wish to enrol their children are in a position to pay the full term's fees before the term begins.

A pro-rata charge is calculated for students who enrol after a term has commenced. Should a student withdraw from the school, term fees paid are **not refundable**.

Payment details are contained in our *School Fee Policy*.

## Becoming Involved

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The involvement of parents at The Small School is central to our educational philosophy and is one of our six core guiding principles. Parents are welcome and encouraged to be involved where and when they can in a range of meaningful ways.

The purpose of parental involvement is to develop a shared learning space which helps children to make connections between home and school life and to bring as much understanding as possible between parents and teachers about a child's education.

There are a number of ways to get involved ranging from informal to formal involvement.



### *Mornings at The Small School*

Parents are welcome to spend time at the school in the kitchen/dining area (and elsewhere) in the mornings. The school is open and supervision for children is available from 8.15am. The school day formally begins at 9am with Circle Time. Parents are welcome to make a cup of tea or coffee between 8.15 and 9am in the kitchen where they can spend time with staff and other parents or spend additional time with their child while they settle in for the day.

Parents are also welcome to participate in Circle Time, beginning at 9am and ending at 9.20am. Parents who wish to stay beyond 9.20 need to organise this with the School Manager. Parents can stay on at the school during the day as volunteers or just to spend more time with their

child if their child is having trouble settling in. Except when there is special event on at the school, a maximum of three (3) parents can stay at the school or be rostered on the volunteer roster on any one day.

### ***Parent Volunteers***

Parents are welcome to stay at the school during the day and the parameters of this will be worked out between staff and the individual parent. Where a child is having trouble settling in to school parents are particularly encouraged to spend time at the school while the relationship between the school and the family grows, allowing the child to feel safe. Space will be available for parents to work from the school if needed, usually this will include space to work from a lap top but could include other types of work, space permitting, in the Manual Arts Room or Dining Room.

Parents can volunteer to assist in the garden, kitchen or classroom via the Volunteer Roster which is coordinated by the School Manager. Parents can create educational offerings to share with the children or visit to talk about aspects of their work. All parent volunteers must have a current Working with Children Check and complete an induction session with the School Manager or delegate. (See *Child Protection Policy and Procedure* for further details).

### ***Contact with the Board/Sub-Committees***

The Small School is a public company with Directors and members. The school is governed by a Board of Directors who have qualifications and/or expertise in education, finance and/or governance. Any parent can approach the Board to seek assistance, answer a question or make a suggestion. In most cases this is done via the School Manager. Parents can make suggestions about projects they would like to undertake and seek approval from the Board to form a working sub-committee under the direction of the Board.

### ***Members and Directors of the Board***

Expression of Interest forms are available for any person with qualifications and/or expertise in education, finance and/or governance who is interested in applying to be a Director of the School Board. Similarly, membership forms are available for parents interested in becoming members of the school company.

## **Facilities**

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The school premises consist of a two-storey converted home centrally located at 8 King Street, Murwillumbah.

There are 3 main learning areas in the school building consisting of Learning Spaces 1 and 2 on

the first floor and the Manual Arts Room on the ground floor. The first floor also holds the library, the school office and a room reserved for a sick bay (or other quiet purposes). The premises are air conditioned throughout.

On the ground floor, the main back and front doors to the building both lead into the Manual Arts Room. This large space holds the children's storage space for bags and belongings as well as the school's making space. Workbenches, tools and art resources are all located in the Manual Arts Room.

Also on the ground floor is the open plan kitchen and dining area. The kitchen has been designed to meet commercial kitchen standards and will be used to prepare children's lunches each day, cater for school events and provide an educational space for cooking classes.

The open plan kitchen and dining room will also act as the school's common room and provide space for parents, staff and children to gather in the mornings before the school day begins.

An additional eating area is provided in the Covered Outdoor Learning Area (COLA) in the back garden. The back garden also holds a toilet block, play equipment and vegetable gardens.

The school car park is behind the back fence. Important details about school transport and car parking arrangements are contained in our *Transport Policy* which all parents must read (available on the website or in hard copy from the school).

The front garden holds the storage space for bicycles, some more play space and the Waiting Area for children travelling on the bus. The school bus stop is about 20 metres to the east of the school building and is visible from the Waiting Area. Staff accompany children to and from the bus stop (see section on Daily Life at *The Small School*).

To begin operation in 2019 with 12 enrolments, computer resources available for children will include one lap top and two iPads. The school building has fibre-to-the-node hard-line internet connections throughout the ground and first floors and the school will be trialling a Wi-Fi free environment in 2019. As enrolments increase in 2020, additional laptops and iPads will be purchased.

Knox Park, which has an open playing field, playground and a skate ramp is within easy walking distance of the school. Excursions into the community are part of The Small School's educational philosophy and the facilities available in town will be accessed semi-regularly including the Tweed Regional Aquatic Centre and Get Wet Swimming Pool and the Tweed Regional Library, Museum and Art Gallery.

## Future Plans

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The Small School has a Business Plan and Facility Master Plan. While we will always be a small school, we have plans for growth. A neighbouring property has been purchased which we hope

will hold a middle (small) school in the future. Planning for this will be underway from 2019. The Board also has a long-term vision to develop a high school.

## **Policies and Procedures**

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The Small School has a full suite of policies which are available on our website. They include:

- Premises and Buildings Policy and Procedures
- Facilities Policy and Procedures
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Emergency Management Policy and Procedures
- Flood Management Policy and Procedures
- On-Site Supervision Policy and Procedures
- Off-Site Supervision Policy and Procedures
- Risk Management Policy and Procedures
- Well-Being and Safety Policy and Procedures
- Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures
- Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures
- Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures
- Student Leadership Policy and Procedures
- Raising a Concern or Complaint Policy and Procedures
- Grievance and Conflict Resolution Policy and Procedures
- Administration of Medication Policy and Procedures
- Anaphylaxis, Asthma and Allergies Management Policy and Procedures
- Homework Policy and Procedures
- Enrolment and Attendance Policy and Procedures
- Communication Policy and Procedures
- Management and Operation Policy and Procedures.

## The Small School Board: Directors' Qualifications

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**Ms. Carla Wilson**

2010 Graduate Certificate in Environment (Education for Sustainability), Griffith University, Queensland

2003 Master of Social Administration (Community Development major), University of Queensland

1993 Bachelor of Arts (Psychology), University of Queensland.

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**Ms. Paula Shaw**

2017 *Current enrolment* Master of Education - degree by coursework, Queensland University of Technology

2002 Bachelor of Education (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies), University of Queensland

1999 Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults, International House, Sydney

1997 Bachelor of Arts (Anthropology), University of Queensland.

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**Dr. Louise Kolff**

2015 PhD in Graphic Design Culture, University of New South Wales

2003 Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design Gerrit Rieveld Academie, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2001 Foundation Course in Art and Design (specialisation in Graphic Design), Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, London, U.K.

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**Ms. Sabrina Stokes**

2008 Graduate Diploma in Early Education, University of Sunshine Coast

2004 Bachelor of Social Work, University of Queensland

2000 Bachelor of Social Science, University of Queensland.

# The Small School Board Directors



**Carla Wilson**  
Founder and Board Director

Carla brings professional experience working in social policy, community development and project management and has worked with children and young people extensively throughout her career. Her passion has been to create a school where the willingness to hear children's voices is at the heart of the school culture. A school where children's natural sense of curiosity and inventiveness is supported and encouraged as they progress through formal education. Working closely with co-director and teacher, Paula Shaw, The Small School is the culmination of a three-year project to create a new school in Murwillumbah.

Carla's qualifications are in psychology and history from the University of Queensland, where she also completed a Master of Social Administration (Community Development major). Carla has also worked extensively in adult and community education and has completed a Graduate Certificate in Environmental Education at Griffith University.

Carla has project management experience in social welfare and community projects as well as in primary schools where she has delivered programs on sustainability. She brings experience from a number of governance positions in the local community, including a local community pre-school, and is the mother to one young daughter.



**Paula Shaw**  
Board Director

Paula has been instrumental in guiding the foundation of The Small School. She is a deeply committed and passionate educator and has worked as a teacher in suburban state high schools in Brisbane and Sydney and as a primary school teacher in the Cape York Aboriginal Community of Aurukun. Following this experience, Paula published her memoir *Seven Seasons in Aurukun*. Paula has appeared on ABC radio to speak about her experiences teaching in an Aboriginal community.

Paula has developed her knowledge of governance structures and procedures through her work as a consultant, conducting quality assurance audits of community organisations and more recently in her role as President of the Management Committee at a community pre-school. Her professional career has also focused on social welfare program research, evaluation and quality assurance in both the private and public sectors.

Paula graduated as a teacher of Social Sciences and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in 2002. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology (1998) as well as a Bachelor of Education degree. She continues to have a passion for education and is currently working towards a Master of Education degree through the Queensland University of Technology, as well as working as an independent assessor for the White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation Program, while being a mum to two young girls.

## The Small School Board Directors *continued*



**Sabrina Stokes**  
Board Director

Sabrina obtained a Bachelor of Social Science (Sociology) in 2000 and a Bachelor of Social Work in 2004. She has been in the Social Work sector for the past 20 years promoting the welfare of children and families in a variety of different roles and contexts including non-government, government, private business and tertiary education. Sabrina completed her Graduate Diploma in Education in 2008. In the same year Sabrina also obtained her Cert IV in Training and Assessment. She has worked as an Educator and Facilitator in non-government organisations and colleges and is currently working at Southern Cross University. She has a strong passion for lifelong learning emphasising the importance of creating and maintaining positive learning experiences from as early as possible.

Sabrina is currently the Secretary of the Management Committee of a local community preschool. Additionally, she supports the preschool through writing grant applications and creating opportunities for family engagement. Sabrina was on the board, in the role of Secretary for a not for profit community organisation in Brisbane before moving to the Tweed Valley. Sabrina has two beautiful young children.



**Louise Kolff**  
Board Director

Louise holds a doctorate from the Department of Art and Design, University of New South Wales (UNSW). For the past four years Louise has worked as an online lecturer in graphic design and information graphics at UNSW, and is currently working as a lecturer in graphic design at Southern Cross University. In addition, during the past three years she has worked in school administration in a development role at a local primary school. Louise is an engaged member of the local community. She has sat on the board of the Mt Warning Community Preschool, and has for a number of years organised a local organic bulk buying group. In addition she is an active member of Zero Emissions Tweed, a Tweed residents group working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make the Tweed more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Louise is mother to two beautiful girls.

# The Small School Advisory Board



## **Robin Grille**

Psychologist, Parenting Educator and Author

Robin Grille is a psychologist in private practice and a parenting educator. His articles on parenting and child development have been widely published and translated in Australia and around the world. Robin's first book: 'Parenting for a Peaceful World' has received international acclaim and led to speaking engagements around Australia, USA, UK, Canada, Indonesia and New Zealand. Parenting for a Peaceful world has been translated into Chinese, and his second book, 'Heart to Heart Parenting', has been translated into German and Korean. Robin's work is animated by his belief that humanity's future is largely dependent on the way we collectively relate to our children.

Robin's experiential, skills-based and informational parenting courses have helped many people to embrace parenting as a transformative, personal growth journey. Drawing from 28 years' clinical experience and from leading-edge neuropsychological research, Robin's seminars and courses focus on healthy emotional development for children as well as parents; while building supportive, co-operative parenting communities.



## **Fiona Mackenzie**

Founder of Koonwarra and Phillip Island Village Schools

After being inspired by a small alternative primary school in Western Australia, Fiona became a primary school teacher and took up studies in the history and philosophy of alternative education. Curious to learn whether schools could still be started by an individual with a vision, Fiona combined her existing business qualifications and newly acquired teaching experience to start her first primary school in South Gippsland, Victoria in 2012.

Seventy-five kilometres away and four years after Koonwarra Village School was established, Phillip Island Village School opened its doors, and now 80 students enjoy a Village School education. Fiona still works as the Business Manager at both primary schools and oversees the application of the Village School Curriculum at both locations. The next exciting venture is a Village High School, which plans to open in 2019.

While Fiona is drawing a line at three schools, she definitely intends to continue to contribute to the development of innovative, educational options for children and young people in Australia. Through her new company, Small School Business Services, Fiona and her team are able to do just that, by sharing their experience and expertise to support others who dream of starting a school.

Fiona is currently working with schools in Townsville, Murwillumbah in NSW, and Clayton South and Cockatoo in Victoria.

## The Small School Advisory Board *continued*



### **Juli Gassner**

Educational Leader, Kinma School, Sydney

For some 30 years Juli has played and learned alongside children and their families in a range of private and public settings in Australia and New Zealand. She has worked in a variety of roles in the learning world, including: class teacher, Deputy Principal, University Pre-teacher facilitator and guide and now Community Co-ordinator of WILDSPACE, Northern Rivers only non-aligned community learning place. Juli now mentors students, school communities and assorted organisations in the art of building healthy community spaces for rich learning.

She grows the natural desire to learn by encouraging people to follow their interests, passions and challenges as well as offering them a suite of broad offerings to allow self and group exploration. She trusts that all have innate creative powers, which when unleashed, benefit not only an individual's artistic, dramatic, cognitive and kinaesthetic blossoming but self-concept, confidence and social and emotional health. Most importantly she works with community to move toward all benefiting as each individual is empowered to be the unique, resilient and responsible learner of which they are capable, enmeshed in an interdependent community.



### **Geoffrey Colwill**

Finance Consultant, NORTEC Director

Geoffrey holds a wealth of experience working with a wide range of commercial and not for profit organisations in the UK and Australia. He was Chair of NORTEC for five years, and is currently a Non Executive Director of NORTEC. He is Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors - MAICD. Communication and effectiveness are amongst his passions. Geoffrey was attracted to NORTEC by the organisational culture – taking a genuine interest in people's well being and the commitment to being a force for good on the North Coast of NSW and South East Queensland. He was previously Director of the Findhorn Community College.