



**LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SECTOR
"QUALITY BADGE PLUS" REPORT**



NAME OF THE PROVIDER FSC EPPING FOREST

Assessment dates 10th – 11th June 2015

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SUMMARY OF LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM QUALITY BADGE PLUS CRITERIA

Key indicator	Components	Met	Very Good	Outstanding
	3g Progress and achievement of students		✓	
	3h How well the provider supports the current national agenda within education and youth sectors			✓
	3i Quality of teaching and learning		✓	
	3j The suitability and rigour of assessment		✓	
	3k How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students			✓
5. The provider meets the needs of users	5e Effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management		✓	
7. Overall effectiveness and efficiency	7a Improvement since last evaluation		✓	
	7b Overall effectiveness		✓	

THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CENTRE

Epping Forest Field Studies Centre is very good provider.

FSC Epping Forest is a residential centre with the following strengths:

- An excellent location at the heart of Epping Forest, close to London and other major centres of population with excellent road, overland rail and London Underground transport links.
- An experienced, long-serving Head of Centre (HoC) who is passionate about environmental learning and what the Centre has to offer to visitors, stakeholders and the local community.
- A safe and strongly inclusive, caring ethos, which places a high priority on the enjoyment and wellbeing of all visitors.
- Excellent learning opportunities in the Centre grounds complemented by direct access to numerous high quality field sites in Epping Forest, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation, with a variety of urban settlements within easy reach. More than 70% of the provision is delivered within easy walking distance of the Centre, which is a real bonus for a day centre.
- Friendly, enthusiastic, well-qualified Education Team Members (ETMs), guided by very competent senior education staff who take great care to ensure that all students, including those with DSEN, or from very diverse cultures and visitors from urban backgrounds who may have very little prior experience of learning in the outdoors, can learn effectively in an environment where they feel welcome and supported.
- A very strong reputation for delivering high quality day courses to support the National Curriculum for all abilities from KS1 to KS4 and examinations at GCSE and A level. Senior ETMs have a good understanding of proposed curriculum reform and changes to examination specifications.
- A varied and well-regarded programme for adult learners.
- Clearly delegated responsibilities supported by clear structures, operational systems and effective communication. These provide a framework which enables the Centre's staff to work well as a team, processing applications from and teaching over 20 000 visitors each year.

- A culture that encourages continuous development. Senior and less experienced ETMs are encouraged to be innovative. They are enthusiastic about exploring new ideas and use feedback from teachers to inform developments in teaching and learning.
- A wide range of high quality, differentiated resources developed to support students' different learning styles and abilities, including those with DSEN.
- A developing use of ICT focused on using mobile technology in the field.
- A strong commitment to professional development.
- A growing understanding of the principles and practice underpinning effective assessment for learning.
- A strong eco ethos embedded in all aspects of the Centre's operation. The Centre was re-accredited as an Eco-Centre in December 2014.
- An attractive, up to date and easy to navigate website which includes comprehensive guidance for visiting staff and other adults such as parents and carers on how to support learning effectively during the visit.
- A committed group of volunteers who are inducted and trained before being deployed to good effect to support learning and other functions at the Centre.
- Strong and well established community involvement, including long-term partnerships with a range of organisations and volunteers that embed the Centre in the wider network for sustainability.
- Very positive feedback from teachers, and adult learners, which has secured a deservedly high reputation reflected in high occupancy rates and repeat bookings.

Epping Forest Field Centre is not yet outstanding because:

- Staff changes in the last two years have resulted in the breakup of an experienced education team. ETMs new to Epping Forest have needed time to get established and learn how to undertake their about their job roles effectively.
- The quality of teaching is not less than good but requires further improvements to raise education provision overall to a consistently outstanding standard.
- New ETMs need time to learn about field sites on and near the Centre in order to maximise the opportunities for learning about the natural environment and sustainable development in local environments and to make links to different scales.
- Newly appointed ETMs need access to targeted CPD, which builds on the initial verification process, to develop their teaching skills to support and challenge learners across the age and ability range.
- The approach to Assessment for Learning (AfL) and the use of personalised learning objectives is not yet consistent throughout the Centre, and does not meet the needs of all levels of ability.
- ETMs do not always provide sufficiently detailed feedback to students by focusing on reviewing the key learning points for each session and explaining what individuals need to do to improve.
- The development of a London Region vision and structure combined with uncertainty about future priorities for the City of London are frustrating long term strategic planning for EFFC.
- Newly appointed managers at EFFC need time to work with colleagues based at other learning locations to understand the national and regional education offer and ways of maximising the strengths of the different centres in London in developing and delivering courses linked to the new curriculum.
- Although the HoC is very enthusiastically encouraging ETMs to adopt technology in 2015, the use of ICT to support learning is not yet fully realised, in part because the infrastructure needs upgrading and also because the potential of the investment in iPads and other mobile technology needs to be developed and extended to enhance learning opportunities.
- The relevance of the skills and competences being taught at EFFC to future study or to employment are not sufficiently highlighted.
- Insufficient use is made of feedback from students to guide developments that can contribute to further improvement in service quality.

What FSC Epping Forest needs to prioritise to improve further:

To focus leadership and management on:

1. Using the EFFC's comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems to:

- Inform continued collaboration with stakeholders and the Head of Region to develop a clearly articulated dynamic long - term vision for the future of the EFFC in a regional context, which

continues to stretch targets for visitor numbers, maintains the Centre's strong eco ethos and includes the innovative use of ICT;

- Provide clarity about how the outcomes from monitoring and evaluation, including data in the Management Information System, is used to identify future priorities;
- Streamline key quantitative aspects of action planning and reporting on the Centre to assist interpretation and comparison;
- Re-establish a more consistent system to improve the capture of feedback from students to guide developments that can contribute to further improvement in service quality;
- Assess the use of any new investment in ICT to enhance the innovative use of ICT in all aspects of the Centre's work, including education, administration and finance.

2. Supporting continuous improvement in teaching and learning by:

- Ensuring that groups of all ages maintain a high pace of learning during the visit through:
 - providing challenge for more able students and appropriate support for less able learners;
 - ensuring that language and text used for younger age groups reflects and meets the needs of their abilities;
 - refining ways of using differentiated resources to more effectively support the learning of students of all abilities.
- Developing a consistent approach to Assessment for Learning (AfL) throughout the Centre that enables students, tutors and visiting teachers to track progress more effectively. This should include:
 - modifying the use of assessment resources to make them accessible to all levels of ability;
 - using personalised learning objectives to ensure that students can learn at an individual pace;
 - increasing the impact of feedback from tutors to students by focusing on reviewing the key learning points for each session and explaining what individuals need to do to improve.
- Enhancing understanding of the natural environment and sustainable development by creating opportunities for students to understand the specific local environments and make links to different scales.
- Drawing on Head Office support to improve the infrastructure to realise the exciting potential of using ICT to enhance learning at Epping Forest by building up expertise in the use of digital technologies inside and outside the classroom.
- Continuing to work with national and regional colleagues to develop and deliver courses linked to the new curriculum.

3. Further improve accommodation and resources by:

- Taking action in the grounds to improve first impressions, transform the raised beds and maximise the messages relating to sustainability.
- Continuing to press the City to improve the toilet facilities for adults.