

Cheshire School

bestchance

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Stepping Stones to Success

Cheshire School is a renowned independent special assistance primary school for students with complex social, emotional and behavioural challenges. Through an intervention, trauma-informed approach that is evidence-based, our team of highly dedicated Teachers, Education Support Officers and Allied Health personnel partner with families to support students to gain the skills and confidence needed to re-engage with learning and transition back into mainstream schooling.



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Acknowledgement of Country

Cheshire School acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians of the land. We also acknowledge in a special way the Wurundjeri and Bunurong Peoples of the Kulin Nation for it is on their land that we are proud and fortunate to live and learn as the Cheshire School community today.

As we share our knowledge and help our young people grow, we pay our respects to the Elders – past, present and emerging, as it is their knowledge and experiences that hold the key to the success of future generations.

As we live and learn together, may our journey remain forever committed to a spirit of respect, mutual understanding and reconciliation.



Contact Details

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Minimum Standards Attestation

I, *Kevin Browning*, attest that Cheshire School is compliant with:

- All of the requirements for the minimum standards and other requirements for the registration of schools as specified in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)* and the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)*, except where the school has been granted an exemption from any of these requirements by the *Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)*;
- Expenditure and commitment of funds being used solely to support educational outcomes and operational needs;
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2023 school year under the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)* and the *Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)*; and
- The Child Safe Standards prescribed in Ministerial Order No.1379 – Child Safe Standards, Managing Risk of Child Abuse in School

June 2024

Statement from the Head of School

"With adequate support, all children, irrespective of their different needs, should be able to learn together in mainstream classrooms in their local communities."

(UNESCO 2015)



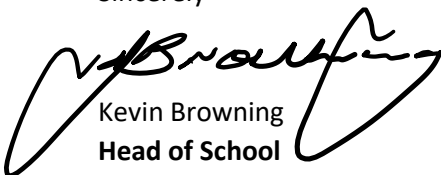
For Cheshire School, 2023 was a year of growth. From the annual Federal Census of August 2022 to August 2023, Cheshire School saw enrolment growth of 58%. Given this significant increase, as well as to enable continued future growth, the School expanded to a third class at the commencement of the 2023 school year. A review of the School's staffing levels to meet increased enrolments was undertaken in collaboration with all members of the Cheshire Team. The review resulted in a part-time leadership position being introduced, and the front of house administration role restructured to enable flexibility for classroom support.

As an interim specialist school, supporting and working with students with complex social, emotional, and behavioural challenges, a critical component of our curriculum delivery prioritises the implementation of a rigorous social and emotional learning program. In 2023, Cheshire School commenced implementation of its revised Respectful Relationships Program, a two-year rotating scope and sequence of teaching and learning underpinned by teaching and learning materials from *Resilience*, *Rights and Respectful Relationships* and *Bounce Back!*.

An application for the Federal Government's Schools Upgrade Fund, resulted in funding being received that has enabled additional technology to be purchased for the School's growing student population along with the provision of a shade sail that will be installed in the first half of 2024. The funding, which is aimed at improving and upgrading school facilities, to help keep students safe and to get their education back on track after the COVID-19 disruptions of the previous couple of years, enabled improvements to the School's educational amenities that would have otherwise not been possible.

Finally, in the latter part of the 2023 school year, Cheshire School received notification advising that VRQA had completed its assessment of the re-registration submission made by the School and was satisfied that it had demonstrated compliance with the minimum standards within the scope of the review. The School will be scheduled for its next VRQA review in 2027.

Sincerely



Kevin Browning
Head of School

bestchance

bestchance Child and Family Care is an independent not-for-profit organisation that has been providing support to children and families since 1895 in the eastern metropolitan region of Victoria. *bestchance* adopts an innovative and holistic approach to provide flexible, comprehensive and integrated services, within available resources, based on identified needs.

Cheshire School is one of the programs run by *bestchance*, and focuses on delivering an intervention program that facilitates the future development and learning of children with social, emotional and behavioural challenges. Its service to students and families is an integral component of *bestchance* and complementary to the other key priorities of early years, family support, children's therapy services and training opportunities.

bestchance Philosophy

The early years are the building blocks for later life. We recognise that children develop in the context of their families and that this needs to be the starting point for service delivery.

We provide an integrated environment that combines the elements of care, learning and laughter within childcare, kindergarten, early childhood intervention, primary education, child and family support and volunteer programs.

This philosophy is reflected in the following goals of Cheshire School:

- Each child is provided with an individualised program that is based on their needs, interests and wants.
- Each child is provided with positive and consistent guidance that promotes their self-esteem and confidence.
- The School is a safe, caring environment free from hazards.
- Children with additional needs are fully included in all programs.
- Diversity is embraced and celebrated.
- Educators treat all children and families equally and fairly.
- Educators not only identify any additional needs or barriers that children and/or their families may be facing but assist them in seeking support from other programs within *bestchance* or in the community.
- Families are encouraged to participate in their child's program and experiences.
- Educators work as a team, knowing and respecting each other's skills and strengths in order to provide the best care for each other.
- Educators are affirmed and encouraged to pursue professional development and further qualifications in order to continually improve the quality of the programs offered to children in their care.

Cheshire School Mission

By using contemporary research, evidence-informed practice and our team's expertise, we strive to fulfil every student's potential in a physically and emotionally safe learning environment. Through our program, students are empowered in their learning and transition back to the mainstream school system with renewed confidence.

Cheshire School Vision

Our vision is to be the leading provider in the specialist educational setting. We aim to be a centre of excellence committed to evidence-informed best practice in teaching students with social, emotional and behavioural issues, leveraging contemporary research to have a positive impact on families.

Our Aim: Why we exist?

To fulfil every student's potential so they can successfully transition back to a mainstream educational setting.

Our Values

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We see the potential in every student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student has an Individual Education Plan with clear learning and behavioural goals. • We have high expectations for every student. After every session students reflect on their engagement and receive positive feedback and guidance for improvement. • A Student Support Plan is designed for each student. It details tailored strategies to ensure that they are able to engage in their learning. • Rigorous initial assessment of each student's needs begins with observations in their current setting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We believe every student deserves to experience joy in their learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide an engaging and innovative learning experience, based on the Victorian Curriculum. • Students participate in a range of extra-curricular activities that help them to self-regulate. • Regular excursions and incursions linked to the Victorian Curriculum take our students beyond the core academic curriculum and further encourage each student to make deeper links with their learning. • We have a high staff to student ratio and so learning is modelled, scaffolded and supported.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We invest in caring and trusting partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our thorough intake process ensures we are the right program for families. • Our focus is building strong rapport when a student first starts at our School. • Our enrolment process clearly sets out the expectations for parents and carers and how we can support them during their child's journey. • To ensure the success of every student, we insist on all stakeholders being involved throughout the student's time at our School. • We hold regular parent and carer opportunities for collaboration throughout the term (formal and informal) to strengthen the parent/school partnership and improve student outcomes.

School Overview

Cheshire School is a small independent school which focuses on supporting students to be the very best version of themselves. Our location on the main site of *bestchance* in Glen Waverley, affords us the unique opportunity to establish strong connections with the organisation's Children's Therapy Services, a dedicated and expert team of allied health professionals who enable us to advocate a transdisciplinary perspective in the delivery of our "team around the child" approach.

As an interim specialist school, our aim is about reimagining a positive experience of school for our students, equipping them with the strategies and mindset that enables them to manage their social, emotional and behavioural challenges in ways that foster success when reintegrated within a mainstream school setting.

For many of our students and their families, Cheshire School affords an opportunity to step back from the cycle of disengagement, negative experiences of school to date, judgement and misunderstanding that can often result in students feeling isolated, low in self-confidence, and poor self-perception as learners and as an individual.

The team at Cheshire School are dedicated and passionate about their work. Through a trauma informed approach that is underpinned by evidence-based practice and collaboration, particular attention is given to knowing each and every one of our students, and to ensuring that a strong, engagement focussed partnership exists with all of our families.

At Cheshire School, our priority is always about the children in our care. We pride ourselves in providing a way of learning that is unique, that values the individual and their family, and acknowledges and celebrates success in all its forms through a learning environment that is positive, respectful and safe for all. By providing a stepping stone to success, we believe that we can enable every student the best chance to thrive and reach their individual potential.

Democratic Principles

The programs and teaching at Cheshire School support and promote the principles and practice of Australian Democracy, including a commitment to:

- Elected government
- The rule of law
- Equal rights for all before the law
- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of speech and association
- The values of openness and tolerance



Curriculum

Cheshire School provides an engaging and innovative learning experience, based on the Victorian Curriculum. The School adopts a two-year rolling program to support integrated, cross-curricular work.

Explicit teacher modelling, careful scaffolding, support and feedback at the point of need, underpin the commitment to every student making progress in their learning. Students quickly build on their small steps of success and acquire the characteristics of a successful learner.

In addition, each student has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with clear learning goals. This plan is reviewed every six months and shared with parents and carers. Students quickly learn to improve their resilience, self-motivation and confidence. They work towards improving their ability to build strong relationships and work collaboratively, before transitioning back into mainstream education.

Throughout the year, students have the opportunity to be involved in a range of different learning initiatives and activities such as soccer, gymnastics, movement/dance, swimming and music. The use of digital technologies is integrated across the curriculum to support the improvement of teaching and learning outcomes.

Class sizes are kept small with a maximum of 10 students per class, supported by one class teacher and two Education Support Officers. The high staff to student ratio allows us to offer a unique and personalised learning experience for every student.

Relationships are at the heart of great learning at Cheshire School. Staff work closely with parents and carers in order to establish a working partnership to quickly build a student's confidence. Cheshire School empowers students to make valuable contributions to the world around them.

Extracurricular Activities

During the 2023 school year, students had the chance to participate in a variety of educational visits and activities aimed at expanding their learning beyond the classroom and connecting them with the wider community.

Excursions included:

- Healesville Sanctuary
- Funtopia
- Werribee Zoo
- Twisted Science
- Bounce
- Markham Reserve
- Village Cinemas
- Scienceworks
- Treetops Adventure
- Virtual Reality

Incursions included:

- Gourmet Kids
- Toys through History
- Australian Animals – Black Snake
- Little Devils Circus
- First Aid in Schools Program



Other Programs:

- Swimming (Terms 1 & 4)
- Gymnastics Program

Standardised Assessments

All eligible students in Years 3 and 5 are provided the opportunity to undertake the annual NAPLAN assessments as per their entitlement.

Student Progress

Cheshire School is dedicated to student progress. Each student at Cheshire School has an Individual Education Plan. These plans ensure that learning goals are individually tailored and identify appropriate supports, strategies and interventions aimed at achieving success. Parents and carers, external specialists such as allied health professionals, and staff work collaboratively to determine students' needs and identify goal priorities. These are regularly reviewed with Student Support Group meetings held in Terms 1 and 3.

Over the course of the school year, our teachers continuously monitor student outcomes using various assessment strategies and tools. We collect and analyse both formative and summative data on a regular basis. Standardised testing provides numerical measurements of student growth, while the collection of student work and teacher observations offer ongoing formative assessments to track progress.

Twice a year, teachers also prepare formal reports to parents and students. These reports inform parents and students about their progress and achievement, specifically in relation to the Victorian Curriculum.

Cheshire School ensures that parents and carers have a clear understanding of their child's progress by providing end-of-period reports that demonstrate:

- Where their child is on the learning continuum;
- How well their child is progressing against expected levels of achievement and personalised learning goals; and
- Areas in which their child needs improvement and the next steps in their learning.

Student Attendance

The rate of attendance for the 2023 year as per the annual student attendance data was:

Prep	79.33%
Year 1	77.0%
Year 2	84.0%
Year 3	83.25%
Year 4	70.57%
Year 5	87.66%
Year 6	88.0%

Cheshire School complies with the *Australian Education Act (2013)* which requires children of school age to be in full-time attendance at school. Please see the information below for detail on the attendance policy.

- All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- Illness is reasonable grounds for absence.
- Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and are only absent if unwell or if absolutely necessary.
- Parents have a responsibility to provide a written note or telephone call to the School explaining why an absence has occurred.
- All student absences are recorded in both the morning and the afternoon by teachers.
- Government departments and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records.
- Unexplained absences are followed up as soon as practicable on the day of absence by the School Support Officer.



TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS	
Doctorate	0%
Masters	17%
Graduate	0%
Graduate Certificate	0%
Bachelor Degree	83%

Advanced Diploma	0%
No Qualifications Listed	0%

STAFF COMPOSITION	
Head of School (Headcount)	1
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	5
Teaching Staff (FTE)	3.6
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	9
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	8.0
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Staff Participation in Professional Development

During 2023, all staff continued to undertake significant professional learning to build and improve their own professional knowledge according to their specific areas of responsibility. Professional learning activities included, but were not limited to:

- Child Safety Training
- Attachment and Trauma Theory
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and First Aid in an Education or Early Years Setting
- Course in the Management of Asthma Risks and Emergencies in the Workplace
- Course in First Aid Management of Anaphylaxis
- Anaphylaxis Training
- Protecting Children: Mandatory Reporting (e-learning modules)
- Fire Wardens Roles and Responsibilities
- Information Sharing Training for Education Workforces
- Read, Write Inc. Facilitators Training

Child Safety

Cheshire School takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is fully committed to ensuring that its strategies, policies, procedures and practices meet all Child Safety Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 1359 (2022).

In 2023, Child Safety continued to be a priority focus area for the School as practices and procedures were strengthened in light of the new standards introduced in 2022. This included:

- Continuing the development and implementation and sustainability of child safety practices in the School;
- Ensuring all students, parents, employees, volunteers and contractors are provided appropriate support regarding child safety;
- Improving and sustaining an inclusive child safety culture in the School; and
- Monitoring and supporting policy implementation procedures and practices in relation to child safety.

Achievements

- All staff members included in the development and implementation of all aspects of the School's Child Safety strategy;
- The School ensured that all policies and procedures reflected the updated Child Safety principles;
- Safety strategies implemented and prioritised to ensure that children are safe and protected;
- Child Safety included as a standing agenda item for staff meetings;
- Matters of child safety regularly communicated to families through the school newsletter;
- Maintenance, updating and strengthening of risk management and risk register;
- Risk assessment processes for excursions and special events reviewed and refined;
- Emergency management procedures reviewed and practised; and
- Human Resource practices embedded to support Child Safe Standards

To further enhance staff involvement and participation in the School's Child Safety initiatives, professional development sessions have also been conducted with particular focus given to:

- Child Safety Standards legislative requirements;
- Mandatory reporting requirements;
- Reportable Conduct;
- Developing a culture of zero tolerance to child abuse across all aspects of the School's activities including the School's expectations for the implementation and ongoing management of Child Safety; and
- Understanding safeguarding practices for children with a disability.

Child Safe Commitment

Cheshire School is committed to providing a child-safe environment where children and young people feel safe and have their voices heard regarding decisions that affect their lives. Cheshire School prioritises the best interests of children and takes steps to protect them from harm. The School acknowledges its responsibilities in child protection and is dedicated to allocating necessary resources to comply with all relevant child protection laws and regulations. Robust policies and procedures are in place to foster a culture of child safety. Every member of the Cheshire School community is responsible for understanding their role in ensuring the wellbeing and safety of all children and prioritising it in every decision made.

Zero Tolerance to Child Abuse

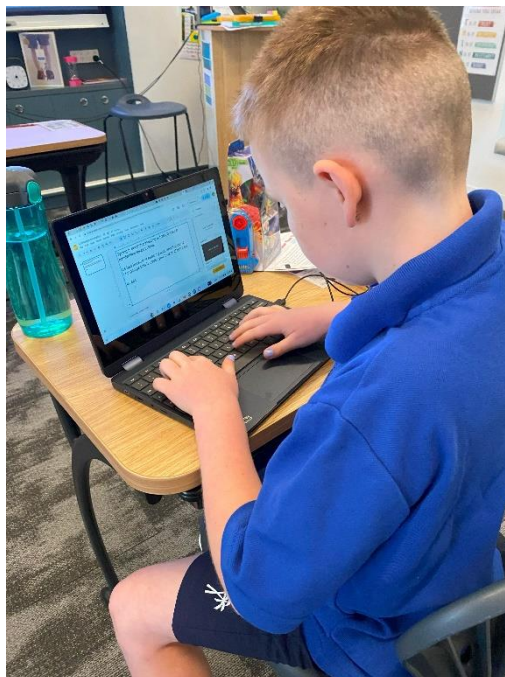
At Cheshire School, we have a strict policy of zero tolerance for child abuse. We recognize that children with complex social, emotional and behavioural challenges are particularly vulnerable, and it is essential to support them in communicating their needs and involving them in decisions that impact their lives. We value and respect our students' voices, understanding that their behaviour and actions are forms of communication. We are committed to assisting and supporting any children who disclose child abuse or are linked to suspected abuse.

In our school community, we promote diversity and tolerance. We welcome people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. Specifically, we:

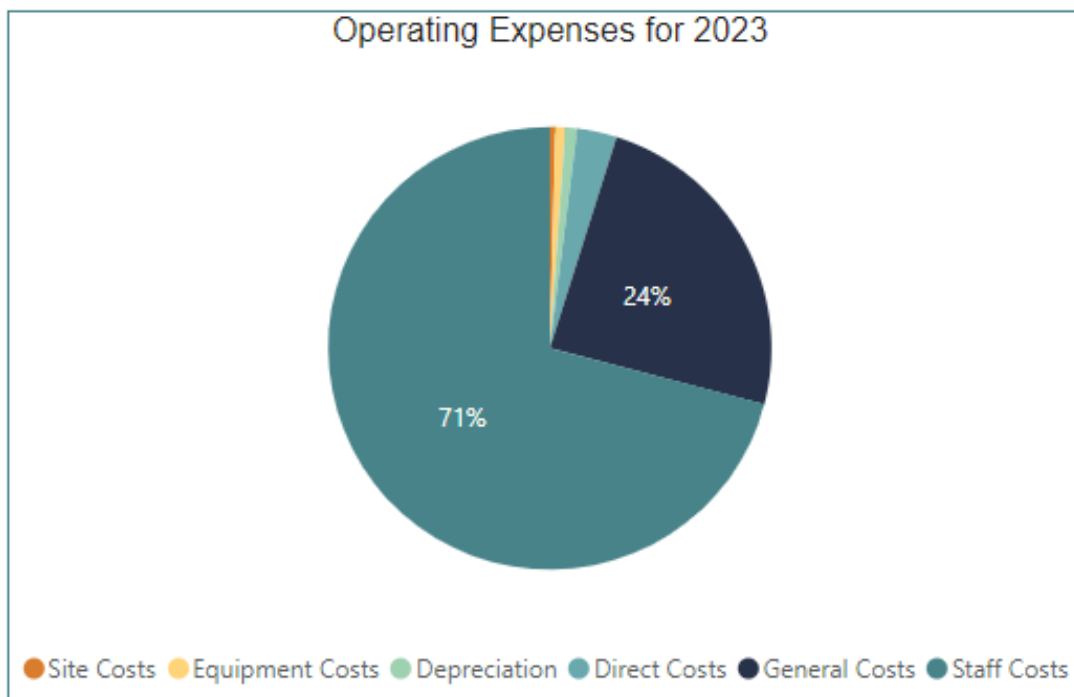
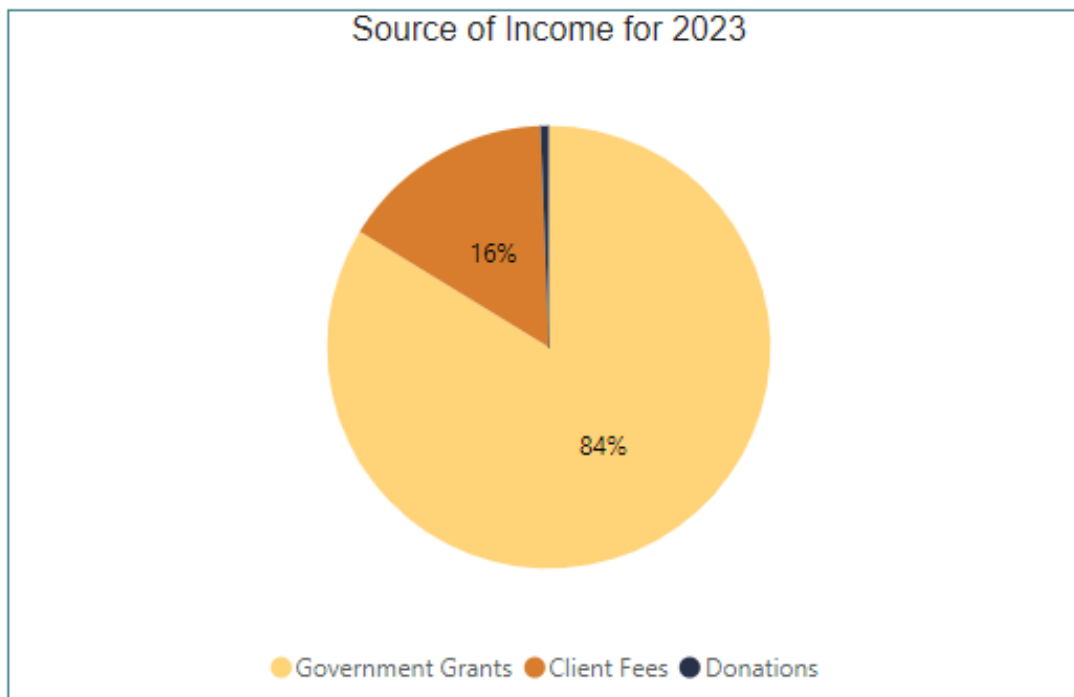
- promote the cultural safety, expression, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
- promote the cultural safety, expression, participation, and empowerment of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- ensure that children with disabilities are safe and can participate equally.

Families are provided with information on child safety matters and supported in understanding, identifying, discussing, and reporting such matters for the benefit of children.

Cheshire School has a zero-tolerance policy towards racism, gender bias, religious discrimination and disability, and any incidents of such will be addressed by the School.



Financial Operating Revenue and Expenses for Year Ending 2023



NOTE: The School's financial performance information has been provided to the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) and will be available for the community to access from their website at www.acnc.gov.au.

Distribution of the Annual Report

- A copy of the Annual Report is to be placed on the Victorian State Register.
- The report is made available to staff and parents within the school community.
- Copies made available to *bestchance* Board of Management.
- Copies to be made available on Cheshire School website.

Contact Information

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Company Information

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