

CHESHIRE SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2017

EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO SUCCEED

Cheshire School No: 1703

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bestchance

bestchance Child 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.

The Cheshire School is one of the programs run by bestchance, which focuses on delivering an intervention program that facilitates the future development and learning of children with challenging behaviours.

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 the service delivery.

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

This philosophy is reflected in the following goals:

- 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 skill 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

To provide a physically and emotionally safe environment where student's experience of themselves and school is positively transformed. Through a partnership between educators and parents, students and their families are empowered to make positive changes that will enable them to successfully return to a mainstream educational setting.

Cheshire School Vision

For the community:

The Cheshire School will contribute to the broader community by providing children and their families the skills and capabilities to achieve meaningful participation both now and into the future.

For the child:

The Cheshire School will contribute to children successfully engaging with and benefiting from educational opportunities, achieving improved knowledge and skills – and then enjoying optimal health, well-being, relationships and quality of life. We facilitate children and their families to create positive change that will allow them to successfully return to mainstream education.

These objectives are achieved through:

- A positive behavioural management program embedded within a highly engaging, fun and creative curriculum.
- Predictable consequences to reinforce desirable behaviours.
- Active encouragement of students to take responsibility for their actions.
- Parents supporting the behaviour management program, processes and policies of the school.
- Partnering with parents to work collaboratively toward identified goals.
- All stakeholders attending all reviews and meetings.
- A belief that students are able to achieve developmentally and socially appropriate behaviours.
- A belief that students can more successfully manage within a mainstream educational setting with the necessary practical, emotional and psychological tools.
- Assisting the students to set practical and achievable goals to change unhelpful behaviours.
- Working collaboratively with external service providers involved with a child or the family.
- Application of the Victorian Curriculum.

Democratic principles

The programs and teaching in The 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

Contextual information about the school, including the characteristics of the student body:

The Cheshire School provides a specialised minimum eighteen month intervention program to support children from Foundation through to Grade Five, who are unable to continue their education in a mainstream school due to significant social, emotional and behavioural problems.

The program is designed to support students and their families by providing them with a caring, supportive environment to identify the fundamental causes for a students' behaviour and to 'unlearn' these disruptive behaviours that may have become part of the child's coping mechanism. Most importantly, Cheshire gives students opportunities to learn skills and learn to identify and normalise their feelings of sadness, anger and frustration and express their emotions in a socially acceptable manner. Some of the issues the children have presented include Attention Deficit disorders (ADD, ADHD) Autism (ASD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Anxiety and Trauma related issues.

Teaching standards and qualifications

All teachers employed at the Cheshire School are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

Staff composition during 2017 was:

- 1 Full time Principal/Supervising Psychologist
- 1 Full time Senior Teacher/Assistant Principal
- 1 Full time Junior Teacher
- .6 EFT Educational and Developmental Psychologist
- .4 EFT Provisional Psychologist
- 2 Full time Education Training Specialists
- 2 Full time Education Training Specialists/Sports Coaches
- 1 Full time EFT Administration Assistant

No staff member was of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

Qualifications of staff employed in 2015:

David Greenwood: General Manager, Education and Training, B. of Arts (Training & Education), Certificate IV in Training & Assessment (TAA40104), Diploma of Management (BSB51107), MRGC.

Dr Kylie Jackson: Psychologist, B. of Applied Science (Disability Studies), B. of Applied Science (Hons) Disability Studies, M. of Psychology (Counselling), PhD, APS Board Approved Supervisor, First Aid.

Helen Barrett: Assistant Principal/ Senior Class Teacher (Year 3-4), B. of Arts (Hons) Business and Finance, B. of Arts (Hons) Humanities, English and Psychology, Postgraduate Certificate of Education, Primary 5-11 Years with QTS, First Aid.

Jessica Platt: Junior Class Teacher (Foundation- Year 2), B. of Arts (Hons) Primary Education with QTS, First Aid.

Angela North: Psychologist, B. of Arts. Psychology, Grad.Dip.App.Psych M.A.P.S.Cert. Clinical Play Therapy, APS Board Approved Supervisor and First Aid.

Andrew Garas: Provisional Psychologist, B. of Science, Psychology, Graduate Diploma of Psychological Science, Candidate – Master of Educational and Developmental Psychology/ Doctor of Philosophy, First Aid.

Darren Ball: Education Training Specialist, Cert. III & IV in Fitness, Cert. IV TAE, Cert III & IV in Sports Coaching, Level 3 First Aid, Martial Arts Therapy instructor (Level 3).

Cyril Jezek: Education Training Specialist, B. of Engineering (Architectural Engineering), First Aid.

Ainslie Lamb-McCallum: Teaching Aide, Cert. III, First Aid.

Fotini Chandler: Teaching Aide, Cert. III, First Aid.

2017 Professional Development activities

Various Professional Development activities were undertaken by staff in 2017 which included:

- Child Safety Awareness Training- Independent Schools Victoria.
- Protecting Children, Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations - Professional Learning Module.
- Follow basic food safety practices (HLTFSE001)
- Use hygienic practices or food safety (SITXFSA001)
- Provide an emergency first aid response in an education and care setting (HLTAID004)
- Provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation (HLTAID001)
- Verifying the Correct Use of Adrenaline Autoinjector Devices (22303VIC)
- Use hygienic practices or food safety (SITXFSA001)
- Resilient Kids Conference.
- Bestchance Educators' Professional Development Day Conference.
- Principles of Play Therapy.

Curriculum

The Cheshire curriculum is exciting, flexible and innovative. It involves explicit teaching of different strategies, teacher modelling and scaffolding. Students have clear learning intentions and success criteria. Class sizes are small with a maximum of 11 students and 3 staff per class. Teachers are there at the point of need and offer 1:1 support when required.

The current scope and sequence of integrated topics are categorised into 4 term units (two year rolling program) of work linked to the Victorian Curriculum and these incorporate science, history, humanities and civics and citizenship.

- Beyond Earth/Sharing Our Space
- Exploring and Discovering/Making Connections
- Survival and Natural Disasters/ Keeping the Balance
- Changing Lives/How the World Works

At The Cheshire School we develop learning units that encourage student wondering and questioning. This in turn leads to higher order thinking skills as students move through the process of inquiry to investigate and express their growing understandings. Children are supported to work independently, collaboratively. Fortnightly excursions linked to Victorian Curriculum take our students beyond the core academic curriculum and further encourage each student to make deeper links with their learning.

Relationships are at the heart of great learning at The Cheshire School. Our team work closely with parents to establish a working partnership and quickly build the confidence in every child. So that they feel empowered and they are able to make valuable contributions in the world around them.

Specialist programs from Foundation to Year 5 include Warrior Fitness, Gymnastics, Yoga, Soccer, GreenHat workshop, Mad Science, Road Safety, Music and Swimming.

Standardised Assessments

No students took the NAPLAN testing in 2017.

Student attendance:

The rates of attendance for the 2017 year as per the annual student attendance data was:

Foundation	83.75%
Year 1	92.75%
Year 2	85.80%
Year 3	90.56%
Year 4	94.50%
Year 5	97.5%

The Cheshire School complies with the Australian Education Act (2013) that 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.
- Staff will contact parents with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.

School Satisfaction

Student Satisfaction

Each student writes of their experience at different times during their program. Below are examples from students who were students in 2017.

1. What did you like the most about Cheshire?

"I like that the school encourages the students to behave in a different way, with things like rewards. The teachers are nicer because they treat me fairly".

2. What did you come to Cheshire for, and how have you improved since coming?

"I came to the school because of my behaviour. I used to be aggressive and get annoyed. A lot of my time was spent inside at lunchtime. Sometimes I would punch people. I am not like that now".

3. What am I looking forward to in my new school?

"I am not really sure and I feel a little neutral. There will be new people but I don't know them yet".

4. What are some of your favourite activities and excursions?

"I loved the indoor rock climbing, Bounce and the Yarra Valley Chocolaterie. My favourite subject is science. I like investigating".

5. A statement about Cheshire

"My other school didn't let me reach my full potential but this school lets me. I can change the world. I can change my life. This place is awesome".

Parent Satisfaction

In 2017, parents completed surveys which showed an overall satisfaction rating of 99%

Parent Comments

"The most amazing teachers, fantastic, life changing for us. We will be forever grateful to the Cheshire School and it's staff for the transformation in our son. Thank you. He has transitioned successfully and positively back into mainstream school. Thank you".

"It's been one amazing ride, that's for sure! We don't want to leave. Ever".

"Cheshire's true worth lies in its ability to help the children grow as people, not just as students".

"Thanks for understanding Josh's needs and celebrating his strengths. Thank you for using his special interests to engage and motivate him. Thanks for not punishing him for expressing his anxiety in ways that we cannot always understand. Thank you for accepting his difference. But most of all, thank you for bringing Josh back to us, happy of mind, body and soul'.

Staff Satisfaction:

In 2017 staff completed surveys which showed an overall satisfaction rating of 86.53 %.

Financial Activities

Financial reports are contained in the bestchance Annual Report 2016-2017, which is available on the bestchance website.

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 the Cheshire School website.

Contact Information

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