

CHESHIRE SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2014

EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO SUCCEED

Cheshire School No: 1703

583 Ferntree Gully Road, Glen Waverley, VIC 3150

Tel 03 8562 5100

Fax 03 8562 5111

www.bestchance.org.au



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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.

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 the Centre 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, wellbeing, 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:

- Use of school-wide cognitive-behavioural strategies targeted to each individual's needs.
- 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.
- Both parents 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 AusVELS National 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 twelve month intervention program to support children from prep through to grade six, 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 children and their families by providing them with a caring, supportive environment to identify the fundamental causes for a child's behaviour and to 'un-learn' these disruptive behaviours that may have become part of the child's coping mechanism. Most importantly, Cheshire gives children 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, ADHS) Autism/Aspergers, 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 2014 was:

- A full time team manager
- 3 full time teachers
- .5 EFT psychologist
- .2 EFT speech pathologist
- .6 EFT Education Training Specialist
- .2 EFT Administration Assistant

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

Qualifications of staff employed in 2014:

David Greenwood: General Manager, Education and Training, B. A (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.

Karen Tytler: Team Manager, B. App Science (Physiotherapy)

Jennifer Daverington: Junior Class Teacher (prep- 2), Dip. T., Grad. Dip. Sp. Ed.

Lisa Quattrocchi: Middle Class Teacher (3-4), B. Music, Dip.Ed. (Monash University) Qualified Teacher Status-Brunel University, UK

Amanda Emerson.: Senior Class Teacher (5-6), B.A. (Psychology) and B. Ed. (Primary).

Felicity Byrnes: Senior Class Teacher (5-6), Dip. T., Dip. HRM/IR, Cert IV Assessment and Training

Crystal Symons: Speech-Language Pathologist, Bach of Human Comm Sciences

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)

2014 Professional Development activities

Various Professional Development activities were undertaken by staff in 2014 which included:

- 2 day Autism Workshop: Lydia Meem "Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder: "Practical Strategies for Psychologists and School Counsellors."
- Supervision Masterclass: Monash University
- Expert Speaker at "The Impact of Family Violence on Children."
- Multilit: Professional Development training day
- Provide Emergency First Aid in an Education Setting HLTAID004
- Provide cardio/pulmonary resuscitation HLTAID00
- Course in Anaphylaxis Awareness 10313NAT
- Course in Emergency Asthma Management 10392NAT
- Working with children who have experienced complex trauma presented by Jessica Murphy.
- Currajong Conference 2014

Curriculum and Tuition

The 2014 Curriculum was based on integrated units and student reports to meet AusVELS Curriculum.

A feature of this was the continued refinement of Cheshire English and Mathematics profiles which were created the previous year, to provide all Cheshire teachers with the structure, materials and resources required to enable them to be accountable in covering each of the skills and understandings for each student, at their various developmental levels.

Each student has an assessment folder set up containing these Cheshire learning profiles as well as testing and work samples, behaviour management plans, Parent Support Goals and reports to track and illustrate their progress.

Cheshire conducted a remedial reading program supporting several individual students with literacy skills, resulting in tremendous 'catch up' progress.

The current scope and sequence of integrated topics were categorised into 4 term units of work

- Environment (Friends of the sea)
- Health and Wellbeing (Everybody)
- Communication (Showtime)
- Community (Marvellous Melbourne).

Although the unit outlines remain the same each year, with their own set of learning goals and understandings, new students enrol throughout the year. These are grouped, each with their various interests and personalities, which steers the direction of the learning and gives each year a unique flavour.

The Cheshire curriculum is exciting, flexible and innovative in order to engage even the most reluctant or oppositional student and motivates positive behavioural change by providing enticing rewards in the form of fortnightly excursions.

Highlights for Term1 include several opportunities for beach play, with student initiated activity at the water's edge and sand which allowed sensory exploration and an amazing opportunity for staff

to observe interactions such as risk taking, initiative, problem solving, creativity, cross age tutoring and co-operative group work. It concluded with a divine meditation lead by the Education Training Specialist on the foreshore; leaving our students in a state of peace following their day of activity.

Highlights for Term 2 were Gymnastics, traffic school/ bike day, Bounce and weekly cooking sessions. Two very special events were held encouraging students to show their love and appreciation for their supportive parents by giving them a Mother's Day pampering hand massage followed by afternoon tea and also running the wonderful Cheshire restaurant where students dressed as waiters, prepared and served their parents a magnificent 3 course meal.

The long trek to Westside circus school in Brunswick each week of Term 3 wasn't without it's challenges but families and friends rolled up for the spectacular concert, which also showcased our amazing African drumming finale, and will be forever memorable to those who came together to celebrate their child's effort and achievement, and made it all worthwhile.

In term 4, a favourite excursion for many of the students was having a yum cha lunch in Springvale, immersing themselves in the language, culture and traditions of China, displaying tolerance for differences and respect for all that other cultures have brought to Australia. The riverboat cruise and Eureka tower excursion was also a wonderful city experience, including a train and tram ride. The year ended with a block of summer swimming lessons, for the first time at the Waverley Aquatic Centre, which was fabulous in equipping our students with further skills, confidence and safety around water. An opportunity that many of our students have been unable to participate in at prior schools or out of school hours, due to their varying behaviour.

Standardised Assessments

All parents/guardians of eligible students opted out of NAPLAN testing in 2014.

Student attendance:

The rates of attendance for the 2014 year as per the annual student attendance data was:

- Prep to grade 2: 83%
- Grade 2 to grade 4: 85%.
- Grade 4 to grade 6: 84%

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 2014. Included is a graduation speech by one of the students.

1. What did you like the most about Cheshire?

“Excursions and Darren”

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

“Anger issues. I don’t hit people when they annoy me or are mean to me anymore. I don’t swear as much, I don’t punch people as much. I’ve also improved in my reading and writing and mass and maths. I used to be a level 3 reader and now I am a level 19 in reading. I’ve learnt how to write in lower case. I can add up much better now. I can add triple digits!”

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

“Good friends. Good behaviour. Playing on the playgrounds! They have 9!”

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

“Swimming, clown, school, gymnastics, martial arts and play time.”

5. A statement about Cheshire

“In Cheshire, I learnt to read, write, and control my anger. Cheshire is a place where people can be happy and learn.”

6. Graduation speech of 2014 student

“Good Morning Everyone! I’m sorry that I have to leave. I will miss all of my friends, most of all xxx. I hope that you have a good time here. I would like to thank all my teachers: Jenn, for helping me control my anger and helping me learn to read. Lisa: for helping me learn outside my class. Dr Kylie: for always helping me when I have a problem with someone. Darren: for helping me calm myself down when I was hurting people but didn’t want to. Thank you to my mum and dad. I love my mum and dad because they always support me for everything I do. Thank for helping me read, picking and dropping me from school, for loving me and taking care of me. “

Parent Satisfaction

In 2014 parents completed surveys which showed an overall satisfaction rating of 75%.

Grandparent Comment

“We should have more schools like Cheshire to support children with behavioural issue. Within 1yr. Our grandson went from a very aggressive, destructive little boy to learning how to control this behaviour. We are very grateful.”

Staff Satisfaction:

In 2014 staff completed surveys which showed an overall satisfaction rating of 80%.

Financial Activities

Financial reports are contained in the bestchance Annual Report 2013-2014, 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

Principal:

2014 Karen Tytler

2015 Dr Kylie Jackson

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