

CHESHIRE SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2015

EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO SUCCEED

Cheshire School No: 1743

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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 2015 was:

- .8 Principal/Supervising Psychologist
- 2 full time teachers
- .4 EFT Educational and Developmental Psychologist
- .6 full time Education Training Specialist
- .6 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. 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.

Vicki Cooper: Educational and Developmental Psychologist, B. of Social Work, Graduate Diploma of Psychology, M. of Psychology (Education and Developmental).

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

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

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).

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

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

2015 Professional Development activities

Various Professional Development activities were undertaken by staff in 2015 which included:

- 1 day workshop. Hawker Brownlow, Professional Learning Solutions, Bridges out of Poverty
- 1 day workshop. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Protecting the Safety of Children and Young People, Mandatory Reporting Professional Learning Module.
- 2 day workshop. Spectrum Speech Pathology, Social Thinking Masterclass Zooming in on Social Thinking
- 1 day workshop. Professor Tony Attwood, Understanding Autism, Spectrum Disorders.
- Supervision Masterclass: Monash University
- bestchance Training, Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- First Aid - Provide an emergency first aid response in an education and care setting (HLTAID004)

Curriculum and Tuition

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 8 students and 2 staff per class. Teachers are there at the point of need and offer 1:1 support when needed.

The current scope and sequence of integrated topics are categorised into 4 term units of work linked to AusVELS and these incorporate science, history, humanities and civics and citizenship.

- Environment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Communication
- Community

At Cheshire we develop inquiry-based 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 and collaboratively to investigate their own questions as well as those of their peers and teachers.

We link our inquiry units to a variety of excursions and incursions that involve hands on experiences and promote self-discovery.

Specialist programs from Prep to Year 4 include Warrior Fitness, Gymnastics, Yoga, African Drumming, Music and Swimming.

Standardised Assessments

One Year 3 student took part in NAPLAN testing in 2015.

Student attendance:

The rates of attendance for the 2015 year as per the annual student attendance data was:

- Prep: 93.86%
- Grade 1: 78.57%
- Grade 2: 90.32%
- Grade 3: 94.29%

- Grade 4: 94.72%
- Grade 5: 88.07%

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 2015. Included is a graduation speech by one of the students.

1. What did you like the most about Cheshire?

“Excursions and Maths”

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

“I came to Cheshire because I had anger management issues. I used to punch people at my old school. I have improved in how I deal with my anger. Having less people in the class and school has helped me. My teacher isn’t as strict and she helps me.”

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

“I am looking forward to making new friends and playing football with Gavin my new friend!”

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

“Bounce, and Puffing Billy. I like Poison Ball, and Warrior Fitness with Darren. I also like Literacy and Maths.”

5. A statement about Cheshire

“I think Cheshire is awesome.”

6. Graduation speech of 2015 student

“My name is Adam and the first time I went to school here at Cheshire, I was feverishly crying but Dad and Mum just kept driving me to school. It was a long way away along the Monash freeway. The second day I met the senior class and I have stayed with them for the last 12 months. They are all pretty nice and have become my friends. When I first started at Cheshire I was pretty scared because I didn’t know anyone and I was used to having my twin brother at school with me. When I started, it was hard for me to finish my work, and now it’s much easier especially maths.”

*Cheshire has taught me to work harder, keep my hands to myself and try to be patient. I can concentrate better and try to do what the teachers ask me to do - most times.
I would like to thank everyone here including my friends, and especially Kylie for coming to my old school and helping my Mum and Dad to get me to come to Cheshire.
Thank you Darren for teaching me Martial Arts and getting me up the 1000 steps.
Thank you to my teacher for teaching me a lot about eco-habitats and concentrating.
Thank you to my Mum for bringing me to school and my Dad for helping me with my homework.
I am a bit sad to be leaving Cheshire because I will miss all my friends.*

I am happy about my new school because my teacher is really nice and I get to play with my brother again and learn to play the keyboard.”

Parent Satisfaction

In 2015 parents completed surveys which showed an overall satisfaction rating of 82%. Comments received in response to the survey included “I am going to miss the support at Cheshire school”.

Staff Satisfaction:

In 2015 staff completed surveys which showed an overall satisfaction rating of 81%.

Financial Activities

Financial reports are contained in the bestchance Annual Report 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:

Dr Kylie Jackson

Company Information

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