

Cheshire School

bestchance

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Stepping Stones to Success

Cheshire School is a renowned specialist primary school for students with significant social, emotional and behavioural challenges. Through an evidence-based intervention program, our team of Teachers, Education Support Officers and allied health personnel partner closely with families to help students gain the skills and confidence needed to re-engage with learning and transition back into mainstream schooling.



Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	2
Contact Details	3
Minimum Standards Attestation	3
Statement from the Head of School.....	4
bestchance	5
bestchance Philosophy.....	5
Cheshire School Mission.....	5
Cheshire School Vision	6
Our Aim: Why we exist?	6
Our Values	6
School Overview	7
Democratic Principles	7
About our Program	7
Standardised Assessments	8
Student Progress.....	9
Parent Satisfaction.....	9
Staff Satisfaction.....	10
Staff Participation in Professional Development	11
Financial Activities	11
Distribution of the Annual Report.....	12
Contact Information.....	12
Company Information	12

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 Bunerong 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

ADDRESS	583 Ferntree Gully Road, Glen Waverley, VIC, 3150
HEAD OF SCHOOL	Kevin Browning
GOVERNING AUTHORITY	bestchance - Child and Family Care Services Mr Chris Chronis, Chief Executive Officer
TELEPHONE	(03) 9132 6320
EMAIL	kbrowning@bestchance.org.au
WEBSITE	www.bestchance.org.au/cheshire-school/

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 VRQA
- Australian Government accountability requirements related to the 2021 school year under the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)* and the *Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)*
- The Child Safe Standards prescribed in Ministerial Order No.870 – Child Safe Standards, Managing Risk of Child Abuse in School.

June 2022

Statement from the Head of School

More than anything else, more than expectations, passionate engagement or standards, teaching is about hope. Every child is the teacher's hope for the future. Education happens when hope exceeds expectation. Teaching is what makes the difference.

*Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan
What's Worth Fighting for in Education?*




The year of 2021 was in many respects simply an extension of the uncertainty and disruption experienced in 2020. COVID-19 continued to have deep and long-lasting impact on the way in which many schools were able to operate. The traditional paradigm of face-to-face teaching and learning continued to be interspersed with various models of remote learning. Whilst there were certainly students who thrived in this space, there were unfortunately many who did not. The challenges of navigating school online and having to develop greater learning independence amidst less physical support to help in understanding new concepts and learning new skills, whilst also losing out on valuable social connections and time with peers, had impacts on emotional wellbeing and mental health that we could not have foreseen.

For Cheshire, the decision to remain open and to maintain face-to-face operations for all students was an important one – one that was about providing continuity and stability amidst a broader world of uncertainty and unpredictability. It was a decision that was inherently about supporting our students in a way that we knew many schools could not. Our unique context afforded us an opportunity to maintain some normality when much of the wider world was unable to. – For this, deep thanks go to the staff for their united commitment to this agenda and for their unwavering dedication to always putting our students (and their families) front and centre.

2021 was also a year of change for the school as it underwent the process of significant organisational redesign, leadership change and staff turnover. Broader organisational visioning to reimagine a renewed model of specialist education delivery required new perspectives to be considered and a way of operating that was more clearly aligned both with the broader bestchance organisation and its strategic priorities. Whilst the transition was met with challenges, there is no doubt that a renewed energy, a strengthened culture and a deeply dedicated team of professionals, who are wholeheartedly committed to delivering excellence in its field, is evidenced today.

As we turn our eyes to 2022, there is indeed much to look forward to. The new facilities currently under construction will provide a new space for Cheshire to relocate and grow. The new school will enable enhanced opportunities for us to support and work with children and families of the Cheshire community and to utilise our new spaces in ways that are responsive to innovation and creativity. There is indeed great excitement as we now prepare to begin a new chapter in the story that is Cheshire School.



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 child care, 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 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

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. 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. 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. Every term starts with exploring the school values and students take part in a series of activities to build their trust, resilience and confidence. Our enrolment process clearly sets out the expectations for parents 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 our 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 fosters 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 of themselves as learners and as an individual.

The team at Cheshire are deeply dedicated and passionate about their work. Through an 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 partnership exists with all of our families, where connection and communication are fundamental.

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.

Our hope is for something better for all who pass through our doors. 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

About our Program

Cheshire School provides an interim specialist program that is specifically designed to help students gain the skills required to re-engage with learning and transition back into mainstream school.

Given this, particular focus is given to building those fundamental skills that sit as part of the Victorian Curriculum's Personal and Social Capabilities. Learning experiences are targeted at helping students engage in a range of opportunities that are aimed at:

- recognizing and regulating emotions
- developing empathy for others and understanding relationships
- establishing and building positive relationships
- making responsible decisions
- working effectively in teams
- handling challenging situations constructively and with resilience, and
- developing leadership skills

Underpinning the program, however, remains a strong focus and commitment to English and Mathematics along with integrated and inquiry units which provide a platform for students to also explore a range of concepts and topics that sit as part of their curriculum learning entitlement.

At Cheshire School, we develop learning units that encourage students 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. Students are supported to work independently as well as collaboratively. Fortnightly excursions 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.

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

Programs in 2021

During the 2021 school year, students were afforded opportunities to experience a broad range of incursions and excursions was significantly limited in comparison to normal years due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Excursions included:

- Karkarook Park & Little Devils Circus
- Sidetracked Entertainment Centre
- Yarra Valley Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery
- Funtopia
- Rush HQ
- Visits to various local parks

Incursions included:

- Black Snake Productions
- Mad Science

Other Programs:

- Swimming (Term 1)

Standardised Assessments

Eligible students in Years 3 and 5 are entitled to undertake the annual NAPLAN assessments. 2021 was the final year in which testing was paper-based.

Students also participated in Progressive Achievement Tests in May and November.

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 personnel, 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.

Student Attendance

The rates of attendance for the 2021 year as per the annual student attendance data was:

Prep	N/A
Year 1	86.33%
Year 2	95.25%
Year 3	91.56%
Year 4	91.83%
Year 5	89.40%
Year 6	N/A

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 Administration Officer.

Parent Satisfaction

Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and disruptions to the school year, the school and organisation did not complete parent surveys.

Positive comments were received from parents because of Cheshire School's commitment to operating during restrictions.

Staff Satisfaction

In 2021, all employees across *bestchance* were invited to participate in the *bestchance* Staff Engagement Survey. The survey was based on the Voice Engagement Model, which identifies the drivers of three organisational outcomes:

- **Engagement** - measuring the overall job satisfaction of staff and their commitment to the organisation;
- **Wellbeing** - measuring the emotional wellness of staff at work, and their ability to successfully manage job stress; and
- **Progress** - measuring staff perceptions about current organisational performance and optimism about the future.

Survey results for Cheshire indicated higher than the organisation wide results for all three organisational outcomes, with engagement and wellbeing being significantly higher by 24%.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS	
Doctorate	0%
Masters	25%
Graduate	0%
Graduate Certificate	0%
Bachelor Degree	75%

Advanced Diploma	0%
No Qualifications Listed	0%

STAFF COMPOSITION	
Head of School (Headcount)	1
Teaching Staff (Headcount)	4
Teaching Staff (FTE)	3.6
Non-Teaching Staff (Headcount)	9
Non-Teaching Staff (FTE)	5.8
Indigenous Teaching Staff (Headcount)	0

Staff Participation in Professional Development

During 2021, 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:

- Team Teach Training
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and First Aid in an Education or Early Years Setting
- Protecting Children: Mandatory Reporting (e-learning modules)
- NAPLAN School Readiness 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. 870 (2015).

Ministerial Order No. 870 sets out the specific actions that registered schools need to take to meet the child safe standards. The Ministerial Order places accountability for managing the risk of child abuse with school governing authorities. The Child Safe Standards came into effect for all Victorian schools on 1 August 2016 whereby a new minimum standard for school registration required schools to meet the requirements of the Ministerial Order.

As of 1 July 2017, all Victorian school principals are required to bring allegations of reportable conduct by employees to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). The Reportable Conduct Scheme complements the Child Safe Standards and other existing child safety measures. School Principals are required to:

- report any allegations of misconduct that may include reportable conduct to the CCYP within three days of becoming aware of the allegation; and
- notify the CCYP of all allegations of conduct that may involve reportable conduct by employees, contractors, volunteers and allied health staff.

The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not change mandatory reporting and other reporting obligations. Victoria Police must be contacted if they suspect a criminal offence has occurred involving a child. Principals' responsibilities to manage employee misconduct will not change. The Reportable Conduct Scheme will require schools and other organisations to respond to allegations of child-related misconduct made against their workers and volunteers and report those allegations to the Commission for Children and Young People.

Financial Activities

Financial reports are contained in the *bestchance* Annual Report 2020-2021, which is available on the *bestchance* website.



NOTE: The School's financial performance information has been provided to the Australian Charities and Not-forprofits 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

Head of School: Mr Kevin Browning
 Telephone: 0409 727 154
cheshireschool@bestchance.org.au

Company Information

Cheshire School Reg. No: 1743
 583 Ferntree Gully Road, Glen Waverley, VIC 3150
 Tel 03 9132 6320
www.bestchance.org.au