

Red Cross Primary School

The Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital
In partnership with The Foschini Group
and the Western Cape Education Department

Introduction to the Red Cross Primary School

The Red Cross Children's Hospital Primary School and the Therapeutic Learning Centre (TLC) based at the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Department is registered with the Western Cape Department of Education as a Special Needs School and is also governed by a School Governing Body.

The school caters for patients admitted to the Hospital for any length of time irrespective of their physical and emotional difficulty and follows the National CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements) curriculum, but adapts it where necessary to meet the needs of the individual.



Red Cross hospital Primary school aims to provide the patients with the best possible educational opportunities to empower the children with the skills and knowledge to be able to be reintegrated back into their "home" school. Each learner is assessed according to his/her ability and the school provides a very nurturing atmosphere for all learners/patients. The admission into hospital might be the first time the child has been exposed to any schooling. This creates an opportunity to foster a culture of learning in a stress free environment.

Patient Story : Aloshay - “I’d like to be a doctor when i grow up”

These are the words of 10-year-old Aloshay Arendse of Kraaifontein, Cape Town, who together with the unwavering support of her mom, Candice, has survived against all odds and today pursues her education so she can reach her dreams. Soon after birth, Candice was struggling to bond with Aloshay who was constantly crying despite being cared for in the best possible. Candice had Aloshay assessed at a private clinic where she was diagnosed with jaundice and an abnormally enlarged spleen. They were referred to Tygerberg Hospital for treatment where doctors detected Biliary Atresia, a condition where the bowel duct is underdeveloped, preventing bile from draining out of the liver. At the time of her diagnosis, Aloshay’s liver had already hardened and unfortunately, she missed the window for a corrective procedure known as a Kasai Procedure. As a result, she required a liver transplant.

Thankfully a suitable organ donor was found and the transplant took place. Just as Candice breathed a sigh of relief, Aloshay was further diagnosed with Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis (HLH), a severe systemic inflammatory syndrome treated through chemotherapy. By the time Aloshay reached 5-years-old, doctors discovered that she was also suffering from kidney failure. Added to that, due to the medical interventions she survived over the years, Aloshay had lost her hearing and was only able to communicate via lip reading, resulting in her being three years behind normal childhood speech for her age. To address the hearing impairment, Aloshay received a cochlear implantation and was then enrolled at Carel Du Toit School which provides support and learning for children with hearing disabilities. Despite all of this, Candice did not give up hope and was comforted and assured by the specialist medical team and passionate staff at Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital, who had walked this long journey with them.

Aloshay was absent from school quite often as she required frequent hospital visits, but thanks to the Red Cross School, she was able to continue her learning while being treated at the Hospital.



“We tell the loved ones of patients, don’t lose hope - hope for recovery and hope for a child’s bright future”, said Michelle xxx, xxx at Red Cross Primary.

As Aloshay approached the end of foundation phase education, Candice wanted to integrate her into a mainstream school. With Michelle’s guidance, they were able to enrol Aloshay into Paarl Primary School where she would receive individual attention.

When Aloshay spends time in Hospital, Michelle corresponds closely with her teachers at Paarl Primary School to ensure that she is always up to date with her school work. Inspired by the medical staff who have cared for her over the years, Aloshay wants to become a doctor when she grows up.

Red Cross Primary School learning/teaching areas

School Teaching

The educators work very closely and are considered an integral part of the multi-disciplinary team. The children often come from schools where there are very large classes. The school provides them with the opportunity to remediate problems. The children leave our school with a very positive experience and are encouraged and eager to continue their learning process. Many children experience a new perspective to schooling.

Swimming

Swimming lessons are regarded as an integral part of the behavioural modification programme at the TLC. The children eagerly await the weekly lessons and it is viewed as an important reward for hard work during the week. In addition, the lessons provide an enjoyable and fun way for children to gain self-confidence, master new skills and the opportunity to overcome fears.

Art

The children in the Hospital as well as the TLC have art sessions once a week. The children are taught how to express themselves in the different media and to develop their creativity. The children eagerly look forward to their Art sessions with teachers who are sensitive to their needs. Art has provided children with the opportunity to release their emotions through creative expression. Children are given the opportunity to talk through their drawings and their paintings. This in turn aids the healing process. Two art sessions take place a week, one at TLC and one at the hospital classroom. Art classes include around 20 children a week for both.

Yoga

Yoga sessions take place once a week at the TLC and around 6 children attend a session at a time. The sessions have shown that yoga practice is a relatively low-risk, high-yield approach to improving overall health. A variety of relaxation techniques are taught and these encourage mindful ways of reducing stress. The skills can also be used outside of the class and enable stressful situations to be managed more positively.

The TLC classroom -a glimpse into the educator's day

I started teaching at the TLC in July 2012. My role is to ensure that the children continue with their academic curriculum while they attend the in-patient Therapeutic Programme. It involves working with a multi-disciplinary team to foster the emotional, social and mental health wellbeing of the children.

I work very closely with the school and the Education Department to ensure that the children are able to bridge successfully to their schools when they are discharged from the programme. My job also entails administering diagnostic tests, remediating learning difficulties and compiling learning support plans to cater for the individual needs of each learner. Each child has specific goals and objectives which we incorporate into our daily programme. It is very gratifying to experience the progress of the child and the family as they start to become actively involved in the programme.

I find my work extremely rewarding and interesting as every day is different with new challenges and experiences.



The Foschini Group (TFG) Funding

For the Red Cross Primary School to successfully operate, The Foschini Group generously contributed a total of **R150 000** to fund the following needs at the school.

- **2 x Classroom Assistants (Teachers)**
- **2 x Art Therapist**
- **1 x Yoga Teacher**
- **1 x Swimming Teacher**
- **1 x Social Worker**
- **1 x Auditor & Accounts administrator**

This investment in education has helped at least 1,600 patients per year receive the best possible education while in hospital.

Funding spent thus far has been used on the art therapists, yoga teacher and contribution towards classroom assistants. A maths tutor has not been required as yet so the funding has been added to the amount allocated towards the classroom assistants as well as the swimming therapy teacher (in the summer season).

Additionally, refurbishing of the preprimary completed in July 2019. The refurbishments consisted of new flooring for the classroom, roller blinds for the windows, fitting a new basin and cupboard and painting the classroom.

Financial Overview (Jan - Dec 2019)

Item	Actual Year to date Jan - Dec 2019
Art Therapists x 2	R 19 500
Classroom Assistants (Teachers x 2)	R 170 987
Auditor and Accounts	R 18 299
Yoga Teacher	R 3 410
Swimming Teacher	R 1 920
Social Worker	R 7 350
Total	R 221 466

Item	Completed Refurbishments
Uplift existing vinyl flooring and replace with Woodlands Limewash Pine flooring	R12 204
PVC Roller Blinds - Windows	R3 133
Painting, supply basin and cupboard	R14 621
Total	R29 958

Total project spend for 2019 amounted to R251 424



**Western Cape
Government**

Education

Progress

The Red Cross Children's Hospital School has definitely seen an increase in the number of children seen. The duration of hospital stays has also increased. The school has forged links with The Learning Support Coordinator in the District who has assisted when having to deal with uncooperative schools or parents. We have worked (with the support of the medical team) to get assessment accommodations for the hospital patients as well as those who are on dialysis (3 X per week) in order that they can write their assessments and do not miss out or fall too far behind.

How the Project is communicated

The school and all teaching staff have an excellent relationship with the medical staff of the hospital. The teaching staff are in the wards everyday and the doctors/nurses also refer patients to the school. There is no need to market the school amongst the medical team. The medical teams consider the educators as playing a vital role in the "treatment" of the patient.

Challenges

The parents are often not very transparent with the school team. This often creates delays as time is spent pursuing "useless information." The parents are also sometimes uncooperative when asked to collect the school work. The "home school" fails to return phone calls and is reluctant to communicate with the school in assisting their pupils. In some cases the child has never had formal schooling before. We then liaise with social work to assist the parents in enrolling the child at a school. More cases of children requiring haemodialysis have been noted. Haemodialysis requires patients to visit the hospital three times per week which is very disrupting to children's regular schooling at home.

Measures to mitigate these challenges

Constant communication with medical staff is vital for gaining their full support. Medical staff often assist by writing necessary motivations to either the schools or Department of Education when needed. Liaising with the learning support coordinator as well as the Circuit Manager helps when schools are unsupportive.



Conclusion

The Red Cross Children's Hospital Primary School has continued to make a difference to approximately 1,600 children annually. Your support has enabled the school to employ 2 Art Therapists, 2 Classroom Assistants, a therapeutic Yoga and Swimming teacher as well as a social worker and an Auditor & Accounts employee for 2019.

Thank you so much for your generous and ongoing generous and influential support.

Thank You !



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