

Aiming for education excellence



Kylee Owen, Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT) at Chatham High School.

By Sarah Parker

KYLEE Owen is six months into her role as a Highly Accomplished Teacher at Chatham High School, and is thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to make a difference.

Highly Accomplished Teachers (HATs) provide mentoring and program support for teachers with a focus on improving student outcomes within their allocated school and also within their community of schools.

As the name suggests, teachers appointed to the position have a high level of teaching experience and a demonstrated ability to improve student outcomes.

"I have been teaching History, Society & Culture and Drama for 16 years. Many of those years were spent at Bulahdelah Central School and I also spent time (three terms) working in the district office at Forster as a regional literacy consultant," Kylee said.

Of the 100 HATs working in schools around Australia, 50 of those are specifically appointed to schools which have been named as Centres for Excellence.

Chatham High School was identified as a CFE this year in

recognition of their high quality teaching and learning environment and their willingness to build upon their achievements for the benefit of surrounding schools.

"Everything I do as a HAT is focused around the goals of the Centre For Excellence program. It is a two year program designed to reward and promote teacher quality within the school and also within our community of schools.

"This is a real opportunity for us to further develop the great learning environment that we have here and to share it with others.

"We have many wonderful teachers who work extremely hard and so we are grateful for the extra funding and support that being a Centre For Excellence provides," Kylee said.

Kylee noted that teaching is a dynamic yet demanding profession that ideally involves high levels of peer support and mentoring - particularly for new-scheme teachers.

"We have 15 new-scheme teachers at Chatham High School and so far this year we have had

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From page 7

six pre-service teachers doing their practicum here. The demands placed on newly graduated teachers can be quite daunting and they need a high level of support to comfortably develop their knowledge and experience.

“Another strong focus for us is the important transition from primary to high school. We work closely with our team of partner schools: Chatham, Cundletown, Lansdowne, Upper Lansdowne, Cooperbrook, Harrington, Crowdy Head and Manning Gardens public schools, to assist students during this important time in their schooling.

“In September a group of year six students will travel with a parent down to Newcastle University as part of our ‘Aim High’ program. This program, which was offered to us through our partnership with Newcastle University, is designed to inspire young students by exposing them to the variety of career options available through university study.

“We work closely with our partner schools and

share staff development resources. There is a strong focus on building relationships and also incorporating technology into our learning programs where ever possible.

“The kids who are coming through today are so advanced when it comes to digital literacy that it is important for staff to keep up with the demands of the technological age.

“We have used some of our additional funding to employ an operational para professional in technology - Melissa Barry.

“She works within our community of schools and supports teachers and students to effectively incorporate information technology within the classroom and across the board.

“This is an exciting time for Chatham High School. To be a Centre for Excellence is such a wonderful opportunity that will not only benefit our school but also our partner schools.

“The extra funding and support is making a significant difference to the learning of our students,” Kylee said.