

CHESSE MOVES FOR LIFE

THE VISION

The educational benefits of a chess in schools programme are well-known. Less well-known, but no less important are the social benefits and the health benefits. A detailed outline of these benefits is at the end of this document.

The main objective of the Chess Moves for Life charity (MFL) will be to introduce chess to as many children in Ireland as possible. Ultimately, the aim is that every child in Ireland should receive at least four years of chess education.

Chess Moves for Life - Children for Tomorrow

Taking chess to children, to make them better socially adjusted, more intelligent, healthier human beings, growing into young adults well-prepared for the Knowledge Society of the 21st Century.

Chess Moves for Life will have several subsidiary objectives, all of which are aimed at highlighting the value of, and assisting the development of the primary objective. Such subsidiary objectives will involve introducing chess to the wider community, especially the socially deprived and senior citizens.

The current position is that a steering committee has been established, with the blessing of the Irish Chess Union (ICU – the governing body for chess in Ireland). The ICU would also have provided its backing, if only it had some resources.

The steering committee members are April Cronin, Barbara Magee, Darko Polimac, John Alfred, Kevin O’Connell and Rory Delaney.

The task of the committee is to bring about the creation of MFL as a charitable body (trust or company? Almost certainly a company).

CHESSE MOVES FOR LIFE – THE CHARITY

The following are the main steps in establishing a philanthropic organisation:

- * Choosing a legal form (trust or company);
- * Drawing up of governing document defining charitable purposes;
- * Drawing up a Statement of Activities and a Financial Statement;
- * Appointment of trustees (trust) or directors (company);
- * Providing details of proposed activity, including governing documents, Statement of Activities and Financial Statement to the Revenue Commissioners when seeking tax exempt status;
- * In the case of a company, the company is incorporated;
- * Application for a tax registration number which is then submitted to the Charities Section of the Revenue Commissioners;
- * The Revenue Commissioners issue the company or trust with its charity number (the CHY number).

TIMELINE

2011

- steering committee appointed with ICU blessing
- draft implementation plan
- establish a Project Leader for each task
- Project Leaders make contact with relevant external individuals and organizations
- proceed with first stages of setting up the charity
- arrange meeting with a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Education
- establish Chess Moves for Life with its Board of Directors
- meet said senior civil servant to discuss the way forward (2 trials – Limerick & Dublin?)

2012

- trials commence in Limerick & Dublin
- meeting(s) with Ministry of Education to discuss initial progress of trials and their expansion

2013

- MFL, with backing from FIDE's Chess in Schools Commission, and support from the Ministry of Education goes nationwide, adding 1000 schools each year

2014

- chess in at least 2000 schools in Ireland, including at least 600 Secondary schools
- 3000 chess teachers (2/3 or more in secondary schools)
- 60000 pupils learning and playing chess (target: half in secondary schools)

THE BENEFITS

Chess is a powerful aid to raising educational standards, not only in mathematics, but also of literacy, as witnessed by studies carried out all over the world.

It has also become known as a tool to prise the socially deprived young out of a downward spiral of drugs and violence. Projects in Harlem and the Bronx stand out.

A handful of studies now show long-term benefits to health. Many senior citizens suffering from Alzheimer's show significant improvement in their condition if they play chess regularly. There is even some evidence that lifelong chess players are many times less likely to suffer from Alzheimer's in the first place. Prevention is better than cure – another argument for chess in schools.

All stakeholders benefit:

- Individuals – chess gives the young a learning tool for life and has clear health benefits.
- Schools – higher achievement, especially in maths, and fewer social problems.
- Government and society - more intelligent generations, better adapted for a knowledge-based society; less pressure on social services; better health, especially among the elderly.
- sponsors – chess has an excellent corporate image with powerful associations of intelligence and sophistication, an extremely rich heritage and interesting connections with art, music and science, but currently lacks a sufficiently broad base to excite sponsors.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF CHESS

The educational benefits of chess are many and varied. They are well documented by a large body of research papers from around the world.

There is so much evidence, that it is easy to miss the wood for the trees, therefore this document is intentionally brief. If detailed evidence is required, please refer to the sources and links cited below.

Presidents of Cuba and the United States agree:

“Playing chess helps students develop thinking and analyzing skills, concentration, greater self-control and self-confidence ...

We have hard evidence that chess in the schools works.”

- William Jefferson Clinton

"El ajedrez debe formar parte del programa escolar." - Fidel Castro Ruiz

The most frequently cited general benefits include the development of:

- Cognitive abilities, such as attention, memory, and logical thinking; essential skills for the development of the individual.
- Creativity, through problem solving.
- Critical thinking, improving the ability to assess strengths and weaknesses, establish value judgments and make decisions.
- Ethical sense. Improvements in attitude and general behaviour are often noted.

Specific benefits that are often mentioned include:

- Focusing - Children are taught the benefits of observing carefully and concentrating. If they don't watch what is happening, they can't respond to it, no matter how smart they are.
- Visualizing - Children are prompted to imagine a sequence of actions before it happens. We actually strengthen the ability to visualize by training them to shift the pieces in their mind, first one, then several moves ahead.
- Thinking Ahead - Children are taught to think first, then act. They learn to ask themselves "If I do this, what might happen then, and how can I respond?" Over time, chess helps develop patience and thoughtfulness.
- Weighing Options - Children are taught that they don't have to do the first thing that pops into their mind. They learn to identify alternatives and consider the pros and cons of various actions.
- Analysing Concretely - Children learn to evaluate the results of specific actions and sequences. Does this sequence help me or hurt me? Decisions are better when guided by logic, rather than impulse.

- Thinking Abstractly - Children are taught to step back periodically from details and consider the bigger picture. They also learn to take patterns used in one context and apply them to different, but related situations.
- Planning - Children are taught to develop longer range goals and take steps toward bringing them about. They are also taught of the need to reevaluate their plans as new developments change the situation.
- Juggling Multiple Considerations Simultaneously -Children are encouraged not to become overly absorbed in any one consideration, but to try to weigh various factors all at once.

“the main benefit being that it contributes to the development of strategic thinking as well as concentration, analytical skills and problem solving.”

– His Excellency President Jacob Zuma

Ministries of Education around the world have been convinced.

In 2005, the Turkish Ministry of Education commenced a plan to teach chess to all primary school children, with the objective of making them more intelligent and better citizens. The Turkish Chess Federation, under its President (and Chairman of FIDE's Chess in Schools Commission), Ali Nihat Yazici, has trained 40,000 teachers and about 2,000,000 children are now learning chess.

This year's budget for New York City's Chess-in-the-Schools programme is \$3,200,000. It is noted for its achievements in raising educational standards and improving socialization in inner-city schools in the Bronx and in Harlem.

The government of South Africa is the latest to announce a major programme.



President Zuma said:

In summary, the benefits that accumulate from the teaching and promotion of chess in schools include the following:

- 1. The game teaches patience. You have to give the opponent time and space to think and make his or her own move.*
 - 2. It teaches that a decision must be an outcome of a serious thought process.*
 - 3. Chess teaches discipline, for example as chess players would know, “touch is a move”. When you touch, you must move, you have to be disciplined.*
 - 4. Chess teaches fairness. You alert the opponent before you strike, and keep them informed of your moves and intentions.*
- *His Excellency President Jacob Zuma, December 2010.*

The Education Ministries of Israel, Thailand and Vietnam are all preparing to implement a programme later this year.

Numerous colloquiums have taken place in the past few years, for example:

Chess in the Schools and Communities Conference, Aberdeen University 2007

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/rowangroup/ciscon.shtml>

Chess, a game to grow up with, Turin 2009

http://www.turinchessinschools.com/en_presentazione.php

Chess as an innovative school subject in the education system, Moscow 2010

http://www.moscowchessopen.ru/scientific_conference/resolution_eng.php

El ajedrez, es una herramienta fundamental, Mexico City, November 2010

<http://www.ajedrezunam.mx/contenido/paralelas-coloquio.htm>

The bibliographical references within the following works refer to many hundreds of books and papers.

Ferguson, R. (1995). *Chess in Education Research Summary.*

O'Connell, K.J. (1997). *Sport and Education: transferability of skills, an in-depth examination of chess.*

Blanco, U. (1998). “¿Por qué el ajedrez en las escuelas?. [Chairman of FIDE Chess in Schools Commission 2006-2010]

Noir, M. (2002). *Le Développement des habiletés cognitives de l'enfant par la pratique du jeu d'échecs.* [492pp, doctoral thesis]

Forrest et.al. (2005). *Chess Development in Aberdeen's Primary Schools: a study of literacy and social capital.*

Laplaza, J. (2006). *Cuando hablamos de ajedrez escolar queremos decir...*

McDonald, P.S. (2005, 2006) *The Benefits of Chess in Education, a collection of studies and papers on chess in education.* [104pp, a kind of meta-analysis]

HEALTH BENEFITS OF CHESS

An increasing amount of attention is being paid to the health benefits of chess. These are mostly quite recent discoveries and point to the great value of learning chess during childhood since it seems to confer health benefits almost from the cradle to the grave. They can be summarized as:

- Chess leads to an improvement in cognitive functioning and has been cited as a significant tool in the fight against Alzheimer's.
- Chess can help patients who have suffered from stroke to recover.
- Chess assists recovery in people suffering from physical and emotional disability.
- Chess helps to prevent anxiety and depression by encouraging self improvement, improving self esteem and self confidence. By contrast, excessive time spent on activities that do not challenge the brain, particularly tv watching, has been linked to an increased incidence of depression.
- Chess (as recreational therapy) helps prevent or reduce non-adaptive or inappropriate behaviour.

Most attention is being paid to the value of chess in the fight against Alzheimer's which blights the lives of 35 million people and their families.

It has long been known that chess improves attention, memory, organization skills and perception. It improves the ability of cognitive-impaired individuals to work on issues related to orientation, sensory stimulation and environmental awareness.

Some aspects of age-related cognitive decline begin in healthy educated adults when they are in their 20s and 30s (Salthouse 2009). These declines may seem relatively minor compared with problems that may appear later in life such as Alzheimer's disease and dementia, but just as it's never too early to adopt a healthy lifestyle, it makes sense to take care of our brains now rather than waiting until there has been a serious decline.

Research, mostly in the USA and Spain, among those over the age of 60, has demonstrated the value of chess in combating Alzheimer's, especially the work of Dr Lainez Andres (2006) in Valencia. A collaborative Franco-Russian research effort began recently (December 2010) between the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire of Nice, led by Professor Philippe Robert and Prof. Vladimir Zakharov's team from the Moscow State Medical University.

Salthouse (2009) *Neurobiology of Aging*

Wilson et al. (2007) *Neurology*

Archer et al. (2005) *Neurocase*

Vergheze et al. (2003) *New England Journal of Medicine*

SOCIAL BENEFITS OF CHESS

Frequently closely allied to the educational benefits, these include:

- reduced delinquency
- reduced drug use
- improved ethical sense
- improved discipline
- improved sense of fairness
- integration of minorities
- improved social mobility

Reductions in delinquency and in drug use have been noted particularly by the Chess-in-the-Schools programme (mostly in The Bronx and Harlem) and by Orrin Hudson's "Be Someone" programme, with its emphasis on learning "life lessons", both in the USA.

Schools chess programmes in many countries have reported improvements in attitude and general behaviour ("ethical sense").

President Zuma spoke of chess teaching discipline and fairness. Both of these benefits have also been noted in work with prison inmates (see, for example, the work carried out in Almeria, Spain).

A project in Denmark has the goal of creating lasting change and improvement in the lives of youngsters with a minority background. Dansk Skoleskak uses school chess clubs not only as a gateway to community activities for the children and their parents – but also as a stepping stone towards involvement in other kinds of social activities such as sports and voluntary social work.

Chess has a reputation as a catalyst of social mobility. For me (Kevin O'Connell) it was a case of "seeing is believing." In 1988 a ten-year-old boy I was coaching was functionally illiterate. His family had a very low income, they lived in social housing and he attended the local "sink" school. His future was not bright, but he loved chess and wanted to play in tournaments, so he needed to be able to notate his games. He wanted to push for a place in the National Junior Squad, so he needed to read chess literature. Therefore, he taught himself to read and write. His school work improved so much that he gained a place at the best secondary school in the area. The last I heard, he had passed his final school exams with flying colours and was off to university.

There are tens of thousands other such examples worldwide and, hopefully, hundreds of thousands or even millions to follow.

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Attachments		
Questionnaire	Socially deprived push pawns not drugs	Previous main document: 2010 1124
Charities Act - Burke	Charities Act - Hayes	Charity FAQs