

WIDCOMBE ACORNS PLAYGROUP

England & Wales · Charity number 1029494

Details

Other names	WIDCOMBE PLAYGROUP, Widcombe Acorns Pre-school
Status	Registered
Legal form	Other
Registered	1993-11-30
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	St. Marks Community Centre St. Marks Road Bath BA2 4PA
Phone	01225445446
Email	office@widcombeacorns.co.uk
Website	www.widcombeacorns.co.uk

Activities

Objects: TO ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN UNDER STATUTORY SCHOOL AGE BY ENCOURAGING PARENTS TO UNDERSTAND AND PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF THEIR CHILDREN THROUGH COMMUNITY GROUPS

Activities: Widcombe Acorns Pre-School is Bath's only City Centre Forest School and provides daycare for pre-schoolers. Our children love being outside in all weathers exploring our fantastic outdoor space, building dens, gardening & cooking on the camp fire. Graded "outstanding" by Ofsted for the past 4 inspections, we have a safe, happy & creative environment with well thought-out indoor and outdoor space.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services
- **What:** Education/training
- **Who:** Children/young People

Geography

- Bath And North East Somerset

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-07-31	£305,245	£250,665	-	-
2024-07-31	£244,402	£214,967	-	-
2023-07-31	£232,838	£236,070	-	-
2022-08-01	£203,007	£213,139	-	-
2021-08-01	£217,039	£206,911	-	-
2020-08-01	£178,502	£176,663	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Christopher John Henry		2024-04-22
Helen Lucy Harvey		2023-11-07
Jane Elizabeth Lang		2025-10-13
Richard Heath		2023-11-07
Sarah Letitia James		2023-11-07

Accounts



REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1029494

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025
for
Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Monahans
Chartered Accountants
Hermes House
Fire Fly Avenue
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN2 2GA

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Contents of the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

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Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

The trustees present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 July 2025. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

Objects:

To enhance the development and education of children under statutory school age by encouraging parents to understand and provide for the needs of their children through community groups

Significant activities

Widcombe Acorns Pre-School is Bath's only City-centre Forest School and provides daycare for pre-schoolers. Our children love being outside in all weathers exploring our fantastic outdoor space, building dens, gardening and cooking on the campfire. Graded "outstanding" by Ofsted for the past five inspections, we have a safe, happy & creative environment with well thought-out indoor and outdoor spaces.

Public benefit

The trustees have paid due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in deciding what activities the charity should undertake. The trustees consider that they have acted for the public benefit.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Charitable activities

The last academic year was a positive and successful year for Acorns. Throughout the year staff have continued to work hard to maintain an inclusive environment for all. Staff have planned the curriculum to inspire children's learning and curiosity in line with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We have also planned and delivered engaging activities that are uniquely possible in our setting including; gardening through the seasons, developing our Forest school and focused topic-based activities. Examples of these include 'Healthy Eating' and science experiments. Children have been out in the community visiting The Egg theatre, local garden centre and local railway station.

Over the year Acorns has maintained a high take up on places with a total of 38 children attending over the 5 days offered each week. Staff have continued to work skilfully to weave all areas of children's learning and development into a curriculum which captures the interest and imagination of the children.

OFSTED inspected Acorns in July 2025. Acorns were delighted to be graded 'Outstanding' in all areas of learning for the fifth inspection in a row. The inspector observed and noted that at Acorns' children "make exceptional progress". Another comment recognized how "staff scaffold children's learning with well-timed support and enthusiastic ideas".

Parents' feedback has continually been overwhelmingly positive and general sentiment is reflected in this quote: 'My child's experience at Acorns has been above and beyond what we could have hoped for, the team there have really brought out the best in him and allowed his creativity and confidence to flourish'.

Fundraising activities

Throughout the year the Acorns' Parent Committee have worked together with the trustees and staff on a variety of fundraising initiatives to support the charity. These include a Christmas show and party, cake sales, a quiz night, a pop-up pub night, an auction and a summer party.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial position

At 31 July 2025 total fund were £140,838.

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Report of the Trustees **for the Year Ended 31 July 2025**

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Reserves policy

The trustees have established a Reserves Policy to ensure that the charity maintains sufficient funds to support its ongoing activities and manage unforeseen financial pressures.

The trustees aim to maintain unrestricted reserves equivalent to approximately 4-6 months of operating expenditure which is currently estimated at £75,000 to £100,000.

At the end of the financial year, the charity held £140,838 in unrestricted reserves which is in excess of the required level. The trustees review the reserves policy annually to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs and financial position of the charity.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust and constitutes an unincorporated charity.

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

During the year the charity retained its core group of trustees and appointed Jane Lang as trustee in October 2025. Trustees are recruited in accordance with the charity's governing document and are selected to ensure an appropriate balance of skills, knowledge and experience to support the effective governance of the charity.

Potential trustees are identified through existing networks and recommendations and are subject to approval by the board of trustees and Acorns management team. New trustees must complete DBS checks and EY2 authorisation. New trustees receive an induction to familiarise them with the charity's activities, governance arrangements and responsibilities.

The trustees meet at least quarterly to review the charity's activities and make key strategic and operational decisions relating to the management of the setting and the delivery of high-quality early years education.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Charity number

1029494

Principal address

St. Marks Community Centre
St. Marks Road
Bath

Trustees

Jane Lang - appointed 13 October 2025
Christopher Henry
Sarah James
Helen Harvey
Richard Heath
Louise Gilliland

Independent Examiner

James Gare DChA
Monahans
Chartered Accountants
Hermes House
Fire Fly Avenue
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN2 2GA

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

Approved by order of the board of trustees on and signed on its behalf by:

23 April 2026

.....
S James - Trustee

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of
Widcombe Acorns Playgroup**

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of Widcombe Acorns Playgroup (the Trust) for the year ended 31 July 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under Section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since your charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a listed body. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by Section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



James Gare DChA

Monahans
Chartered Accountants
Hermes House
Fire Fly Avenue
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN2 2GA

Date: 6 May 2026

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Statement of Financial Activities
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

		2025 Unrestricted fund £	2024 Total funds as restated £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM	Notes		
Donations and legacies	3	12,000	650
Charitable activities	6		
Playgroup		285,509	246,093
Other trading activities	4	7,509	13,523
Investment income	5	<u>227</u>	<u>347</u>
Total		<u>305,245</u>	<u>260,613</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON			
Raising funds	7	2,827	2,462
Charitable activities	8		
Playgroup		<u>247,838</u>	<u>214,631</u>
Total		<u>250,665</u>	<u>217,093</u>
 NET INCOME		54,580	43,520
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward		<u>86,258</u>	<u>42,738</u>
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u><u>140,838</u></u>	<u><u>86,258</u></u>

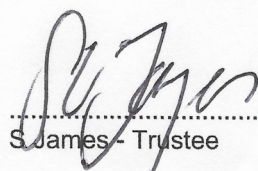
The notes form part of these financial statements

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Balance Sheet
31 July 2025

	Notes	2025 Unrestricted fund £	2024 Total funds as restated £
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	15	1,958	6,906
Cash at bank		<u>140,800</u>	<u>79,352</u>
		142,758	86,258
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	16	(1,920)	-
		<u> </u>	<u> </u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>140,838</u>	<u>86,258</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>140,838</u>	<u>86,258</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>140,838</u>	<u>86,258</u>
FUNDS	17		
Unrestricted funds		<u>140,838</u>	<u>86,258</u>
TOTAL FUNDS		<u>140,838</u>	<u>86,258</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 28/April/2026 and were signed on its behalf by:


.....
S. James - Trustee

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

1. STATUTORY INFORMATION

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup is an unincorporated charity. The registered office address, nature of the charity's operations and principal activities can be found in the Trustees' Report.

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity and rounded to the nearest pound.

There are no significant areas of judgements or key sources of estimation uncertainty.

Going concern

The Trustees assess whether the use of going concern in preparing the financial statements is appropriate i.e. whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern. The Trustees make this assessment in respect of a period of at least one year from the date of authorisation for issue of the financial statements and have concluded that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. In making this assessment, the Trustees have reviewed the balance sheet, the likely future cash flows of the charity and have considered the funds available at this point in time.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants are recognised at fair value when the charity has entitlement after any performance conditions have been met, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably. If entitlement is not met then these amounts are deferred.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the expenditure heading for which it was incurred.

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

Current liabilities

Creditors are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

Retirement benefits

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charity's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

3. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	2025	2024 as restated
	£	£
Donations	<u>12,000</u>	<u>650</u>

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

4. OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	2025	2024 as restated
	£	£
Fundraising events	<u>7,509</u>	<u>13,523</u>

5. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2025	2024 as restated
	£	£
Deposit account interest	<u>227</u>	<u>347</u>

6. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

		2025	2024 as restated
	Activity	£	£
Early Years Entitlement	Playgroup	114,298	88,071
Fees received	Playgroup	165,786	145,793
Extra funding	Playgroup	2,625	9,529
Registration fee	Playgroup	<u>2,800</u>	<u>2,700</u>
		<u>285,509</u>	<u>246,093</u>

7. RAISING FUNDS

Other trading activities

	2025	2024 as restated
	£	£
Fundraising costs	<u>2,827</u>	<u>2,462</u>

8. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Direct Costs (see note 9)	Support costs (see note 10)	Totals
	£	£	£
Playgroup	<u>245,918</u>	<u>1,920</u>	<u>247,838</u>

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

9. DIRECT COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2025	2024 as restated
	£	£
Staff costs	207,032	182,742
Rent and utilities	16,109	15,990
Insurance	1,592	1,006
Office admin and tech support	2,590	2,588
Cleaning	1,090	561
Equipment and maintenance	5,729	1,569
Remedial therapy	80	1,480
Education and training	720	557
Membership fees and subscriptions	3,172	610
Educational resources	2,856	1,975
Snacks	3,524	3,575
Garden	764	599
Sundries	<u>660</u>	<u>1,379</u>
	<u>245,918</u>	<u>214,631</u>

10. SUPPORT COSTS

	Governance costs £
Playgroup	<u>1,920</u>

Support costs, included in the above, are as follows:

	2025	2024 as restated
	Playgroup £	Total activities £
Accountancy and Independent examination	<u>1,920</u>	<u>-</u>

11. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 July 2025 nor for the year ended 31 July 2024.

Trustees' expenses

There were no trustees' expenses paid for the year ended 31 July 2025 nor for the year ended 31 July 2024.

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

12. STAFF COSTS

	2025	2024 as restated
	£	£
Wages and salaries	<u>207,032</u>	<u>182,742</u>
	<u>207,032</u>	<u>182,742</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2025	2024 as restated
Employees	9	10
Supply	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>

No employees received emoluments in excess of £60,000.

13. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted fund as restated £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM	
Donations and legacies	650
Charitable activities	
Playgroup	246,093
Other trading activities	13,523
Investment income	<u>347</u>
Total	<u>260,613</u>
EXPENDITURE ON	
Raising funds	2,462
Charitable activities	
Playgroup	<u>214,631</u>
Total	<u>217,093</u>
NET INCOME	43,520
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS	
Total funds brought forward	<u>42,738</u>
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>86,258</u>

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025**

14. PRIOR YEAR ADJUSTMENT

The charity has exceeded the threshold for preparing receipt and payment accounts. Therefore the comparatives have been restated to reflect accrual accounting adjustments such as prepayments, accrued income and accruals.

15. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025	2024 as restated
	£	£
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>1,958</u>	<u>6,906</u>

16. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025	2024 as restated
	£	£
Accrued expenses	<u>1,920</u>	<u>-</u>

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1.8.24 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.7.25 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	86,258	54,580	140,838
	<u>86,258</u>	<u>54,580</u>	<u>140,838</u>
TOTAL FUNDS			
	<u>86,258</u>	<u>54,580</u>	<u>140,838</u>

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	305,245	(250,665)	54,580
	<u>305,245</u>	<u>(250,665)</u>	<u>54,580</u>
TOTAL FUNDS			
	<u>305,245</u>	<u>(250,665)</u>	<u>54,580</u>

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1.8.23 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.7.24 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	42,738	43,520	86,258
	<u>42,738</u>	<u>43,520</u>	<u>86,258</u>
TOTAL FUNDS			
	<u>42,738</u>	<u>43,520</u>	<u>86,258</u>

Widcombe Acorns Playgroup

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 July 2025

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	260,613	(217,093)	43,520
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>260,613</u>	<u>(217,093)</u>	<u>43,520</u>

18. EMPLOYEE BENEFIT OBLIGATIONS

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The costs for the period was £4,433. No contributions were owing at the balance sheet date.

19. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There were no related party transactions for the year ended 31 July 2025.

Accounts



St Mark's Community Centre, St Mark's Road, Bath, BA2 4PA

Registered Charity No: 1029494

Web site: www.widcombeacorns.co.uk

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school Annual Report

1st August 2023 - 31st July 2024

Our objectives and activities

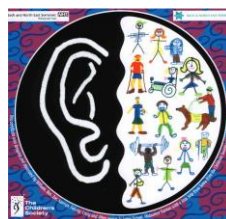
Established over forty years ago, Widcombe Acorns provides full day-care for up to 40 pre-school children, aged between 3 years and statutory school age during the academic year. We are open to all local children and their families regardless of their race, ethnicity, national origin or ability.

We are committed to providing a caring and secure environment where children can play, learn and grow, happily and safely. Each individual child's learning is encouraged by providing a well-balanced and stimulating range of activities across the areas defined in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Our approach is child-led and based on observation, research and documentation of our children at play.

We respect each individual child and encourage them to progress at their own pace and therefore reach full potential. Paramount importance is placed on the development of each child's personal, and emotional skills. Self-confidence is encouraged in a sensitive, responsive, warm and loving environment. We work towards each child being a valued member of the group and wider community so that they have a strong self-image and high self-esteem.

At Widcombe Acorns we respect parents and carers as the child's first educator, and endeavour to ensure that they are a key part of their child's current and future learning and are involved in all aspects of pre-school life. All our staff are given the opportunity to gain further appropriate qualifications that will benefit themselves and the whole group, and we place a great importance on on-going training and skills building.

We have a fully comprehensive Operational Plan in place, which sets out our practice, procedures and all essential policies, such as child protection and equal opportunities. This is reviewed on an on-going basis.



OFSTED Unique Reference Number: 133108.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Historically our pre-school was managed by an annually elected voluntary committee made of parent trustees, who meet a minimum of six times a year. The purpose of the trustees is to oversee the running of the pre-school and to provide input into matters of policy. Along with the Administrator and the Pre-School Leaders, it is responsible for the good management of the pre-school's budget. Its aim is to support the staff in providing a safe, caring and stimulating environment for the children in attendance. It also has a responsibility, reflected in its election by our parents, to communicate parental wishes to the pre-school leader and act as an arbitrator, if necessary.

In accordance with our constitution, parents at the pre-school's AGM, which is usually held just prior to the autumn half term, elect the committee annually. All trustees are subject to DBS Enhanced Disclosure clearance.

Our current trustees were appointed at our Annual General Meeting held on 7th November 2023.

Sarah James - Chair
Lou Gilliland - Secretary
Richard Heath – Health & Safety
Katherine Kajzer-Hughes
Christopher Henry

Our trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or benefits in return.

We are governed by a constitution based on The Pre-school Learning Alliance Model 2005, which was adopted on 30th April 2008. The Pre-school Learning Alliance, of which we are members, is a national charity which promotes quality care and education for the under-fives. This organisation also provides an advisory service and our insurance package, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Chair's report 2023-24

As Chair of Widcombe Acorns Pre-school, I am delighted to reflect on what has been an incredibly dynamic and rewarding year for our community. This past year has brought exciting developments, meaningful achievements, and a renewed sense of purpose in delivering quality early years education.

One of the most notable changes has been the evolution of our leadership team, with over 20 years of dedicated service to Acorns and our broader community, Dena Moore made the decision to leave Acorns and embark on an exciting new chapter overseas. We are deeply grateful to Dena for her years of hard work and commitment — Acorns would not be what it is today without her contributions. With Dena's departure, we welcomed a new co-management structure led by Helen and Emma, whose combined experience and passion have already proven a great asset. Their collaborative approach ensures that both the day-to-day needs of our children and the wider strategic goals of Acorns are being met with care and vision.

Our outdoor learning has gone from strength to strength, with the expansion of our Forest School provision. The addition of a wildlife pond and a beautifully crafted wooden playhouse, generously donated by a local carpenter, have enriched our garden space, giving children greater opportunities to explore, discover and connect with nature.

We were also proud to collaborate with The Egg Theatre this year, bringing the magic of live performance to our children—an unforgettable experience that embodies our commitment to creativity and inclusion.

Financially, we have seen a strong recovery. I am thrilled to report a surplus of £40,770, a major turnaround from last year's deficit. This has been achieved through increased fee income, successful fundraising, and a careful review of our operational costs. These positive results give us a more secure foundation on which to build and reinvest in our provision.

However, we are not without our challenges. Recruitment remains difficult in the current climate, and the ongoing under funding in the Early Years sector and in SEN support poses ongoing concerns. Nevertheless, our dedicated staff and trustees continue to rise to the occasion, ensuring we remain a nurturing and inclusive environment for all children.

Our governance structure has also matured this year, with a more stable trustee base enabling long-term planning and continuity. Together with the St Mark's trustees, we have formalised a new Memorandum of Understanding, and are working constructively to address essential building repairs, particularly to the main roof.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to our core vision—offering a loving, engaging, and affordable pre-school experience for every child. With your continued support, we are confident in our ability to meet future challenges and celebrate many more successes.

Warmest thanks to our wonderful staff, supportive families, and dedicated trustees for making this year so special.

Sarah James
Chair of Trustees, Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

Pre-school leader's report

This year has been a busy positive year. Dena's moving on was an adjustment for the team, but the new team have hit the ground running. We have had some staffing structure changes; Emma is now sharing the management role with Helen. Emma has been working with the team for 4 years in forest school and the main room and has just finished a degree in Early Childhood Studies. The joint leadership is working very well with both Emma and Helen able to spend time with the children and leading the room as well as having time for administration. Acorns continues to have the warm buzzing and friendly feel for the children and staff.

Acorns Trustees

This year, we have shifted towards establishing a core group of trustees for Acorns who will serve for several years, rather than changing annually. This approach allows us to work more consistently and focus on long-term projects. Alongside this, we continue to form a parent fundraising committee each year to engage current parents. The new trustee structure has successfully assisted us with our discussions with St. Mark's, the new staffing structure and providing structure to our long term vision of providing affordable places for children who most need it.

Our achievements this year

This year we have achieved many things. We have continued to develop our forest school provision. As well as our wonderful wooden cabin and cared for forest school area, we have worked with the children to dig a pond for wildlife and we are very lucky to have a beautiful new wooden playhouse built by a local carpenter as a donation. Both new additions are helping us to enjoy the garden even more and get the most out of our outside learning time.

Furthermore, Acorns has teamed up with the Egg Theatre to enable children to go to the theatre thanks to the Wonder Fund of the Theatre Royal Bath. In December we took a group of excited children to see The Snow Mouse, this was a magical and memorable experience. We hope to take a second group later in the year to enable all children to participate.

We have painted our front door and hope to paint the inside of Acorns later this year.

Challenges

This year we have found covering staff sickness and recruiting new staff a challenge. We were lucky to appoint a supply member of staff in September. However, they have since been given a permanent position elsewhere which has often meant staff have been stretched and have had to work overtime. We suspect the difficulty in recruitment is largely due to government funding being far from adequate to pay staff a fair wage for their hard work. This is a national issue which many other settings are experiencing. We are continuing to recruit supply staff for the year ahead.

St Mark's Discussions

This year the St Mark's trustees and Acorns trustees have been working together to finalise the details of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which has now been signed by all parties. St Mark's Community Centre owns the building that Acorns leases.

The MOU is meant to show a shared intention between both parties to work together more closely — especially to improve communication and find common ground on how the shared spaces and resources at St Mark's are used. Some leaking inside of the main hall and Acorns room from the main roof of the community centre has highlighted the urgent need for repairs to the roof. St Mark's Trustees are currently working towards fundraising for this project. In the meantime our trustees are negotiating a survey of the roof to ensure safety for all inside the building. Initial surveys have suggested that the building is safe.

Our plans for the year ahead

This year we hope to purchase some much-needed resources including new chairs for the children and a new water tray. We have continued with the fantastic Acorns curriculum giving children the chance to develop and grow in a nurturing and engaging environment. We have always ensured that children can explore open ended resources which encourage creativity, independence and engagement.

The 'A' team!

As well as our new management team we have a few new additions and changes...

Our deputy Tigi has just completed her level 3 in Child development and has continued to be a strong and influential member of the team throughout the year.

We have been incredibly fortunate to have gained an incredibly experienced addition to our team with Lauren starting with us in September. Lauren is a qualified teacher who has moved here from London, having thirteen years' experience teaching children with Special Educational Needs. Lauren has settled in well and is sharing her vast SEND knowledge with the team.

Hazel has taken on her role as Special Educational Needs Coordinator brilliantly and has completed her level 3 SENco qualification. Hazel has led the team in supporting children to enable every child to access their Acorns provision and reach their potential.

Sam has continued to lead the Forest School team, taking inspiration from the changing seasons and our outdoor environment, resulting in inspiring and informative forest school sessions for all.

We are also thrilled that the rest of our fabulous team including Donna and Pip have remained committed to their integral roles as pre-school practitioners, both offering a warm, nurturing approach to all the children.

Emma Dodds-Smith and Helen Harvey **Pre-school Leaders**

Registration Report

Occupancy Overview

Occupancy levels saw a modest decrease this year, primarily due to a lower birth rate within the local area and an increased number of children with additional needs, requiring higher staff-to-child ratios. In some sessions, capacity was intentionally limited to ensure the best care. Friday occupancy continues to be a challenge, but we have adapted by scaling staff presence accordingly.

September 2023 Intake: Key Figures

Admission Category	Total
Children allocated a place	33
Returning children (deferred school entry)	0
Siblings of current/former attendees	7
Children from previous year's waiting list	0
New admissions	26

Extended Hours Provision

This year marks the fourth consecutive year offering both early start and late finish options. The Breakfast Club (8:15 AM start) and Extended Day (until 4:00 PM) continue to provide flexible solutions for families. Attendance varies by day, as shown below:

Day	8:15 AM Start	9:00 AM Start	4:00 PM Finish
Monday	3	9	7
Tuesday	3	13	12
Wednesday	4	11	10
Thursday	4	9	9
Friday	3	9	7

Financial analysis

An enormous thank you to Mr. Alistair Mathers, who once again very kindly offered his time to produce our end of year accounts this year. Thank you so much for your generous support, your advice and expert number crunching. We couldn't do it without you!

Summary and key observations:

1. Income and Expenditure Analysis

- Total Income increased from **£232,838** (2023) to **£255,499** (2024), mainly due to a rise in fees received (£145,925 vs. £120,280) and fundraising income (£11,097 vs. £7,078).
- Early Years Entitlement funding decreased from **£92,717** to **£88,071**.
- Extra funding for SEN also fell from **£12,309** to **£9,409**.
- Total Expenditure decreased from **£236,070** to **£217,429**, primarily due to lower employment costs (£182,742 vs. £201,631) and reduced spending on sundries (£1,379 vs. £2,359) and cleaning (£561 vs. £1,268).
- **Net surplus for 2024: £40,770**, compared to a **deficit of £3,232** in 2023.

2. Fundraising Performance

- Fundraising income increased significantly from **£7,078** to **£11,097**.
- Fundraising expenditure reduced slightly from **£3,381** to **£2,462**.
- Net fundraising income nearly doubled, from **£3,697** to **£8,635**.

3. Cash Position

- Closing cash balance increased from **£42,738** (2023) to **£83,508** (2024), mainly due to the improved net income.
- Current account balance grew significantly to **£55,727** (from £17,544).
- Savings account saw a small increase from **£18,131** to **£18,478**.

Key Takeaways

- Strong financial turnaround with a £40,770 surplus compared to last year's deficit.
- Increased fee income & fundraising success contributed significantly.
- Reduced employment costs helped improve financial performance.
- Early Years Entitlement & extra funding have decreased, which could impact future budgets.

Some cost areas increased, remedial therapy such as speech and language therapy (£1,480) and office admin/tech support (£2,588).

The preschool has seen a strong financial recovery over the course of the year, with a **£40,770 surplus** compared to last year's **£3,232 deficit**. Below is a more detailed analysis, along with some budget recommendations to sustain and improve financial health.

Key Areas of Financial Improvement

Increased Fee Income:

- Fees received increased from **£120,280** to **£145,925 (+£25,645, up 21%)** due to a significant fee increase agreed in the summer term of 2023
- This suggests higher enrolment or increased fee rates, which is a positive sign.

Successful Fundraising:

- Net fundraising income more than doubled (£3,697 → £8,635).
- If this trend continues, it can provide additional funds for special projects or reserves.

Reduced Employment Costs:

- Salaries and staff costs decreased from **£201,631 to £182,742 (-£18,889, down 9%)**.
- Resulting from: Staff restructuring after Dena left with more job sharing.
- However, it's important to ensure that cost-cutting does not affect staff morale or service quality.

Lower Overall Expenditure:

- Spending dropped from **£236,070 to £217,429 (-£18,641)**, largely due to:

- Cleaning costs down by **56%** (£1,268 → £561).
- Sundries down by **42%** (£2,359 → £1,379).
- Employment costs down by **9%** (£201,631 → £182,742).

2. Areas of Concern & Recommendations

Decreased Government Funding:

- Early Years Entitlement fell by £4,646 (-5%). This has been offset by an increase in non funded session income.
- Extra funding (SEN) dropped by £2,900 (-24%).

Higher Spending in Some Areas:

- Remedial Therapy (speech and language therapy): New expense of £1,480.
- Office Admin & Tech Support: Increased by 18% (£2,197 → £2,588).
- Educational Resources: Increased by 25% (£1,585 → £1,975).

Recommendation:

- Remedial Therapy: Ensure funding is available for this important service. This was funded by BANES via the SEN payment for the child but must be paid for upfront by Acorns.
- Admin/Tech Support: Assess whether this spending is necessary or if cheaper alternatives exist.
- Educational Resources: While an increase is positive, ensure funds are spent effectively.

3. Cash Flow & Reserves

Closing cash balance improved significantly:

- **£83,508 vs. £42,738 last year (a 95% increase).**
- Current account balance increased to **£55,727** (from £17,544).
- Savings account slightly increased to **£18,478** (from £18,131) due to increasing interest rates on saving accounts over the year.

Recommendation:

- Consider allocating some of this surplus into the reserves fund for unexpected expenses, future expansion or forced closure.
- Ensure at least **3-6 months of operating expenses** are kept as reserves (~£54,000 based on current expenditure levels).

4. Suggested Budget Priorities for 2024-25

Category	Recommendation
Staff Costs	Maintain efficiency but ensure staff retention & morale.
Fundraising	Continue successful efforts, consider grant applications, sponsorship deals, charitable donations.
Educational Resources	Ensure investments directly benefit children's learning.
Tech/ Admin costs	Review necessity of spending, find cost-effective solutions.
Cash Reserves	Set aside surplus funds for long-term sustainability.

Final Thoughts

- The preschool is in a much stronger financial position than last year.
- The focus should now be on sustaining fee income and maintaining cost control. Maximum occupancy being the ultimate goal. Increasing occupancy in breakfast clubs, early starts and late finishes.
- With a £40,770 surplus, there is room to invest in quality improvements while ensuring financial stability.

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31st July 2024

A. Pre-school

	Year Ending 31 July 2023	Year Ending 31 July 2024
Income £		
Early Years Entitlement	92,717	88,071
Fees received	120,280	145,925
Extra funding	12,309	9,409
Bank interest	126	347
Donations	328	650
Sub-total	225,760	244,402
Expenditure £		
All employment costs	201,631	182,742
Rent and utilities	15,113	15,990
Remedial therapy	0	1,480
Insurance	1,139	1,342
Education/training	409	557
Membership fees/subs	481	610
Cleaning	1,268	561
Educational resources	1,585	1,975
Office admin/tech support	2,197	2,588
Equipment/maintenance	1,908	1,569
Snacks	3,759	3,575
Garden	840	599
Sundries	2,359	1,379
Sub-total	232,689	214,967
Net pre-school income/ (expenditure)	(6,929)	29,435

B. Fundraising

Income	7,078	11,097
Expenditure	3,381	2,462
Net income from fundraising	3,697	8,635

C. Cash summary

Total income	232,838	255,499
Registration fees in	0	2,700
Total expenditure	236,070	217,429
Net income/(expenditure)	(3,232)	40,770

D. Opening cash position

Current account	20,902	17,544
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Strong box donation	460	460
Savings account	18,005	18,131
Total	45,970	42,738

E. Closing cash position

Current account	17,544	55,727
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Strong box donation	460	0
Registration fees in	0	2,700
Savings account	18,131	18,478
Total	42,738	83,508
Net inflow/(outflow)	(3,232)	40,770

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Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Widcombe Acorns **Preschool**

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st July 2024.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the 1993 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 43 of the 1993 Act; To follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity
- Commission under section 43(7)(b) of the 1993 Act and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention: (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the 1993 Act;

and

- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and

comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

ALISTAIR H. MATHERS FCA

Meadowgate
Dark Lane
Bathampton
BA2 6SZ

29 November 2024

Accounts



St Mark's Community Centre, St Mark's Road, Bath, BA2 4PA

Registered Charity No: 1029494

Web site: www.widcombeacorns.org.uk

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school Annual Report 1st August 2022 - 31st July 2023

Our objectives and activities

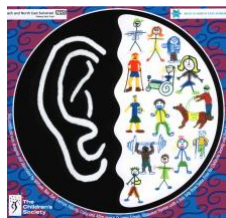
Established over forty years ago, Widcombe Acorns provides full day-care for up to 40 pre-school children, aged between 3 years and statutory school age during the 2022-23 academic year. We are open to all local children and their families regardless of their race, ethnicity, national origin or ability.

We are committed to providing a caring and secure environment where children can play, learn and grow, happily and safely. Each individual child's learning is encouraged by providing a well-balanced and stimulating range of activities across the areas defined in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Our approach is child-led and based on observation, research and documentation of our children at play.

We respect each individual child, and encourage them to progress at their own pace and therefore reach full potential. Paramount importance is placed on the development of each child's personal, and emotional skills. Self-confidence is encouraged in a sensitive, responsive, warm and loving environment. We work towards each child being a valued member of the group and wider community so that they have a strong self-image and high self-esteem.

At Widcombe Acorns we respect parents and carers as the child's first educator, and endeavour to ensure that they are a key part of their child's current and future learning, and are involved in all aspects of pre-school life. All our staff are given the opportunity to gain further appropriate qualifications that will benefit themselves and the whole group, and we place a great importance on on-going training and skills building.

We have a fully comprehensive Operational Plan in place, which sets out our practice, procedures and all essential policies, such as child protection and equal opportunities. This is reviewed on an on-going basis.



OFSTED Unique Reference Number: 133108.

Structure, governance and management

Our pre-school is managed by an annually elected voluntary committee made of parent trustees, who meet a minimum of six times a year. The purpose of our committee is to oversee the running of the pre-school and to provide input into matters of policy. Along with the Administrator and the Pre-School Leader, it is responsible for the good management of the pre-school's budget. Its aim is to support the staff in providing a safe, caring and stimulating environment for the children in attendance. It also has a responsibility, reflected in its election by our parents, to communicate parental wishes to the pre-school leader and act as an arbitrator, if necessary.

In accordance with our constitution, parents at the pre-school's AGM, which is usually held just prior to the autumn half term, elect the committee annually. All trustees are subject to BDS Enhanced Disclosure clearance.

Our current trustees were appointed at our Annual General Meeting held on 7th November 2023. Daisy Lloyd was initially appointed as and acted as chair between November 2022 and January 2023, however resigned from the position in January 2023 due to personal reasons. Chris Henry was subsequently appointed as chair.

:

Chris Henry - Chair
Kerry Swift - Secretary
Tanya Bennett – Health & Safety
Kerry Swift, Rebecca Colls - Fundraiser

Our trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or benefits in return.

We are governed by a constitution based on The Pre-school Learning Alliance Model 2005, which was adopted on 30th April 2008. The Pre-school Learning Alliance, of which we are members, is a national charity which promotes quality care and education for the under fives. This organisation also provides an advisory service and our insurance package, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Chair's report 2022-23

2022/23 has been another challenging year for Acorns. However, as always, the staff at Acorns have continued through adversity and provided an exceptional year for the children.

Staffing

The most significant change of the year is that Acorns has said goodbye to Dena Moore, Pre-school Leader after 25 years with Acorns and 15 as their leader. Dena has been instrumental over the years in making Acorns an exceptional pre-school environment for children. Dena will be sorely missed by staff, parents, and pupils alike.

Helen Harvey will be taking up the Pre-School Leader position and we wish her every success in her new role.

Acorns continues to enjoy a high adult:pupil ratio which enables us to provide enhanced curriculum opportunities, provide additional support to children with disabilities or special educational needs, and to run forest school activities in the way that we do.

Registrations

Acorns was full for Academic year 2022/23 with the exception of Fridays. Acorns continues to be a very popular choice in the community and has built a very strong reputation, with many families returning with siblings.

Challenges

It's been a challenging year financially for Acorns. Although there was a good increase in income in 2023, there was also a substantial increase in our costs, partly due to the cost-of-living crisis, and partly due to a 50% increase in our annual rent and utilities. We also awarded a long-overdue pay increase to staff, the first pay award in many years.

The relationship with St Marks Community Centre has improved remarkably over the past year and progress has been made towards the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our two organisations. This agreement will help both organisations align the mutual benefits each charity provides and is hoped will re-set the relationship between the two organisations, which has been prone to fracture in previous years.

Committee.

Acorns parents' committee chair stood down from her position unexpectedly just after Christmas, and I was appointed to replace her for the remainder of the academic year. The committee help to organise the usual Christmas, Easter and end of year celebration to the best of their ability but other than that, due to a limited amount of time in the year, other avenues and ideas initially posed by the committee were not fully explored. The ongoing negotiations on the MoU with SMCC also has taken more time than expected.

Acorns practice for the appointment of trustees is currently to re-appoint new trustees each academic year from the cohort of new pre-school parents. Whilst I am stepping down as a trustee, in line with usual practice, I ask that the newly appointed committee of trustee look

to change this practice. Appointing new trustees, with the required DBS and Ofsted checks takes time and resources – and at best newly appointed trustees are only operational in their roles for eight or nine months before they then step down. In order for a degree of continuity and to better safeguard a sustainable and prosperous future for the charity, I recommend that a handful Trustees should be appointed on multi-year terms, as this will allow trustees to work with Acorns staff to take better and more strategic long-term decisions.

Chris Henry
Chair, Acorns Committee

Pre-school leader's report

It is with a heavy heart that I write my last report for Widcombe Acorns. After lots of deliberation, my husband, Dan, and I have decided to move to France to try out a new way of life, hopefully learning to live more sustainably and to have more time to enjoy life and meet new challenges. I continue to champion Acorns and the incredible team that have not just kept her afloat through the huge amount of challenges that are thrown our way, but have continued to see her improve and progress.

I have had an amazing 25 years in Acorns. I will never forget what a wonderfully inspiring place it is. The team continue to strive for improvement, which means that the children continue to have incredible experiences that instil confidence and high self-esteem. They start school with the very best foundations in place, ready for the next stage of more formal learning. They leave us with the tools to cope with school, and minds that are ready for their next adventure. We always feel proud of the children's achievements.

Leading rehearsals for the shows, particularly the leaver's show, will be something I miss hugely. Seeing the difference in the children's confidence in their acting and dancing abilities between shows is always a particular highlight of my year. As always, this year's leaver's show was brilliant, if emotional for me. Hansel and Gretel set off through the forest to find the gingerbread house, on the way they met fierce crocodiles, little Miss Muffet and many spiders, Peter rabbit and a fly and three little monkeys. When they finally found the gingerbread house they met a particularly fierce witch! Luckily, they made friends, hugged and danced together! The children finished the show with an amazing routine to Crazy Frog (chosen from many songs by the children themselves I hastily add!). It was a brilliant end to the show, and every, single child joined in the routine, so emotional!

I truly believe that singing and dancing should be a regular part of every child's (and adults!) day. It lifts the spirit, giving freedom and fun to the day. I wish this was adopted by schools as a regular part of the day, every day!

The end of year party

I was (and still am) completely blown away by how many people came to the party to say goodbye. It was overwhelming and I didn't stop hugging and talking all night! We think there were approximately 300 - 400 people there, which is incredible and humbling. I met many children that I had cared for in Acorns over the past 25 years, the oldest that came to say goodbye is now 20 years old! Such an amazing experience! I was so happy to reunite with Bronia and Lucy, two ex-Acorns staff members who came along to surprise me, one all the way from Devon! There were so, so many parents and children to hug and I heard so many wonderful stories of their time with us, and how many parents feel that Acorns made a difference to their children's lives. It was an amazing experience and one I will never forget.

It makes me so proud to think of the Acorns community, it is huge, and warm and friendly and loving, and loyal.

Thank you to everyone who made the effort to come and say goodbye, it meant the world to me.

Our achievements this year

This year we have achieved many things. Our Forest School provision continues to improve and expand. We have such an incredibly talented forest school team, who work together beautifully to ensure every child is being encouraged to foster a love of outdoors. Our outside classroom (which has been cleaned, sanded and re-varnished this year) gives a base for warming up, cooking, singing, story telling and enjoying many different activities, ensuring that even reluctant forest school participants (usually due to the weather) can enjoy sessions. The outdoor provision has so many aspects to it. The team should feel so proud of what they have achieved. So many children now enjoy this incredible provision and I hope that continues forever.

We have a fabulous new gardener, Shannon, who has kept the garden beautifully for us this year. Thank you to him for stepping into the breach when our last gardener, Ian, retired, and best of luck to Ian for his future.

Challenges

There are, unfortunately, continuing concerns over funds in Acorns. The under-funding and the misleading wording (free!!!) of the early years entitlement by the Government continues. This has a knock-on effect on everything we try to do. The lack of money means we struggle to keep viable and we cannot give decent pay rises to the team, even though they absolutely deserve them. Recent rent and utility rises, plus the cost-of-living crisis, that has affected the price of food and resources, have made everything so much more difficult.

St Mark's negotiations

After an extremely challenging few years, I am relieved that the relationship seems to be on a more even keel with the trustees. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is still not ready to be signed due to new negotiations by the trustees to repurpose a room that is currently being used by Acorns for storage. This is worrying for Acorns as it may affect us being able to stay a secure unit, which is important to us. Unfortunately, I have not been able to see this through before leaving, however we have help through an Acorns parent, Chris Henry. He has kindly stayed on this year as a liaison between Acorns and St Marks.

What now for Acorns?

Acorns is the very best place for children to be in their pre-school year. The warm, fun, exciting environment and the incredibly talented staff team, mean that the children thrive with us. This will continue with the new leader, Helen. I have worked with Helen for many years, we share the same vision and I know that I am leaving Acorns in very safe hands.

Acorns biggest challenges are from the Government's refusal to listen to the sector, continuing to push the 'free' funding rhetoric, which is completely unsustainable for ALL early year's settings. This approach is frankly ridiculous and dangerous. We are hearing of more and more settings having to close because of this. I hope this changes soon.

The 'A' team!

This leads me to the team, the 'A' team as they are known! I wish Helen all the luck in the world with her new role as pre-school leader. She is incredible at her job and I know she will do everything to lead Acorns positively into the future. Best of luck Helen.

Helen has an incredible team to support her. Juliette, (my right-hand-woman!) will continue to be Acorns administrator and registration secretary, we could not be without her.

Tigi has stepped into the role of pre-school Deputy. Tigi's enthusiasm, passion, energy and organisational skills are second to none and I know she will continue to be hugely popular with children and team alike!

Hazel has stepped into the role of Senco, an incredibly important role. She is currently training for a level 3 Senco qualification in order to put everything she can into the role. I have worked closely with Hazel in the Senco role this year, and have no doubts whatsoever that she will be an excellent Senco and help many children and families going forward.

Sam and Emma are now joint Forest School leaders, supported by Hazel. This is a dream forest school team and they have made the provision the standard it is today. The time and effort they put into the forest school areas is incredible and they ensure the children's confidence in their own abilities continues to grow throughout the year.

Pip, Donna and Katie continue to support Helen and Tigi to keep ensuring the indoor provision is run to a high standard. This is no mean feat; you need to be a good all-rounder. You need to be amazing at cooking, telling inspiring stories, running sewing groups, soft-play groups, literacy activities, dancing, singing, signing, running creative sessions etc etc the list is never ending!

The team work so well because they can work cohesively, there is no hierarchy in Acorns. This means the children gain the highest quality experiences possible.

I wish the team every luck possible. I will miss you, please just keep doing what you do!

Dena Moore

Fundraising report

We continued to run our online raffles through Eventgroove Fundraising instead of the usual raffles at the actual events themselves. These have proved very successful and once set up can be easily managed by Antony and Juliette. We held two online raffles during the year and they continue to prove popular and raise more money than our old style paper raffles. The Christmas raffle raised an impressive £1,215.00 and the summer raffle raised £956.00.

The Christmas show and party went well with the usual soup, mince pies and mulled available to buy. The cake stall was stocked full of delicious homemade bakes from the parents and were quickly snapped up.

The summer party/leaving party for Dena was a huge success with 300 plus people in attendance. The bar ran smoothly and was way more efficiently run after the purchase of several card machines enabling easy card payments. With a live band, stalls, and hot street food available to purchase it all went extremely well and was very enjoyable, but also very emotional as we prepared to wave Dena off to her new life in France. It was wonderful to see so many ex-Acorns and their parents and even some former staff members too.

We managed to raise a reasonably healthy £3,697 (net) this year which will help enormously going forward so that we can replace some very worn out resources and continue to grow our Forest School.

Juliette Davies

Registration secretary's report

Occupancy rates

Overall occupancy rate was good for 2022-23 with sessions filled apart from Fridays where only 16 of the morning sessions were sold and 15 of the afternoon sessions out of the 25 available. Friday occupancy remains an ongoing concern but we do reduce staffing accordingly.

Statistics for September 2022-23 intake

Total number of children allocated a place	33
Number of returning children (deferred school entry)	2
Number of siblings	10
Number carried over from previous year's waiting list	0
Number of new children	21

This was the fourth year of the breakfast club option which starts at 8am, and the 4pm finish. Early starts at 9am are still available. Attendance still varies from day to day – see below:

Monday	8am – 0, Monday 9am – 9, Monday 4pm – 3
Tuesday	8am – 5, Tuesday 9am – 11, Tuesday 4pm – 8
Wednesday	8am – 2, Wednesday 9am – 10, Wednesday 4pm – 4
Thursday	8am – 3, Thursday 9am – 9, Thursday 4pm – 3
Friday	8am – 0, Friday 9am – 7, Friday 4pm - 0

Juliette Davies
Administrator

Financial analysis

An enormous thank you to Mr. Alistair Mathers, who once again very kindly offered his time to produce our end of year accounts this year. Thank you so much for your generous support, your time, advice and expert number crunching. We couldn't do it without you!

Income

Pre-school income increased last year from £196,767 in 2021-22 to **£225,760** in 2022-23. This is due in part to an increase in fees received, and an increase in EYE funding. We are still in the early stages of seeing the full impact of the roll out of the government's extended funding policy and it will take a few years before this stabilizes and we can see the true picture.

Expenditure

Expenditure has increased from **£210,862** to **£232,689** this year. Staff wages and employment costs of £201,631 (this includes the cost of the staff pension) continue to make up the majority of this amount in overall expenditure. We also had to recruit two extra members of staff to help with several children with significant additional needs this year so this contributed significantly to this increase.

Fundraising efforts have contributed £7,078 of gross fundraising income with a net income of **£3,697**. A big thank you to everyone who helped out at all the events throughout the year, you've been truly amazing, we simply couldn't do it without you!

Reserves policy as agreed by trustees on 15th May 2007

It was agreed back in 2007 that Acorns would aim to build a reserve fund of £12,000. This was considered equal at the time to a pre-school term (6 weeks) outgoings. Our current restricted reserves stand at £10,000 and has not been increased. The restricted reserves are to be used in the event of forced closure relocation, redundancy, insolvency or in any other eventuality that the Management Committee sees fit. The amount to be placed in the restricted reserves fund should be reviewed annually at management committee meetings. Unrestricted reserves (i.e the balance of the savings account) amount to £8,130.96. This money is for use on refurbishment and capital expenditure as and when required.

Conclusion

Finances at Acorns remain as precarious as ever; we seem to have one good year, one bad and the challenges of managing the expenditure against the cost of living crisis that has erupted recently has only added to that pressure. The committee agreed to a slight increase in fees for the coming academic year to assist with the rise in cost of electricity and food and the increase in the minimum wage which took effect in April. Fees may need to be reviewed more frequently to ensure we remain financially viable however we are already at the more expensive end of the market and with the persisting misleading message from the government that childcare is 'free' leaves us very little scope to increase fees much further.

Juliette Davies
Administrator

Wishes for the coming year

- For the team to settle into their new roles
- To, hopefully, complete the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- To welcome the new committee into their roles
- To continue to expand the forest school provision
- For Hazel to complete the Senco level 3 training
- For Tigi to complete her level 3 training
- For Emma to explore starting a PGCE at Bath Spa university
- To purchase a replacement strong box
- To purchase a replacement playhouse
- To continue to fight to keep Acorns open and a fantastic place for children and their families.

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31st July 2023

A. Pre-school

	Year Ending 31 July 2022	Year Ending 31 July 2023
Income £		
Early Years Entitlement	101,229	92,717
Fees received	94,543	120,280
Extra funding	740	12,309
Bank interest	4	126
Donations	251	328
Sub-total	196,767	225,760
Expenditure £		
All employment costs	185,434	201,631
Rent and utilities	9,560	15,113
Insurance	1,106	1,139
Education/training	475	409
Membership fees/subs	606	481
Cleaning	1,002	1,268
Educational resources	2,026	1,585
Office administration	3,224	2,197
Equipment/maintenance	2,056	1,908
Snacks	3,244	3,759
Garden	785	840
Sundries	1,344	2,359
Sub-total	210,862	232,689
Net pre-school income/ (expenditure)	(14,095)	(6,929)

B. Fundraising

Income	6,240	7,078
Expenditure	2,277	3,381
Net income from fundraising	3,963	3,697

C. Cash summary

Total income	203,007	232,838
Total expenditure	213,139	236,070
Net expenditure	(10,132)	(3,232)

D. Opening cash position

Current account	31,038	20,902
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Strong box donation	460	460
Savings account	18,001	18,005
Total	56,102	45,970

E. Closing cash position

Current account	20,902	17,544
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Strong box donation	460	460
Savings account	18,505	18,131
Total	45,970	42,738
Net inflow/(outflow)	(10,132)	(3,232)

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31st July 2023

A. Pre-school

	Year Ending 31 July 2022	Year Ending 31 July 2023
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Total	45,970	42,738
Net inflow/(outflow)	(10,132)	(3,232)

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Widcombe Acorns

Preschool

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st July 2023.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the 1993 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 43 of the 1993 Act; To follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity
- Commission under section 43(7)(b) of the 1993 Act and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention: (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the 1993 Act;

and

- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and

comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

ALISTAIR H. MATHERS FCA

Meadowgate
Dark Lane
Bathampton
BA2 6SZ

30 November 2023

Accounts



St Mark's Community Centre, St Mark's Road, Bath, BA2 4PA

Registered Charity No: 1029494

Web site: www.widcombeacorns.org.uk

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school Annual Report 1st August 2021 - 31st July 2022

Our objectives and activities

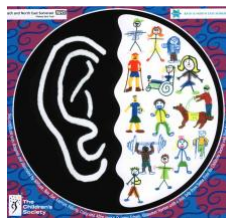
Established over forty years ago, Widcombe Acorns provides full day-care for up to 40 pre-school children, aged between 3 years and statutory school age during the 2021-22 academic year. We are open to all local children and their families regardless of their race, colour, creed or ability.

We are committed to providing a caring and secure environment where children can play, learn and grow, happily and safely. Each individual child's learning is encouraged by providing a well balanced and stimulating range of activities across the areas defined in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Our approach is child-led and based on observation, research and documentation of our children at play.

We respect each individual child, and encourage them to progress at their own pace and therefore reach full potential. Paramount importance is placed on the development of each child's personal, and emotional skills. Self-confidence is encouraged in a sensitive, responsive, warm and loving environment. We work towards each child being a valued member of the group and wider community so that they have a strong self-image and high self-esteem.

At Widcombe Acorns we respect parents and carers as the child's first educator, and endeavour to ensure that they are a key part of their child's current and future learning, and are involved in all aspects of pre-school life. All our staff are given the opportunity to gain further appropriate qualifications that will benefit themselves and the whole group, and we place a great importance on on-going training and skills building.

We have a fully comprehensive Operational Plan in place, which sets out our practice, procedures and all essential policies, such as child protection and equal opportunities. This is reviewed on an on-going basis.



OFSTED Unique Reference Number: 133108.

Structure, governance and management

Our pre-school is managed by an annually elected voluntary committee made of parent trustees, who meet a minimum of six times a year. The purpose of our committee is to oversee the running of the pre-school and to provide input into matters of policy. Along with the Administrator and the Pre-School Leader, it is responsible for the good management of the pre-school's budget. Its aim is to support the staff in providing a safe, caring and stimulating environment for the children in attendance. It also has a responsibility, reflected in its election by our parents, to communicate parental wishes to the pre-school leader and act as an arbitrator, if necessary.

In accordance with our constitution, parents at the pre-school's AGM, which is usually held just prior to the autumn half term, elect the committee annually. All trustees are subject to CRB Enhanced Disclosure clearance.

Our current trustees were appointed at our Annual General Meeting held on 27th November 2018:

Nicky Muller - Chair
Katie Twynam - Secretary
Lindsey Purser - Health & Safety Officer
Jade Parfitt - Fundraiser

Our trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or benefits in return.

We are governed by a constitution based on The Pre-school Learning Alliance Model 2005, which was adopted on 30th April 2008. The Pre-school Learning Alliance, of which we are members, is a national charity which promotes quality care and education for the under fives. This organisation also provides an advisory service and our insurance package, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Chair's report 2021-22

Staffing

Acorns continues to enjoy a high adult:pupil ratio which enables us to provide enhanced curriculum opportunities, provide additional support to children with disabilities or special educational needs, and to run forest school activities in the way that we do.

Staffing has remained consistent with no turnover in key staff. The struggle to recruit adequate supply staff continues.

Registrations

Acorns was full for Academic year 2021/22.

Acorns continues to be a very popular choice in the community and has built a very strong reputation, with many families returning with siblings.

Challenges

Funding remains a challenge, operational costs are covered but Acorns needs to use reserves or fundraise for significant environmental improvements like the recent kitchen replacement and the ongoing investment in the forest school. We are extremely grateful for several financial gifts made to Acorns by parents this year and for all their continued support with our online raffles.

We are in the process of agreeing a new Memorandum of Understanding with our landlords, St Mark's Community Centre. Members of our committee have been working with St Marks' trustees to develop a partnership agreement which reflects the mutual benefit each charity provides, and reconciles the needs of maintaining a listed building with providing a safe, fun and engaging learning environment for Acorns' pre-school children.

Committee

Recruitment to the committee is always difficult as parents have increasing pressures on their time and many more are working full time. I am incredibly grateful to our committee for 2020/21 for giving so much of their time and supporting the pre-school through a tough year.

Nicky Muller

Chair, Acorns Committee

Pre-school leader's report

We have had such an incredibly enjoyable year. Coronavirus restrictions continued to lift as the year progressed and so, even though we started the year in 'bubbles,' working in different areas of the garden and having different sittings for lunches and playtimes etc, we were able to all be together by November and settle back into a sense of normality, which felt such a relief for everyone. We even had an audience for our leaver's show, our first in three years, and what a show it was! We visited nursery rhyme land, where our Hansel and Gretel characters bumped into Mary, Mary and her flowers, Twinkle, twinkle stars, The Grand Old Duke of York, 5 little monkeys and 5 little men in a flying saucer, such a great show and so amazing to welcome back an audience. The children had a blast.

Committee

Thank you to our committee for their support this year, Nicky Muller, Lyndsay Purser, Katie Twynam and Jade Parfitt. We are very grateful for all the support you gave us, particularly with the Summer party.

The 'A' team

Acorns is Acorns because of the incredibly wonderful staff team. We have worked together for many years and I cannot thank them enough for all of their hard work. It is a difficult sector to work in, more so recently as the cost of living keeps rising, yet our wages remain stagnant. People are leaving the sector in droves, it is becoming more challenging to continue to work in a sector where we are undervalued by the Government, and under paid. Not through any fault of Acorns, simply because there is no money there to give due to the underfunding of the sector. The team here deserve HUGE pay rises and we wish more than anything we could pay them what they are worth. Luckily for us and for our families, the team are dedicated, passionate early years teachers. We do what we do because we love making a difference to young children and feel pride in giving children the best possible experiences before they go to a more formal setting. Thank you Juliette, Helen, Sam, Hazel, Tigi, Emma, Donna, Pip and Katie, you are an incredible team.

St Mark's negotiations

The negotiations with the St Marks' trustees continue. The trustees have written a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to lay out how the two charities can work together going forward. Jo Shanmugalingam has continued to work as a liaison this year to try to find a version of the MOU that we can all agree to. Thank you to Jo for all of her hard work, we really appreciate all you have done to support us.

The outside covered area

Unfortunately, the discussions for the outside covered area have come to a halt presently. This is something we hope to discuss later in the year as we struggle in the winter and on wet days to accommodate the children's playtimes now we no longer have the hall on these days.

Looking ahead

We continue to be in a precarious position financially, this year has been a challenge and unfortunately, we have made a significant loss. We will need to raise our fees for September to try to get back to a place where we can break even. This is becoming more of a challenge in the current climate and we are aware that many people are struggling. We are facing a rent rise next year as well as a rise in utilities, food etc. It is a worrying time for the team. I hope we can make it through another year and start to plan for financially better times ahead.

Fundraising report

We continued to run our online raffles through Eventgroove Fundraising instead of the usual raffles at the actual events themselves. These have proved very successful and once set up can be easily managed by Antony and Juliette. We held three online raffles during the year and they continue to prove popular and raise more money than our old style paper raffles.

The summer party was a huge success and after missing out on a few years of summer parties due to the Covid pandemic it was great to be back in the garden with the children and parents celebrating the end of the academic year. With a live band, stalls, a BBQ, a table of salads and breads plus an actual mobile bar provided and run by one of the parents (we didn't have to buy the alcohol it was all very generously donated) everyone managed to have a jolly good time. We also purchased some card machines to facilitate card payments as cash becoming increasingly rare since Covid.

We managed to raise a reasonably healthy £3,963 (net) this year which will help enormously going forward so that we can replace some very worn out resources and continue to grow our Forest School.

Juliette Davies

Registration secretary's report

Occupancy rates

Overall occupancy rate was good for 2021-22 with sessions filled apart from Fridays where only 23 of the morning sessions were sold and 17 of the afternoon sessions out of the 25 available. Friday afternoons remain an ongoing issue but we do reduce staffing accordingly.

Statistics for September 2021-22 intake

Total number of children allocated a place	36
Number of returning children	0
Number of siblings	13
Number carried over from previous year's waiting list	0
Number of new children	23

This was the fourth year of the breakfast club option which starts at 8am, and the 4pm finish. Early starts at 9am are still available. Attendance still varies from day to day – see below:

Monday	8am – 5, Monday 9am – 18, Monday 4pm – 5
Tuesday	8am – 5, Tuesday 9am – 16, Tuesday 4pm – 3
Wednesday	8am – 2, Wednesday 9am – 17, Wednesday 4pm – 3
Thursday	8am – 5, Thursday 9am – 18, Thursday 4pm – 5
Friday	8am – 4, Friday 9am – 15, Friday 4pm - 3

Juliette Davies
Administrator

Financial analysis

An enormous thank you to Mr. Alistair Mathers, who once again very kindly offered his time to produce our end of year accounts this year. Thank you so much for your generous support, your time, advice and expert number crunching. We couldn't do it without you!

Income

Pre-school income decreased last year from £211,268 in 2020-21 to **£196.767** in 2021-22. This is due in part to a decrease in fees received, a drop in donations and despite an increase in EYE funding. We are still in the early stages of seeing the full impact of the roll out of the government's extended funding policy and it will take a few years before this stabilizes and we can see the true picture.

The introduction of this new type of funding has brought with it considerable challenges for the management team. Acorns receives funding at £4.30 per hour per child from the government but the actual hourly cost for a child in Acorns is closer to £8.00 per hour. This is a significant shortfall and would make it impossible for Acorns to continue to cover the costs through fundraising. According to BANES the EYE funding is designed to cover the basic level of care and opportunities such as minimum staff ratios, minimum staff qualifications, environment etc. Anything above and beyond this basic level of care can be charged for, including a setting which is graduate led, the qualifications and experience of the staff team, Forest school activities, yoga, baking, high staff to child ratios, resources etc. Because Acorns is such a high quality setting and offers all the above (and so much more) we had no choice but to introduce a new fee structure to cover the shortfall. It was the only way we could continue to offer the very best quality care and education for our children.

Expenditure

Expenditure has increased from **£205,979** to **£210,862** this year. Staff wages and employment costs of £185,434 (this includes the cost of the staff pension) continue to make up the majority of this amount standing at of our overall expenditure.

Fundraising efforts have contributed £6,240 of gross fundraising income with a net income of **£3,963**. A big thank you to everyone who helped out at all the events throughout the year, you've been truly amazing, we simply couldn't do it without you!

Reserves policy as agreed by trustees on 15th May 2007

It was agreed back in 2007 that Acorns would aim to build a reserve fund of £12,000. This was considered equal at the time to a pre-school term (6 weeks) outgoings. Our current restricted reserves stand at £10,000. The restricted reserves are to be used in the event of forced closure relocation, redundancy, insolvency or in any other eventuality that the Management Committee sees fit. The amount to be placed in the restricted reserves fund is reviewed annually at management committee meetings. Unrestricted reserves (i.e the balance of the savings account) amount to £7,734.76. This money is for use on refurbishment and capital expenditure as and when required.

Conclusion

Finances at Acorns remain as precarious as ever; we seem to have one good year, one bad and the challenges of managing the expenditure against the cost of living crisis that has erupted recently has only added to that pressure. Fees will need to be reviewed more frequently to ensure we remain financially viable.

Juliette Davies
Administrator

Wishes for the coming year

- For the Memorandum of Understanding to be completed and both parties be content with the outcome.
- For Acorns to stay a secure unit where we can have rights over our spaces without worry.
- For the outside classroom to be sanded and re-varnished.
- To re-open the discussions on building a covered outside area.
- To replace our wooden garden house, which is slowly falling apart!
- Replace our old wheelbarrows.
- To ask for permission to build a more permanent wood working area.
- A new cover for the story-telling chair

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31st July 2022

A. Pre-school

	Year Ending 31 July 2021	Year Ending 31 July 2022
Income £		
Early Years Entitlement	100,895	101,229
Fees received	97,518	94,543
Extra funding	7,405	740
Bank interest	1	4
Donations	5,449	251
Sub-total	211,268	196,767
Expenditure £		
All employment costs	179,705	185,434
Covid furlough receipts	Nil	Nil
Rent and utilities	10,524	9,560
Insurance	Nil	1,106
Education/training	763	475
Membership fees/subs	1,048	606
Cleaning	1,554	1,002
Educational resources	1,857	2,026
Office administration	2,363	3,224
Equipment/maintenance	2,522	2,056
Snacks	2,759	3,244
Garden	821	785
Sundries	1,164	1,344
Legal fees	899	Nil
Sub-total	205,979	210,862
Net pre-school income/ (expenditure)	5,289	(14,095)

B. Fundraising

Income	5,311	6,240
Expenditure	932	2,277
Net income from fundraising	4,379	3,963

C. Strong box donation

Income	460	Nil
Expenditure	Nil	Nil
Amount available	460	Nil

D. Cash summary

Total income	217,039	203,007
Total expenditure	206,911	213,139
Net income/(expenditure)	10,128	(10,132)

E. Opening cash position

Current account	21,574	31,038
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Strong box donation	Nil	460
Savings account	17,797	18,001
Total	45,974	56,102

F. Closing cash position

Current account	31,038	20,902
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Strong box donation	460	460
Savings account	18,001	18,005
Total	56,102	45,970
Net inflow/(outflow)	10,128	(10,132)

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

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Net inflow/(outflow)	10,128	(10,132)

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Widcombe Acorns

Preschool

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st July 2022.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the 1993 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 43 of the 1993 Act; To follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity
- Commission under section 43(7)(b) of the 1993 Act and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention: (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the 1993 Act;

and

- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and

comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

ALISTAIR H. MATHERS FCA

Meadowgate
Dark Lane
Bathampton
BA2 6SZ

14 December 2022

Accounts



St Mark's Community Centre, St Mark's Road, Bath, BA2 4PA

Registered Charity No: 1029494

Web site: www.widcombeacorns.org.uk

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school Annual Report 1st August 2020 - 31st July 2021

Our objectives and activities

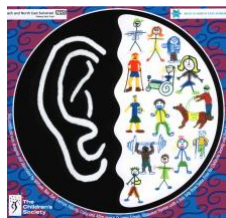
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We respect each individual child, and encourage them to progress at their own pace and therefore reach full potential. Paramount importance is placed on the development of each child's personal, and emotional skills. Self-confidence is encouraged in a sensitive, responsive, warm and loving environment. We work towards each child being a valued member of the group and wider community so that they have a strong self-image and high self-esteem.

At Widcombe Acorns we respect parents and carers as the child's first educator, and endeavour to ensure that they are a key part of their child's current and future learning, and are involved in all aspects of pre-school life. All our staff are given the opportunity to gain further appropriate qualifications that will benefit themselves and the whole group, and we place a great importance on on-going training and skills building.

We have a fully comprehensive Operational Plan in place, which sets out our practice, procedures and all essential policies, such as child protection and equal opportunities. This is reviewed on an on-going basis.



OFSTED Unique Reference Number: 133108.

Structure, governance and management

Our pre-school is managed by an annually elected voluntary committee made of parent trustees, who meet a minimum of six times a year. The purpose of our committee is to oversee the running of the pre-school and to provide input into matters of policy. Along with the Administrator and the Pre-School Leader, it is responsible for the good management of the pre-school's budget. Its aim is to support the staff in providing a safe, caring and stimulating environment for the children in attendance. It also has a responsibility, reflected in its election by our parents, to communicate parental wishes to the pre-school leader and act as an arbitrator, if necessary.

In accordance with our constitution, parents at the pre-school's AGM, which is usually held just prior to the autumn half term, elect the committee annually. All trustees are subject to CRB Enhanced Disclosure clearance.

Our current trustees were appointed at our Annual General Meeting held on 27th November 2018:

Helen Chapman - Chair
Liz Moore – Secretary
Jo Shanmugalingam - Treasurer
Sophie Taylor – Health & Safety Officer
Helen Hudson - Fundraiser

Our trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or benefits in return.

We are governed by a constitution based on The Pre-school Learning Alliance Model 2005, which was adopted on 30th April 2008. The Pre-school Learning Alliance, of which we are members, is a national charity which promotes quality care and education for the under fives. This organisation also provides an advisory service and our insurance package, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Chair's report 2020-21

2020/21 has been another eventful and challenging year for Acorns with many positives, set against a background of ongoing challenges in the sector and continued turmoil as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Staffing

Acorns continues to enjoy a high adult:pupil ratio which enables us to provide enhanced curriculum opportunities, provide additional support to children with disabilities or special educational needs, and to run forest school activities in the way that we do.

Staffing has remained consistent with no turnover in key staff. The struggle to recruit adequate supply staff continues.

Registrations

Acorns was full for Academic year 2020/21.

Acorns continues to be a very popular choice in the community and has built a very strong reputation, with many families returning with siblings.

Challenges

Funding remains a challenge, operational costs are covered but Acorns needs to use reserves or fundraise for significant environmental improvements like the recent kitchen replacement and the ongoing investment in the forest school. We are extremely grateful for several financial gifts made to Acorns by parents this year and for all their continued support with our online raffles.

We are in the process of agreeing a new Memorandum of Understanding with our landlords, St Mark's Community Centre. Members of our committee have been working with St Marks' trustees to develop a partnership agreement which reflects the mutual benefit each charity provides, and reconciles the needs of maintaining a listed building with providing a safe, fun and engaging learning environment for Acorns' pre-school children.

Committee

Recruitment to the committee is always difficult as parents have increasing pressures on their time and many more are working full time. I am incredibly grateful to our committee for 2020/21 for giving so much of their time and supporting the pre-school through a tough year.

Helen Chapman

Chair, Acorns Committee

Pre-school leader's report

We are happy to report that we have survived another year of covid concerns. Although some staff members did contract covid throughout the year, we stayed relatively healthy and managed to stay open and viable to all of our families throughout last year. We are grateful to our families who supported us by staying as safe as they possibly could, following our instructions to keep children at home when poorly. This helped us to get through the year relatively unscathed.

Unfortunately, we had to make the difficult decision at the beginning of the year not to accept children who needed to attend another setting as well as Acorns. This meant that we were not able to accommodate all of the children who had applied last January. Luckily for us we had plenty of children on the waiting list and so we were able to quickly fill those spaces and open to a full cohort in September.

We continued to follow the guidance, which did not allow other adults on the premises, so this was another year of parents having to stay outside the door. This meant that all of our fundraising events had to be cancelled and we could not run any of our shows with an audience to watch the children. This was disappointing for the parents of course, however, the children still had a great time. The Christmas show was filmed and sent out to parents and the staff team ran the Christmas party. We did manage to have a parents' evening in the garden later in the year, all socially distanced and with masks. This was a great success and we will be continuing to run parents' evenings in this way in the future.

Committee

Thank you to our wonderfully supportive committee members, Helen C, Jo, Sophie, Liz and Helen O. Even though we could not meet in person these committee members were there for us every step of the way and we are very grateful to them.

The Acorns team

The team go from strength to strength. It has been such a difficult few years for everyone, with the trustee negotiations being so challenging, then covid hitting the world, it feels like we have faced huge challenges over the past few years. The Acorns team have stayed positively stoic throughout, supporting each other when necessary. I am so grateful to them all. Juliette, in particular, has been a fantastic support; we work incredibly well together and we have managed to weather the storm, even though there have been times over the past year that it has been difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel. A HUGE thank you to Juliette, Helen, Sam, Hazel, Tigi, Pip, Lisa, Emma and Donna.

Friends of Acorns

We were approached by some ex-Acorns parents last year to suggest that they form a 'friends of Acorns' group. This consists of ex and current Acorns parents, who have various skills and talents, that will offer their support to Acorns whenever necessary. The founders met with the St Mark's trustees to discuss the issues that have been dominating us for the past few years. They have pledged to be there for Acorns whenever they are needed. This community spirit and support is what Acorns is about and we are very grateful and in awe of these parents. Thank you to Daisy, Vishaka and Shona for the idea and the support.

St Mark's negotiations on Acorns' rights

Helen C and Jo took over the negotiations with the St Mark's trustees from our two lawyer parents, Rich and Andrew and our previous Chair, Antony. We had some outside advice on our rights and this gave us a better basis for what rights Acorns have. The negotiations have been slow due to Covid, however, they are progressing, which is a relief for all involved. Thank you to Helen and Jo for leading on the negotiations.

Finances

Without being able to run any of our usual fundraising events we had serious concerns over how we could stay viable last year. However, our fabulously supportive parents went above and beyond, ensuring that our two raffles of the year, Christmas and Summer, were incredibly well supported, with ex-parents, current parents and future parents buying huge amounts of raffle tickets to ensure that Acorns could stay afloat. The tickets purchased raised more than we usually do when we run the fundraising events! We thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

Outside classroom

Our wonderful outside classroom has made such a difference to our daily forest school sessions. Children are no longer reluctant to participate in the winter sessions, as they are now a mixture of outside and a lovely, warm, inviting space to go to drink hot chocolate, read stories, sing and take part in activities in the warm. It is an incredible resource and we are forever grateful to the People's Post Code Lottery for the funding to build it.

Outside covered area

Unfortunately the outside covered area, which we have been hoping to build to recoup lost hall space, has still not materialised. We are working with a local designer and builder to design a space that the trustees will give us permission to erect. This will be a pergola type space, with tensile sail sides and roof for inclement weather. This is an on-going issue, as we may have to return the funding if we cannot build this soon. Luckily, we have been given an extension due to covid. We are hoping that the more positive negotiations between our new committee members and the trustees may help this to progress next year.

Our environment

The St Mark's trustees had a lot of tree work completed in the garden this year, which gave us lots of wood chip to enhance the forest school areas. The children and team worked hard to spread this around the garden and make the areas more defined and useable in the wetter weather. We also planted hundreds of bulbs and enhanced our planting areas. Emma, who is a wonderfully knowledgeable gardener, worked with the children to plant lots of fruit and vegetables, which they then harvested throughout the year and cooked or ate straight from the soil. We have been able to invest in some new resources to enhance our provision. We have bought some new trikes, the first in many years, we have a new rope swing under the Yew tree, we have bought more wood working tools and an oven for inside baking.

Looking ahead

It is difficult to plan our future as the world is presently such an uncertain place. I believe that the last few years have demonstrated that we can survive however. We have so much support from the local community that Acorns continues to be precious, not only to the staff team, but also to the huge amounts of parents and children we have served over many, many years. This gives us strength and hope for a bright future.

Fundraising report

As the Covid pandemic raged ever onwards we were yet again unable to hold our usual fundraising activities; the Christmas show and party, the Bath Half Marathon and the annual Summer Party in the garden. The children did however still have their own Christmas show which was filmed so the parents could enjoy watching the performances. We also laid on a Christmas party for the children so they enjoyed a party lunch with the staff and their fellow Acorns.

We continued to run our online raffles through Eventgroove Fundraising instead of the usual raffles at the actual events themselves. These have proved very successful and once set up can be easily managed by Antony and Juliette. We managed to raise a reasonably healthy £4379 (net) this year which will help enormously going forward so that we can replace some very worn out resources such as trikes and continue to grow our Forest School.

We really hope that our usual parties can resume in the coming academic year as not only do they raise significant and much needed funds for Acorns, they are also a great way of meeting and making new friends and they have become much loved and eagerly anticipated social events within the local community.

Juliette Davies

Registration secretary's report

Occupancy rates

Overall occupancy rate was good for 2020-21 with sessions filled apart from Fridays where only 23 of the morning sessions were sold and 17 of the afternoon sessions out of the 25 available. Friday afternoons remain an ongoing issue but we do reduce staffing accordingly.

Statistics for September 2020-21 intake

Total number of children allocated a place	36
Number of returning children	0
Number of siblings	20
Number carried over from previous year's waiting list	0
Number of new children	16

This was the third year of the breakfast club option which starts at 8am, and the 4pm finish. Early starts at 9am are still available. Attendance still varies from day to day – see below:

Monday	8am – 6, Monday 9am – 8, Monday 4pm – 3
Tuesday	8am – 8, Tuesday 9am – 5, Tuesday 4pm – 6
Wednesday	8am – 7, Wednesday 9am – 8, Wednesday 4pm – 2
Thursday	8am – 5, Thursday 9am – 7, Thursday 4pm – 4
Friday	8am – 0, Friday 9am – 6, Friday 4pm - 3

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Juliette Davies
Administrator

Financial analysis

An enormous thank you to Mr. Alistair Mathers, who once again very kindly offered his time to produce our end of year accounts this year. Thank you so much for your generous support, your time, advice and expert number crunching. We couldn't do it without you!

Income

Pre-school income increased last year from £172,520 in 2019-20 to **£211,268** in 2020-21. This is due in part to a decrease in fee income, despite an increase in EYE funding and donations. We are still in the early stages of seeing the full impact of the roll out of the government's extended funding policy and it will take a few years before this stabilizes and we can see the true picture.

The introduction of this new type of funding has brought with it considerable challenges for the management team. Acorns receives funding at £4.14 per hour per child from the government but the actual hourly cost for a child in Acorns is £6.50 per hour. This is a significant shortfall and would make it impossible for Acorns to continue to cover the costs through fundraising. According to BANES the EYE funding is designed to cover the basic level of care and opportunities such as minimum staff ratios, minimum staff qualifications, environment etc. Anything above and beyond this basic level of care can be charged for, including a setting which is graduate led, the qualifications and experience of the staff team, Forest school activities, yoga, baking, high staff to child ratios, resources etc. Because Acorns is such a high quality setting and offers all the above (and so much more) we had no choice but to introduce a new fee structure to cover the shortfall. It was the only way we could continue to offer the very best quality care and education for our children.

Expenditure

Expenditure has increased from £176,403 to **£205,979** this year. Staff wages and employment costs of £179,705 (this includes the cost of the staff pension) continue to make up the majority of this amount standing at of our overall expenditure.

Fundraising efforts have contributed £5,311 of gross fundraising income with a net income of **£4,379**. A big thank you to everyone who helped out at all the events throughout the year, you've been truly amazing, we simply couldn't do it without you!

Reserves policy as agreed by trustees on 15th May 2007

It was agreed back in 2007 that Acorns would aim to build a reserve fund of £12,000. This was considered equal at the time to a pre-school term (6 weeks) outgoings. Our current restricted reserves stand at £10,000. The restricted reserves are to be used in the event of forced closure relocation, redundancy, insolvency or in any other eventuality that the Management Committee sees fit. The amount to be placed in the restricted reserves fund is reviewed annually at management committee meetings. Unrestricted reserves (i.e the balance of the savings account) amount to £7,734.76. This money is for use on refurbishment and capital expenditure as and when required.

Conclusion

The introduction of a new fee structure following the extension of the EYE to up to 30 hours a week has been a challenging for Acorns and parents alike. There was simply no possibility

that our pre-school (nor many others for that matter) could survive this increase in funded hours without a significant increase in the hourly rate received from BANES. Obviously this did not materialize so many settings have been forced to charge for extras to make up for the loss in fee revenue. We are hoping that eventually this will ease the pressure on fundraising, although this year has been another cost heavy one with the ongoing need to re-fit and re-furbish the pre-school rooms. We hope that next year we will get a clearer picture of the true financial implications of these changes. In the meantime we continue to manage costs carefully and hope that going forward we remain financially viable.

Juliette Davies
Administrator

Wishes for the coming year

- For the negotiations with the St Marks current trustees to progress and to stay positive.
- For our rights to the spaces we have occupied for many, many years to be recognised.
- For the covered area to be constructed, or a decision to be made on whether this can progress.
- For more outside storage for forest school resources.
- A new cover for the story telling chair.
- New wheelbarrows, both adult and child sized.
- To fix our very old and disintegrating mud kitchen, or to build a new one in its place.
- To award the staff a long overdue payrise
- To fully fund one place for a disadvantaged child.

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31st July 2021

A. Pre-school

	Year Ending 31 July 2020	Year Ending 31 July 2021
Income £		
Early Years Entitlement	85,041	100,895
Fees received	85,743	97,518
Extra funding	146	7,405
Bank interest	30	1
Donations	1,560	5,449
Sub-total	172,520	211,268
Expenditure £		
All employment costs	166,861	179,705
Covid furlough receipts	(13,262)	Nil
Rent and utilities	8,634	10,524
Insurance	939	Nil
Education/training	194	763
Membership fees/subs	530	1,048
Cleaning	785	1,554
Educational resources	931	1,857
Office administration	2,099	2,363
Equipment/maintenance	3,604	2,522
Snacks	2,683	2,759
Garden	1,134	821
Sundries	1,271	1,164
Legal fees	Nil	899
Sub-total	176,403	205,979
Net pre-school income/ (expenditure)	(3,883)	5,289

B. Fundraising

Income	5,982	5,311
Expenditure	260	932
Net income from fundraising	5,722	4,379

C. Postcode Lottery

Income	Nil	Nil
Expenditure	Nil	Nil
Amount available	Nil	Nil

D. Strong box donation

Income	Nil	460
Expenditure	Nil	Nil
Amount available	Nil	460

E. Cash summary

Total income	178,502	217,039
Total expenditure	176,663	206,911
Net income/(expenditure)	1,839	10,128

F. Opening cash position

Current account	19,765	21,574
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Strong box donation	Nil	Nil
Savings account	17,767	17,797
Total	44,135	45,974

G. Closing cash position

Current account	21,574	31,038
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Strong box donation	Nil	460
Savings account	17,797	18,001
Total	45,974	56,102
Net inflow/(outflow)	1,839	10,128

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

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Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Widcombe Acorns Preschool

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st July 2021.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the 1993 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 43 of the 1993 Act; To follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity
- Commission under section 43(7)(b) of the 1993 Act and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the 1993 Act;

and

- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

ALISTAIR H. MATHERS FCA

Meadowgate
Dark Lane
Bathampton
BA2 6SZ

10th November 2021

Accounts



St Mark's Community Centre, St Mark's Road, Bath, BA2 4PA

Registered Charity No: 1029494

Web site: www.widcombeacorns.org.uk

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school Annual Report 1st August 2019 - 31st July 2020

Our objectives and activities

Established over forty years ago, Widcombe Acorns provides full day-care for 40 pre-school children, aged between 3 years and statutory school age during the 2019-2020 academic year. We are open to all local children and their families regardless of their race, colour, creed or ability.

We are committed to providing a caring and secure environment where children can play, learn and grow, happily and safely. Each individual child's learning is encouraged by providing a well balanced and stimulating range of activities across the areas defined in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Our approach is child-led and based on observation, research and documentation of our children at play.

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We have a fully comprehensive Operational Plan in place, which sets out our practice, procedures and all essential policies, such as child protection and equal opportunities. This is reviewed on an on-going basis.



OFSTED Unique Reference Number: 133108

Structure, governance and management

Our pre-school is managed by an annually elected voluntary committee made of parent trustees, who meet a minimum of six times a year. The purpose of our committee is to oversee the running of the pre-school and to provide input into matters of policy. Along with the Administrator and the Pre-School Leader, it is responsible for the good management of the pre-school's budget. Its aim is to support the staff in providing a safe, caring and stimulating environment for the children in attendance. It also has a responsibility, reflected in its election by our parents, to communicate parental wishes to the pre-school leader and act as an arbitrator, if necessary.

In accordance with our constitution, parents at the pre-school's AGM, which is usually held just prior to the autumn half term, elect the committee annually. All trustees are subject to CRB Enhanced Disclosure clearance.

Our current trustees were appointed at our Annual General Meeting held on 24th October 2019:

Antony Moore - Chair
Sophie Taylor – Secretary
Andrew Conway
Richard Hall
Katie Dougan-Hyde
Marie Youngman
Vishaka Robinson

Our trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or benefits in return.

We are governed by a constitution based on The Pre-school Learning Alliance Model 2005, which was adopted on 30th April 2008. The Pre-school Learning Alliance, of which we are members, is a national charity which promotes quality care and education for the under fives. This organisation also provides an advisory service and our insurance package, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Chair's report

It has been a challenging year that has seen much disruption, additional cost and unplanned events that have made progress challenging on a number of key issues.

St Mark's Trustees

The year started with some progress on trying to resolve challenges with our relationship with St Mark's. A number of regular meetings were held, with support from two parents (lawyers). Whilst progress was limited on the main issues of access, hall use and garden at least communication channels were opened and discussions were being had.

However, we formed the view that progress would still be limited and we began to seek formal legal opinion as to Acorns rights and liabilities.

With the global pandemic and lockdown, meetings ceased and there has been no progress since March 2020.

Finances

See the full financial report.

However, with limited fundraising options during last year it has proved a very challenging year financially.

Registrations

January registration went well and once again Acorns was oversubscribed with places filling within 24 hours.

Operations

Clearly lockdown in March had a significant impact on Acorns with reopening in June. The team have worked incredibly hard to create a safe environment for the children to operate within and have moved as much activity as possible outdoors.

The challenges of missed learning, missed social opportunities, mental well being and staff resilience have been very significant and it has been a very difficult year, as it has been for many people. We look forward to a new committee and a changing situation in 2020 / 2021.

Antony Moore
Chair, Acorns Committee

Pre-school leader's report

Ofsted

We started this year in the best way possible, by having an Ofsted inspection in December and gaining an Outstanding rating! Our fourth Outstanding in a row!

This was a great boost for the team, who work so hard to ensure Acorns is an inspiring place to be for all children. The Ofsted report was glowing and we all felt wonderful that our passion, dedication and work was recognised and praised.

Lockdown

After having such an amazing start to the year, the challenges due to the Coronavirus pandemic started to affect everyone and Acorns was no exception. We waited with baited breath to see what would happen in March and met the first lockdown news with a sense of trepidation. For the first time in 45 years, Acorns was to close its doors.

We felt such mixed emotions, a sense of relief on behalf of the worried staff team, but also huge concern for our future. At the time, no one knew how long this would last, whether we would see the children again or even, whether we would re-open again at all. It was all extremely worrying.

Finances

Financially, this was a testing time. As we were no longer providing a service, we took the decision to stop charging parents for sessions. St Mark's trustees supported Acorns by removing any rent payments, which we are very grateful for. All the team were furloughed and we took the decision to make top up payments to ensure the team were looked after whilst we waited to see how the situation evolved.

Fundraising

Thanks to our incredible parents, who held a huge fund-raiser for us during lockdown, we stayed financially viable throughout and lived to see another term! Some of our current parents organised an on-line fund-raiser for past, present and future parents. To celebrate our 46th birthday, children had to do '46 somethings' and post them on-line to share. This was a HUGE success and the funds raised more than made up for missing our summer party fund raiser at the end of the year. Such amazing community spirit, organised to support Acorns through a challenging time was so humbling. We are extremely lucky to have such incredible parents.

Double celebration

We had hoped to host a double celebration in May, our fourth Outstanding and Acorns 46th birthday! We had planned a huge party for all current and ex Acorns and their families. The caterers were booked, and we were in to the planning phase when lockdown struck. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the event, which was so disappointing.

Acorns is at the heart of such a large community of children and their families, we were looking forward to thanking them for all of their support over the past 46 years. However, we remain hopeful that we will be able to celebrate in the not-too-distant-future!

Re-opening

We were extremely happy to welcome the children back to Acorns for term 6. To be able to open safely we purchased gazebos, outside hand washing stations and camping toilets. We split the children in to two 'bubbles' The Garden Rangers and the Woodland Warriors. These groups worked outside and were separate at all times to keep them as safe as we possibly could. This worked incredibly well and we enjoyed a fabulous last term of the year.

St Mark's

The negotiations with St Marks trustees, regarding the lease and access to Acorns, have been intermittent over the year. Two Acorns parents, both lawyers, took part in some meetings with two trustee representatives early on in the year, however, for various reasons these talks did not continue and the situation remains on-going.

Summary

So, all in all, a very different kind of year for Acorns. However, I feel that we have emerged as strong and as determined as ever. The staff team continue to work together to make Acorns an incredible place for a pre-schooler to be, even during a global pandemic and we are proud of our achievements. Here's to another successful year ahead!

Dena Moore
Pre-school Leader

Fundraising report

2019-2020 proved to be an incredibly challenging year for fundraising. We managed to enjoy our Christmas party and show but the ensuing Coronavirus pandemic ensured that all large group parties and events could no longer take place. The Bath Half went ahead but with reduced numbers as the pandemic had started to take hold by then. Many runners chose to run the distance separately away from the crowds.

Christmas show and party

The Christmas Party was a huge and very busy event this year, with a raffle, hampers, and the usual fun for the children. A party lunch was on offer for the children plus home made soup, mulled wine and mince pies available for the parents. A lot of preparation was needed, but it ran very smoothly and was completed by a visit from Father Christmas.

Acorns 46th Virtual Birthday Party

The Summer Party was an enormously successful event, and was enjoyed by all. We had the usual raffle, with some fabulous prizes on offer. Plus we had live music and a bouncy castle and plenty of stalls and activities for the children. The food was exceptional with a BBQ manned by a team of Dads and there were ample salads, cheeses, quiches etc for the adults. Dessert was cakes for the kids and strawberries and cream for the adults.

In conclusion

With no end to the pandemic in sight we are not feeling particularly optimistic for this coming year either, however we do have a strong and enthusiastic new committee coming onboard in September and they are busy brain-storming new and creative ways to raise money for Acorns.

Juliette Davies
Administrator

Registration secretary's report

Occupancy rates

Overall occupancy rate was very good for 2019-20 with all sessions filled apart from a few spares on Friday afternoons but we reduced staffing accordingly.

Statistics for September 2019-20 intake

Total number of children allocated a place	39
Number of returning children	1
Number of siblings	16
Number carried over from previous year's waiting list	2
Number of new children	20

Juliette Davies
Administrator

Financial analysis

An enormous thank you to Mr. Alistair Mathers, who once again very kindly offered his time to produce our end of year accounts this year despite being in the middle of a global pandemic! Thank you so much for your generous support, your time, advice and expert number crunching. We remain forever in your debt.

Income

Pre-school income decreased last year from £185,162 in 2018-2019 to £172,520 in 2019-20. This is due to a decrease in EYE and in fee income due to the pandemic.

The fee structure remains unchanged and is as follows:

For all funded hours (including the original 15 hours):

£2.50 per hour (£7.50 per session, £15.00 per day)

For any non-funded hours e.g. if you are only eligible for 15 but your child attends more than that:

£6.50 per hour (£19.50 per session, £39.00 per day)

Expenditure

Expenditure has decreased from £203,739 to £176,403 this year. Staff wages and employment costs of £166,681 (this includes the cost of the staff pension) continue to make up the majority of this amount standing at 82% of our overall expenditure.

Fundraising efforts have contributed £5,982 of gross fundraising income with a net income of £5,722. A big thank you to everyone who helped out at the Christmas party and those amazing fundraisers who organised and participated in the birthday fundraiser in May which took place during lockdown. All the events throughout the year, you've been truly amazing, we simply couldn't do it without you!

Reserves policy as agreed by trustees on 15th May 2007

It was agreed back in 2007 that Acorns would aim to build a reserve fund of £12,000. This was considered equal at the time to a pre-school term (6 weeks) outgoings. Our current restricted reserves stand at £10,000. The restricted reserves are to be used in the event of forced closure relocation, redundancy, insolvency or in any other eventuality that the Management Committee sees fit. The amount to be placed in the restricted reserves fund is reviewed annually at management committee meetings. Unrestricted reserves (i.e. the balance of the savings account) amount to £7,734.76. This money is for use on refurbishment and capital expenditure as and when required.

Conclusion and the impact of the pandemic

The pandemic obviously brought with it many challenges, not just financial. Additional resources were required and purchased to adhere to the government's Covid secure guidelines. We had to spend money on outdoor sinks and toilets, on PPE and extra cleaning equipment, plus an extra member of staff was recruited in order to safely manage the two

bubbles outside once we were permitted to re-open.

After being forced to close from 23rd March when the government imposed the first national lockdown Acorns did not re-open until lockdown started to ease at the beginning of the summer term (Term 6). We were fortunate that the EYE funding continued throughout this period as we had no fees coming in at all for Term 5. All staff were furloughed (with the exception of the Administrator) as this helped to ease the financial situation somewhat. Most children returned in June as we did our best to keep them as safe and secure as possible by the formation of two separate 'bubbles' – Woodland Warriors and Garden Rangers. The children remained in their bubbles outside in the garden with no interaction with the other bubble's children or staff. We also had to insist that children only attend a single setting to reduce the risk of cross infection. With no new parents' evening, no taster sessions for the new children starting in September, and no parent visits permitted on site it was a much quieter term than normal, however the weather was glorious and the children were clearly delighted to be back and I think the parents were rather pleased too!

Juliette Davies
Administrator

**Wishes for the coming year
Some from last year, and some new,
There is always hope they may come true!**

- A covered outside play area to recoup the space lost from the hall being rented out to other users during days where historically Acorns had sole use.
- A compost toilet for Forest School sessions.
- Woodworking tools.
- Outside dedicated area for woodworking.
- New trikes.
- A new oven and oven housing for inside Acorns. We would like to be self-sufficient in our cooking and no longer need to rely on St Mark's kitchen to bake if possible.
- New smoke alarms.

Widcombe Acorns Pre-school

Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31st July 2020

A. Pre-school

	Year Ending 31 July 2019	Year Ending 31 July 2020
Income £		
Early Years Entitlement	95,468	85,041
Fees received	87,628	85,743
Extra funding	379	146
Bank interest	33	30
Donations	1,654	1,560
Sub-total	185,162	172,520
Expenditure £		
All employment costs	165,371	166,861
Covid furlough receipts	0	(13,262)
Rent and utilities	11,173	8,634
Insurance	931	939
Education/training	723	194
Membership fees/subs	483	530
Cleaning	1,365	785
Educational resources	2,026	931
Office administration	3,335	2,099
Equipment/maintenance	1,229	3,604
Snacks	3,583	2,683
Garden	1,399	1,134
Sundries	2,386	1,271
Refurbishment	8,535	0
Legal fees	1,200	0
Sub-total	203,739	176,403
Net pre-school (expenditure)	(18,577)	(3,883)

B. Fundraising

Income	6,357	5,982
Expenditure	1,733	260
Net income from fundraising	4,624	5,722

C. Postcode Lottery

Income	20,000	0
Total expenditure	13,397	0
Amount available to satisfy grant aim	6,603	0

D. Cash summary

Total income	211,519	178,502
Total expenditure	218,869	176,663
Net income/(expenditure)	(7,350)	1,839

E. Opening cash position

Current account	33,751	19,765
Postcode lottery	0	6,603
Savings account	17,734	17,767
Total	51,485	44,135

F. Closing cash position

Current account	19,765	21,574
Postcode lottery	6,603	6,603
Savings account	17,767	17,797
Total	44,135	45,974
Net inflow/(outflow)	(7,350)	1,839

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Widcombe Acorns **Preschool**

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st July 2020.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the 1993 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 43 of the 1993 Act; To follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity
- Commission under section 43(7)(b) of the 1993 Act and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention: (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the 1993 Act;

and

- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

ALISTAIR H. MATHERS FCA

Meadowgate
Dark Lane
Bathampton
BA2 6SZ

23rd November 2020