



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

Registered Charity No: 1029494

Web site: [www.widcombeacorns.org.uk](http://www.widcombeacorns.org.uk)

# **Widcombe Acorns Pre-school Annual Report**

## **1<sup>st</sup> 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.

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 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 46<sup>th</sup> 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 46<sup>th</sup> 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 46<sup>th</sup> 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
<b>Income £</b>		
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
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>185,162</b>	<b>172,520</b>
<b>Expenditure £</b>		
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
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>203,739</b>	<b>176,403</b>
<b>Net pre-school (expenditure)</b>	<b>(18,577)</b>	<b>(3,883)</b>

## 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

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

## **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