

ST HELEN'S PLAYGROUP

AGM MINUTES

Wednesday 4th February 2026 at 9.00am

In attendance:

Committee

Charlotte Ayers (Chair)

Harvey Crane

Viviana Botti

Carol Pickering (Co-opted Committee Member and Manager, acting Secretary)

Parents

Runa Begum, Kamile Darzinskaite, Rukia Khatun, Huwnas Ali, Ryan Page, Amber Maples, Memud Omotoyosi, Andreea Radu, Agnieka Panek, Deepak Shinde, Anuradha Shinde, Ismat Jahan Mim

Apologies:

Agnes Barabas, Tiffany Bellingham, Rachel Smith

1. Welcome

Charlotte Ayers welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced herself as Chairperson, Harvey Crane as the new Treasurer and Viviani Botti as a Committee Member and fundraiser.

2. Chairperson's Report

St Helen's Playgroup has been running now for over 35 years and continues to thrive despite all the challenges that pre-schools are having to face, from a lack of government funding and annual increases to the national minimum wage to increased expectations.

We currently have 7 members of staff on permanent contracts and 1 on a zero hour contract to provide cover when needed. The minimum adult:child ratios are always exceeded. This has always been the philosophy of the playgroup and although maximising these ratios would bring in more revenue we believe that this would compromise the care and learning opportunities that we would be able to provide.

St Helen's Playgroup, St Helen's Church, St Helen's Street, Ipswich, IP4 2LS

Charity Number: 1029698

Ofsted Number: 251649

The Playgroup continues to provide as many varied opportunities for the children as possible, including various trips and visits throughout the year. In the past year the children have enjoyed dance sessions with the Ipswich School of Dance, a visit to Soft Play and the Play Den, the Christmas Tree Festival, the library, the local Pet Shop, Brickmaker's Wood and both Alexandra and Christchurch Parks. We have also enjoyed regular visits from the charity Let's Talk Reading who also gave each child a book at Christmas.

The outcome of our regular Ofsted inspection last June was not as good as we had hoped. The issues of concern related to recruitment procedures and have now been addressed. It is important to note that Ofsted commented on:

- The high ratio of qualified staff to children.
- The curriculum being successfully built on children's interests, which means children meaningfully engage and make good progress in their learning.
- Communication and language is incredibly well supported by staff.
- The staff focus on high-quality interactions and make the most of each moment to talk to children.
- The playgroup uses additional funding wisely to positively impact on children's learning and experiences.

We are likely to be inspected again during the current academic year when it is hoped that the additional work that the team have been doing to embed newly introduced areas of the curriculum, including environmental sustainability and oral health, will be recognised.

Our biggest challenge is remaining financially viable. In less than 3 years our annual rent has increased from £1,500 per annum to over £5,000. The minimum wage also continues to increase year on year, which has a huge impact on our pay scales. However, with almost all our children receiving the Government's Early Education Funding, there is little opportunity for us to increase income from fees. We do not want to have to compromise the care and learning opportunities that the children benefit from but if financial pressures continue, we may have to consider reducing the number of staff we have at each session. Your support is therefore vital to us either by contributing towards the cost of providing a healthy snack for the children each day when asked to do so each term or by organising fund raising activities to enable us to buy additional resources.

3. Treasurer's Report

Carol presented the report on behalf of the new Treasurer. A copy of this report is attached to the Minutes of this meeting. The accounts for 2024/25 were subject to an independent examination and no concerns were raised.

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Carol explained that although the last financial year was profitable, this was due to the playgroup operating at maximum capacity for the entire year. During the autumn term this year, numbers were much lower due to the higher proportion of children on the waiting list with birthdays between September and December. Although we are now full to capacity, the lower numbers in the autumn term will severely impact upon our income for the year.

Parents were asked if they could please contribute towards the cost of providing a healthy snack for the children each day. A voluntary contribution of 10p per day for each day that a child attends is suggested, which is a maximum of £7.00 per term. Alternatively, parents could provide, for example, a cucumber or a bag of apples whenever they can afford to do so.

Harvey then introduced himself, explaining his background and how he hopes to be able to support the playgroup.

4. Playgroup Update from the Manager

Carol explained that Preschools are now required to evidence environmental sustainability by producing a Climate Action Plan and working towards Sustainable Development Goals. Siobhan is leading on this initiative with the support of Viviana. This is not just about developing a love of nature and recycling or repurposing things but also aims to develop an understanding of our World so that we can all work towards developing an environmentally sustainable world with kindness and respect being our priority. We would like to be able to grow some vegetables with the children in our garden and would like parents to consider raising some money to enable us to buy the resources to do this.

Oral health also forms part of the Early Years Curriculum and we are now part of the Let's Brush initiative that supports children to brush their teeth each day during sessions. Carol gave a brief talk on the foods and drinks that are good/bad for children's teeth and provided handouts to take home as well as guidance and a sticker chart for parents and children to use at home.

Lots of trips and visits are planned for the second half of the spring term and into the summer. Most of these will be free of charge.

Carol reiterated that the team are always happy to talk with you about your child and how you can support their development at home and can also offer advice and reassurance on things like toilet training and managing challenging behaviour. They are here to help support you as well as caring for and supporting your child. Please speak to your child's Key Person if you have any concerns or would like any help or advice.

5. Invitation for new Committee Members

Charlotte invited anyone interested in becoming a Committee member, particularly if they are interested in fund raising for Playgroup or taking on a committee role to stay behind for a few moments.

There were no further questions, so Charlotte thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

St Helen's Playgroup
Treasurers Report
Annual Accounts Report YE2025

The following balances were held by St Helens Playgroup as at 30th April 2025:

Llyods Account	£ 59,047.43
Petty Cash in Hand	nil
Total	£ 59,047.43

The accounts for the period May 2024 to April 2025 are as shown below:

Income	£77,354.55
Expenditure	£61,938.49
Profit/ (Loss)	£15,416.06

	FY25	FY24
Profit/ (Loss)	£15,416.06	£1,776.74
Income	£77,354.55	£54,864.96
Expenditure	£61,938.49	£53,088.22
Local Authority Funding	£68,009.90	£44,691.25
Attendance Fees	£8,525.20	£6,610.00
Grants	0	£700.00
Fund Raising	0	£227.31
Other	£819.45	£2,636.40
Expenditure		
Wages	£53,596.82	£45,742.20
Training	£983.04	£116.60
Rent	£3,799.27	£1,480.00
Equipment	£176.31	£972.34
Consumables	£1,036.21	£1,260.60
Other	£2,346.84	£3,516.48

It should be noted that of the £59,047.43 held on 30/04/2025, £16,099.87 related to specific funding and £22,800.00 to allocated reserves, leaving £20,147.56 of accessible funds.



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
St Helen's Playgroup

On accounts for the year
ended

30 April 2025

Charity no
(if any)

1029698

Set out on pages

Financial Summary

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **30 / 04 / 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 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date: 04/11/2025

Name:

Gary L Parker

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

FCCA

Address:

23 Woodrush Road, Purdis Farm, Ipswich, IP3 8RB

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.