

Trustees of Priorslee Pre-School Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 2020

7th April 2021

It would be remiss of me not to add the reality check to the Treasurer's report on the financial performance of Priorslee Pre-School, and to spell out, in real terms the level of support we received, the way our industry views the Government lack of support, whilst their expectations of us are both high and unrealistic, and to face the grim reality of a future still in the grip of a pandemic.

Firstly I would like to thank the Co-op Local Community Fund, and all those who participated in it by nominating us as their chosen good cause. Our original bid was for funds to replace the flooring in the Community Centre, but, as heart and lung problems emerged as symptomatic of catching Covid-19, we reviewed the local community demographic, viewed our location, and decided that of greater potential benefit to the community would be a fully accessible defibrillator with 24/7 access- fully automatic and suitable, at the flick of a switch, for adults and children alike. We have not publicised our purchase- it is for community benefit, and so needs to remain intact and serviceable until the day it saves a life. We do not need publicity or public thanks- we exist as a charity to serve the needs of the community. The remainder of the Co-op grant we subsidised to carry out urgent remedial works- replacing the worn out laminate flooring in the kitchen area with non-slip Altro flooring and also replacing the badly stained vertical blinds throughout the centre.

The Government were generous in their funding- this was maintained at 2019 levels and helped towards the increased cost of operating safely- extra cleaning, anti-bacterial whole area fogging, extra hand wash and hand gel stations. Great news for 2020, but not repeated for 2021 when it was obvious that job losses, the end of the furlough scheme, Covid-19 still spreading and creating fears of visiting multi-occupancy spaces were all going to lead to a reduction of the number of children on roll, and also funding received. An accountant would give you the instant solution; - "Increase your charges," but, in times when the furlough scheme is about to end and jobs will be lost, an increase in National Insurance contributions due from next April, rising food prices and fuel bills, schools still only accepting pupils in expensive logo embroidered or printed school wear, family expenditure is already spiralling out of control, with the resultant uncertainty and mental pressures on many families. As a Committee we do not see it as the role of our charity to move the cost of providing childcare that gives parents the opportunity to work in keep their living standards to a cost that is beyond affordability and thus to increase pressure on the family finances.

The latest statistics from the Government highlight that in excess of 2000 early years providers have been lost since the start of this year at a cost of more than 11000 childcare places, detrimental to both working parents and to developing the children who our own future! Without additional support to our sector this number will grow and grow- what a very poor show from a Government, outwardly supported by a key member of the Royal family, that not only advocate the immeasurable benefit to a child of receiving early years education, but also, in the midst of the current uncertainties, the massive benefit to a young child's mental health and wellbeing

derived from the mixing freely to play with their peer group- making friendships that can quite possibly last the whole of their lives and provide an invaluable release from the confusing and bemusing things they hear banded around their own homes.

We have an invaluable role to play in supporting, educating and nurturing the future generations- this was recognised when the Government needed us to continue to provide key worker childcare at a time when our staff were fearful of their own and their own families health and wellbeing. They expected us to put our fears aside- no matter how old, ill, frail or fearful our staff were, not only for their own wellbeing, but also for that of their loved ones. Our reward for this dedication and support is not forthcoming- just like the high street shops and the travel industry we are abandoned to wither and die, leaving only those who have profiteered in the past, building up cash reserves at the expense of re-investing in their offer to the children, to continue in a position where their services are charged at premium price and beyond the reach of many. This flies in the face of the founding principles of our society- that of free education for all and signifies deep rooted problems for years to come. For our part we have cash reserves that were accumulated by a combination of careful budgeting and by volunteers carrying out unpaid work, but these will have to be managed carefully to allow us to fund the changes that need to happen this year. We have a large investment to make into making sure our staff training is not only kept up to date, but also that extra training is given to address child mental health and wellbeing issues as well as the Early Years Foundation Stage changes later this year at a time when one of our managers reaches retirement age and a successor must be found. I am also, at age 68, not immune to advancing years, and look to make a phased step away from my duties as both Chairperson and Designated Safeguarding Lead that have seen me be in the setting every day of opening since the pandemic struck over a year ago. My aim is for us to elect a new Chairperson who I can support by stepping into a role as Deputy Chair, and to make a phased handover over time.

In conclusion, having spelt out the harsh realities of the future challenges, I would like to pay the greatest of tributes to the staff of Priorslee Pre-School, who have worked tirelessly for the past year, putting their dedication to their role in childcare in front of their own health, families and fears, comforting those in need and supporting those who felt vulnerable. I hope that our dogged determination and will of steel will see us through the darker days and take us into the light beyond.

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Examiner's statement

APEX CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Birmingham

0121 622 6512

email: info@apextax.co.uk

www.apextax.co.uk

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Priorslee Pre School

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st December 2020, which are set out herein.

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(3)(a) of the 1993 Act);
- To follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners 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

Our examination was carried out in accordance with the General Direction given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and 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 I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

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

1. which gives us 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 accounting records and comply with accounting requirements of the 1993 Act have not been met; or
2. to which, in our opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Apex Chartered Accountants
94 Moseley Street
Digbeth
Birmingham
B12 0RT

24th August 2021

APEX CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
94 Moseley Street
Birmingham
B12 0RT
0121 622 6512
email: info@apextax.co.uk
www.apextax.co.uk

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