

# AVALON SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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The trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note to the financial statements and comply with the trust's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and the Charities SORP "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)".

### **Objectives and activities**

#### *Public benefit*

The trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the trust should undertake.

#### *Activities*

The objects for which the charity is established are to further the education of children between the ages of 2-11 and to maintain, manage, develop and carry on an early years, infant and junior school and to supply to pupils general instruction of the highest standard.

The principal activity of the charitable company throughout the year was the operation, management and development of Avalon School.

Avalon School is committed to providing a quality educational experience for all its pupils, by enabling each child to reach his or her full potential intellectually, socially and physically. The School's objectives are to provide a secure, happy and stimulating environment in which children feel confident to ask questions and learn, involving parents in this process by discussion with them on their children's work and progress and to prepare pupils for examinations for both the state and independent secondary schools.

The School promotes the academic, moral, social and physical development of its pupils through its academic curriculum, pastoral care, sporting and other activities. An educational environment is provided where each child can develop self-confidence and a desire to contribute to the wider community.

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Strong home and school partnerships are fostered in a variety of ways including regular communication about children's social and academic progress through parents' evenings and formal written reports. In addition to this the school provides regular updates on news and events through its website and weekly newsletters. Other functions such as parent workshops, visiting mornings and 'stay and play' sessions provide opportunities for parents and families to experience the School during a normal working day and to be fully informed about teaching and learning strategies used with their children. The School staff team work closely with the PTA, enabling further links with the parent community to support the work of the School.

The School welcomes pupils from all backgrounds. To admit a prospective pupil the School needs to be satisfied that it will be able to educate and develop the pupil to the best of his or her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by peers. Entrance interviews and taster sessions are undertaken to satisfy School, and parents, that potential pupils can cope with the pace of learning and can benefit from the education provided. An individual's economic status, gender, ethnicity, race, religion or disability do not form part of the assessment procedures. The School is committed to being a good employer, providing a supportive and nurturing work environment that encourages and takes care of our staff team, while continually striving to develop their skills and talents.

Avalon School remains an accredited member of the Independent Schools Association.

Pupil numbers continue to be healthy, with steady class sizes within the main school.

# AVALON SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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All staff vacancies were filled satisfactorily. The School employs 39 members of staff in total. The development of a middle leadership structure has continued to further strengthen the management and leadership of the School.

Curriculum developments have included a particular focus on specific aspects of Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economics Education, such as Mental Health & Wellbeing, following on from the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. The School has continued its curriculum development of Relationships and Sex Education, in consultation with Parents, Staff and the Board of Governors.

An Educational Quality inspection of Avalon School by the Independent Schools Inspectorate took place in November 2022. The inspection report judged the school to be excellent in all 16 categories of Educational Quality, and met all regulatory standards required for Focused Compliance.

### **Discounted Fee and Bursaries**

These take three forms:

To underline the value the School places on continuity for families, it offers discounts on the fees where parents have more than one child at the School. Last year 26 children received sibling discounts amounting to £15,859.

Assistance with fees can be made in cases where children attending the School are affected by unexpected family hardship, eg: unemployment, sudden illness, etc and where the child's education and future prospects would otherwise be at risk. Such assistance is designed to be temporary, but the trustees acknowledge that in some cases it may need to last for longer period of time.

Some bursaries are available for children joining the School, and whose parents would not otherwise be able to afford the full fees. These may be available for children meeting the School's general entrance requirements and whose parental means have been assessed and deemed suitable for bursarial assistance.

The School does not have any designated endowments for fee assistance and bursaries and it has to be mindful, in funding these awards, to ensure a balance between fee-paying parents, many of whom make considerable personal sacrifices to fund their child's education and those benefiting from the award.

In assessing means, several factors are taken into consideration including family income, investments and savings and family circumstances eg: number of siblings.

During the last year, a total of 18 children, were assisted by combinations of temporary assistances and bursaries to the sum of £63,304. Together with the family discounts, this represented a total of £86,712.

### **Other Public Benefits**

Avalon School has a long history of involvement within the local community.

Other public benefits provided by the School include:

- The School runs a weekly Parent Toddler group for the local community
- The School premises are available to local organisations by request
- The School premises are provided free of charge for LAMDA public speaking examinations
- Work experience opportunities are given to pupils from local state schools
- Children and staff make visits to elderly residential care homes in the local community

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## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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### Public Benefit and Community Involvement

Pupils have involvement in local services and assemblies linked with St. Bridget's Church.

Charities supported this year have included:

- Macmillan Cancer UK
- Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal
- Anti-Bullying Alliance – Odd Socks Day
- Children In Need
- Place 2 Be – Dress to Express
- Comic Relief
- Cystic Fibrosis trust
- Charles Thompson Mission

As the School is a charity, the parents of pupils have the assurance that all its income must be applied for educational purposes. As an educational charity, it enjoys tax exemption on the educational activities and on any investment income. During the year of 2023/2024, as a charity, it is entitled to a reduction on the business rates on the property occupied. The financial benefits received from these tax exemptions are all applied for educational purposes and indirectly help the School to maintain its bursary policies. However, as an educational charity, it is unable to reclaim VAT input tax on its costs, as it is exempt for VAT purposes. As well as the VAT paid, it also pays tax as an employer through the PAYE and National Insurance contributions made.

In addition to the substantial benefits the School brings to its pupils, the local community, and society in general through the education offered, the bursary programme creates a social asset without cost to the Exchequer.

All governors give of their time freely and no remuneration or expenses were paid to them in the year in respect of their services as governors. No governor or person connected with a governor received any benefit from either means tested bursaries or other benefits awarded to pupils.

In summary, the total value of all aspects of public benefit provided by the School was in excess of £86,000.

### Achievements and performance

#### *Significant activities and achievements against objectives*

Very good academic results were achieved during the school year:

Secondary School Entrance Assessments: 15 out of 16, year 6 children (94%) went on to grammar schools or selective independent secondary schools following entrance examinations.

SATS - The School does not submit SATS data for external moderation, but uses SATS papers together with INCAS and other standardised tests, as important strands in assessing pupils' attainment at the end of key stages 1 & 2. In both cases, teacher assessment reveals that children are achieving well in advance of their predicted assessment profile. In addition, the School has subscribed to the value added assessment offered by the PIPS programme and INCAS assessment.

Teaching and nursery staff attended over 45 courses in total, the majority of which were online, due to many providers continuing this working pattern. During the year all teachers were involved in a programme of in-service training activities organised at the School on a variety of educational issues, including changes to the Early Years Framework and Digital Development Projects, as well as a number of Health and Safety and Safeguarding matters.

Events and activities such as the School's 'Challenge Week', Beach and Outdoor Learning Projects, including an EYFS Sports Day, Eco Planting and a Junior Performing Arts Production of 'The Lion King Jrn,' just a sample of the many activities and achievements which enable further enrichment of the school's broad and balanced curriculum.

# **AVALON SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL TRUST**

## **TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)** **FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

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Pupils at the School take part in a wide range of extra-curricular trips and visits. These included:

1. War Memorial at Grange Hill (Year 2)
2. Condoover Hall Activity Centre – Residential (Y6 Leavers)
3. Ashton Park (Reception)
4. Cubbins Green Beach (All Year groups)
5. School Council visits to Tam O' Shanter Urban Farm
6. KS1 classes visited the World Museum in Liverpool
7. KS1 and Y4 classes visited Chester Zoo as part of topic about the Animal Kingdom & The Rainforest
8. Y4 & Y5 visited Delamere Forest including high rope adventure trails
9. House Cup Winners visited Hickory's Smokehouse Restaurant to make pancakes
10. Y4 visit to Eureka Science Centre
11. Y6 visit to Caldry Woods
12. Pre School & Reception trip to Imagine that
13. Key stage 2 visit to Storyhouse Theatre
14. Y4& Y5 visit to Go ape in Cheshire
15. Visits were made on a regular basis to local Elderly Residential Homes: The Old Garden and Caldry Manor
16. Activity for All – Sports fixtures and events
17. Liverpool FC AXA Training Ground – football tournament for Y3/4 and Y5/6

The children performed in over 8 music or drama concerts throughout the year, including a Performing Arts concert and Junior production of 'The Lion King,' and a 'Yellow' concert to fundraise money for the Cystic Fibrosis Trust. A theatre in education workshop was also held at the School and Junior children supported the School's Parent Teacher Association events such as the Christmas Fair and Strawberry Tea by managing their own stalls following an Enterprise week project. Children from Key stage 2 classes took part in the Primary Maths UK competition, with one child reaching the national final.

Extra - curricular activities included:

- STEAM
- Netball
- Chess
- Gardening
- Construction
- ICT – Coding & Tinkercad
- Library
- Peripatetic music: Piano, Guitar, Violin, Clarinet, Flute, Singing
- Rugby
- Verbal Reasoning
- Dance
- Football
- Drama
- Choir
- Signing
- Ballet
- Multi Sports
- Acro Dance
- Ju Jitsu
- Lego

Children also took part in a range of local sporting fixtures including netball, football, and athletics.

# AVALON SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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### Financial review

The financial performance of the charitable company is reflected in the attached financial statements, which show a deficit on running the School of £88,500 (2023: £27,653 surplus), but depreciation provided on the assets of £51,066 (2023: £51,942) has meant that there is a net deficit of £139,566 (2023: £24,289). There are sufficient funds to allow the trustees to continue to pursue their objectives of continuing to develop the School for the benefit of its pupils and the community in general.

Income shows a slight decrease from £1,295,545 to £1,275,239. Expenditure shows an increase from £1,319,834 to £1,414,805.

The balance sheet has deteriorated with net current assets of £388,915 (2023: £573,523) and total net assets of £2,267,431 (2023: £2,406,997).

### Reserves policy

This is to aim to achieve and maintain a reserve of six months' working capital in case of future and unexpected downturns. If this is exceeded, then additional repayments of the mortgage are to be made. At present this implies a free reserve of the equivalent to three to six months expenditure, approximately £500,000. Current reserves are significantly below this year at £394,943 (2023: £581,323).

### Major risks

#### Risk Management

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the School is exposed, and are satisfied that systems are in place to monitor and control these risks so as to minimise the School's exposure to them and mitigate any impact they may have in the future.

### Plans for future periods

1. To ensure the financial well-being of the charity during the period of national economic difficulty.
2. Continue to work to ensure the health and safety of all involved in the School.
3. Maintain satisfactory staffing levels and expertise.
4. Examine ways in which the buildings and grounds can be more eco-friendly.

### Structure, governance and management

Avalon School Educational Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated (04050603) on 10th August 2000 and registered as a charity on 15th August 2001 (1088050). The objects and powers of the charitable company are established by its Memorandum of Association and it is governed by its Articles of Association.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mrs Deborah Hillman  
Ms Heather Probert  
Mrs Patricia Johnson  
Dr Catherine Kidd  
Mr Phillip Sheard

# AVALON SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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### *Recruitment and appointment of trustees*

The company's directors are also trustees of the charity and governors of the School. New trustees are initially appointed by the Board and their appointment is then confirmed at the next annual general meeting. In addition one third of the members of the Board retire by rotation at the annual general meeting in every second year. Members retiring may offer themselves for re-election.

Trustees are generally appointed from persons with a strong connection to the School who have expertise in various fields; frequently former parents whose children have attended the School or former pupils. This ensures that trustees have empathy for the ethos and aims of the School, whilst bringing to the Board a professional and business approach.

Names of potential trustees are normally put forward to the Board by existing trustees, particularly with the aim of reinforcing the range of competencies of the trustees.

### *Induction and training of trustees*

Following the agreement of the Board, the new trustee undergoes the requisite safeguarding checks before commencing duties, and initial taking in undertaken. The appointment of trustees from a range of backgrounds ensures that breadth and depth of experience from many areas is available to enable duties to be carried out effectively and efficiently. Where possible the trustees consider that it is helpful if the experience of the Board comprises knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Education
- Finance
- Food hygiene
- Legal
- Personnel
- Property management

Once appointed, training is supplied for trustees on an ongoing basis. Trustees regularly attend School functions.

Separate sub-committees exist to consider issues in detail and to make recommendations to the Board. These cover:

- Staff recruitment and appointment
- Finance
- Property management and Health and Safety

A visiting governor has been appointed to liaise with staff, and another governor liaises over matters concerning children with special educational needs.

Trustees normally meet six times a year to review policies and make decisions.

Policies are set by the governors, whilst responsibility for the day to day running of the School is delegated to the head teacher, who attends these meetings and submits a report to the trustees.

No external person or body is entitled to appoint a trustee.

None of the trustees has any beneficial interest in the company. All of the trustees are members of the company and guarantee to contribute £1 in the event of a winding up.

# AVALON SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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### Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of Avalon School Educational Trust for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the trust and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the trust will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the trust and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the trust and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

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### Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that Xeinadin Audit Limited be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

# AVALON SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) *FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024*

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### **Disclosure of information to auditor**

Each of the trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

Dr Catherine Kidd  
**Trustee**

10 February 2025