

Hearts of Oak – Annual Report 2024/25

Summary

The financial year has been another successful one for our Charity. We have been fortunate in obtaining many donations including some individually large restricted donations toward specific projects, totalling over £43,000.

1. Structure Governance and Management

Constitution

Hearts of Oak – The Oak Lodge School Foundation Trust was first registered as a charity in July 2006 with the Charity Commissioners under No. 1115755.

The charity provides services under the working name of “Hearts of Oak”.

There is a written constitution, approved by the Charities Commission in 2006, which provides the rules and standards under which the charity operates. It sets out details of the Trustees and instructs them on a structure for the management of the charity.

Charitable Objective and Mission

The **Aim** of the Trust is to advance the education of pupils attending Oak Lodge School, London N2 England, together with the students at the 19-25 year old provision, Oak Bridge, by the allocation of facilities and equipment not normally provided by statutory authorities. Additionally, in 2024, a new Autism specialist school called The Windmill joined the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) and it was unanimously decided to extend our fundraising aims to incorporate the students from this school too.

Its **Mission** is to provide the financial support for the staff to provide the optimum education for the pupils.

Its **Vision** is a world where all schools for pupils with learning difficulties have adequate resources.

The Management of the Charity

The management and control of the charity is vested in Trustees who manage the charity via a management committee.

The management committee consists of:

Chairman – Julian Cole

Treasurer – David Craven

Administrator – Lynda Walker (Head Teacher and also a Trustee)

Fundraisers – Teresa Ellis, Richard Weisfeld (Trustee) and Sally Adams (Trustee)

All members of the management committee are unpaid, but reimbursement of reasonable expenses is made available, although yet again, no expenses were charged in this financial year.

The committee met 4 times during the year. Its meetings are regulated by a previously circulated agenda, and the minutes kept in writing by the Administrator. The committee discusses related strategic and political matters as well as overseeing the day to day administration of the charity.

Governance

The charity follows closely the standards set by the Charity Commissioners for England and their Guidance for Registered Charities, with particular regard to the auditing of the accounts.

The charity has a Child Protection Policy established in October 2006 and an Equal Opportunities Policy established in November 2006.

2. Strategic Aims and Communication

The Work of the Charity

The main work of the charity is fund-raising. There are two main arms to this:

- Applying to Charitable Funds for support: there are many funds both national and local whose remit is to fund educational opportunities and equipment for disabled children and young adults. The fundraiser's main task is making applications to these bodies.
- Applying to commercial enterprises with active Corporate Social Responsibility schemes for support: there are many companies both national and local who have supported us significantly during the year.
- Supporting others who wish to raise funds either by conducting fund-raising events e.g. bazaars, Christmas stalls, etc or by getting sponsorship for participation in activities e.g. London Marathon.

Strategic Matters

Projects

At inception of Hearts of Oak, the school had a wish-list of ideas that it had for the improvement of the school. Hearts of Oak also separately realised that it was important to provide a wide range of possible projects to interest different donors. After much discussion, in consultation with the senior management team from the school, a strategy was devised in order to produce a list of approved Projects. This list is reviewed at every Trustee meeting, where short-term and longer-term projects are considered.

Small Events Strategy

The management committee understood early in its consideration of the direction of the charity's strategy that it would not be possible for the committee members themselves to undertake the organisation of many small events as these could easily take over the time needed for other matters. Nevertheless, the committee wanted to encourage those willing to run events for the benefit of the charity. A "Small Events Strategy" document was therefore agreed. Essentially this document seeks

to encourage those wishing to help in this way by the provision of various resources, whilst ensuring that committee members allow others to manage the event.

Communications

Good communications are an essential feature of a successful charity. Hearts of Oak has two main ways of communicating with the public, and in particular its donors and friends.

The Hearts of Oak Website

Our website (www.hearts-of-oak.org) is the focal point for informing stakeholders and recruiting donors for our charity and is regularly updated. It provides contact information, a donation page and updates of donations and successes that the charity have achieved.

Of Political Matters

The Trustees are committed to the advancement of services for pupils with learning difficulties not only at Oak Lodge School, but also across the nation. In particular, the Trustees actively promote the principle of specialist provision of education for pupils who are unlikely to cope well in normal secondary school.

3. Projects

Notable Projects in 2024/25

- **Small Projects:** Hearts of Oak dedicates resources (normally less than £500, although larger grants have been considered and awarded) towards a range of small projects that are specifically aimed at improving the educational experience of children at the school. Recent projects funded under this include horse-riding, art lessons, school trips, flying-trips, Children in Need costumes, cinema and theatre days, and visiting numerous museums, galleries and exhibitions.
- **Day/Residential Trips:** Learning outside the classroom can inspire and motivate pupils in new and exciting ways. For children and young adults with learning difficulties Residential trips not only provide “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunities for pupils, but also provide valuable respite time for parents and carers. Hearts of Oak recognizes that trips such as these should be primarily funded by parents and carers. However, compared with mainstream education, the cost of arranging these trips can be prohibitively expensive (due to the requirement for extra teaching support and for the provision of special facilities). Hearts of Oak makes an annual bursary to the school to be used in subsidising residential trips. Our aspiration is that every child will have the opportunity to participate in at least one residential trip during their time at Oak Lodge School. During the past decade we have been lucky enough to be the recipient of some dedicated funding from the Frank Barnes Educational Trust, who via Oak Lodge’s inspirational teacher Sally Adams, have agreed a legacy of £150,000. This money continues to be utilised to fund day-trips for pupils from Oak Bridge, Oak Lodge and now, The Windmill School. To date this money has allowed pupils to visit places as diverse as The

Cheddar Gorge, The Lake District, sailing in Portsmouth and Catamaran's in Dorset, as well as flying lessons, and even an overseas trip!

Since the Covid pandemic there has been a scale-back of residential stays but it was agreed upon in the trustee meeting of June 2025, that the schools would look to re-introduce these as soon as possible.

4. Fundraising

Total funds raised this year were £43,345.13.

We would like again to thank all the various individuals, businesses and other charitable organisations that have supported Hearts of Oak for another year and created experiences, events and equipment that would be impossible to fund without their incredible generosity.

5. The Future

The last few years has seen a change in the way we raise the majority of our income. Attempting to raise money from our own events, has proved challenging. We have therefore decided to concentrate on applying for grants for specific projects and needs, to smaller/medium sized Charities whose remit is to assist schools such as Oak Lodge. Additionally, we are still looking to partner with local businesses that wish to offer voluntary opportunities to their employees.

The trustees and management committee remain fully committed to providing pupils of Oak Lodge and Oak Bridge with facilities and equipment not normally provided by statutory authorities.

Julian Cole
Chair for the Management Committee

June 2025

Reserves Policy

The trustees aim to maintain free reserves in unrestricted funds at a level which they feel prudent.

The trustees consider that this level will provide sufficient funds to respond to applications for grants and/or equipment and ensure that there are sufficient funds available to cover support and governance costs.

To that end, the trustees feel it would be sensible to work toward maintaining reserves of at least £15,000 and to a maximum of £25,000.

Notwithstanding the above policy, the trustees will always, as a matter of priority, apply reserves for the benefit of children and young persons who attend both Oak Lodge and Oak Bridge Schools whilst maintaining an appropriate level of reserves at any given point in time. Additionally, whilst this is a stated target, there may be times when in the pursuit of funding larger projects, a larger balance will be retained. The trustees will always ensure that all donations received are used correctly, with a stated aim of ensuring the best possible outcomes for the students at both schools.

HEARTS OF OAK
THE OAK LODGE FOUNDATION TRUST
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN

INCOME

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| DESIGNATED DONATIONS | £ | 42,569-74 |
| UNRESTRICTED DONATIONS | £ | 351-21 |
| CHARITIES AID FOUNDATION DONATIONS | £ | 138-73 |
| INTEREST | £ | <u>285-45</u> |
| | £ | <u>43345-13</u> |

EXPENDITURE

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| EDUCATIONAL VISITS AND RESOURCES | £ | 9,266-00 |
| SHOP RENT | £ | 10,150-00 |
| OTHER | £ | <u>74-34</u> |
| | £ | <u>19,490-34</u> |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| <u>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</u> | £ | <u>23,854-79</u> |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| <u>CASH AT BANK 31 MARCH 2025</u> | £ | <u>57,375-23</u> |
|--|---|-------------------------|



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Hearts of Oak Foundation Trust

On accounts for the year ended

31st March 2025

Charity no
(if any)

1115755

Set out on pages

3

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st March 2025

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees, 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 all 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 in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did 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.

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

Signed:

D. Craven

Date: 01/10/2025

Name:

David Craven

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

Address:

8 Osborne Court, Park View Road, London W5 2JE

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material 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.

None