

FRIENDS OF CONAKRY REFUGEE SCHOOL

England & Wales · Charity number 1124736

Details

Status Registered

Legal form Trust

Registered 2008-06-30

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address Gretton Mill
Cardington
Church Stretton
Shropshire
SY6 7HZ

Phone 07918676699

Email info@fcrs.org.uk

Website www.fcrs.org.uk

Activities

Objects: TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION AND RELIEVE THE FINANCIAL HARDSHIP OF THOSE REFUGEE CHILDREN AND CHILDREN OF REFUGEES WHO REQUIRE SCHOOLING AND ATTEND CONAKRY REFUGEE SCHOOL GUINEA, WHICH IS CURRENTLY NOT SUPPORTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF GUINEA OR ANY OTHER AGENCY.

Activities: We support better futures through education by engaging with our partner school in Conakry Guinea, managing programmes aligned with our vision. We improve the lives of marginalised and vulnerable young people through the provision of high quality education in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way. We promote gender equality by supporting girls' access to and experience in education.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Other Finance, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training, Overseas Aid/famine Relief, Economic/community Development/employment
- **Who:** Children/young People

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** GUINEA
- Guinea
- Shropshire
- Telford & Wrekin

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-07-31	£169,283	£163,354	-	-
2024-03-31	£122,253	£111,834	-	-
2023-03-31	£71,002	£68,120	-	-
2022-03-31	£60,441	£128,541	-	-
2021-03-31	£94,499	£51,014	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Daniel John Watkins	Chair	2024-09-27
Carol Jowitt		2024-04-10
Dan Walmsley		2024-04-10
Jackie Watkins		2018-07-18
Jeanette Therese Whitford		2020-02-11
Nigel Hankin		2024-07-03
RUTH DIANE WALMSLEY		2014-06-23
TANYA CHRISTINE WALMSLEY		

Accounts

FCRS Trustees Annual Report

1st April 2024 to 31st July 2025

The 16 months from April 2024 until July 2025 have seen many changes at FCRS. Since its inception as a charity in 2008 membership of the Trustee Board has stayed relatively stable. New Trustees have joined and left after their term, but the core of founding Trustees have remained the same.

During this period, several of the Trustees retired at the end of their term of office and our thanks for their work and support go to all of them. Particular thanks go to Rolf Levesley, who has chaired the charity since inception, providing wise counsel and quiet assurance, and also to Pauline Levesley who has been indefatigable in her devotion to the finances and secretarial matters. Both have committed years of their lives to help support the students in Guinea to have brighter futures. Pauline and Rolf stood down in October 2024.

One of our founding Trustees, Mark Walmsley, sadly passed away in 2024. One of Mark's true passions was educating young people. He brought his deep knowledge, insight, and enthusiasm to every Trustee meeting, and his joyful personality to every fundraising event. Mark will be greatly missed by everyone associated with the Charity and CRS.

Jackie Watkins joined FCRS as a Trustee in 2011 and was Director from 2014 until 2018. She took up the post for a second time in 2022 and continues in post as volunteer Director.

Dan Watkins was appointed as interim Chair in October 2024. Dan has worked in the finance industry for over 30 years, operating at senior levels, and is experienced in managing businesses and chairing Boards.

Nigel Hankin joined the Trustees as treasurer in October 2024; he worked in the financial investment and asset management industry for over 30 years. Nigel lives in north London.

Carol Jowitt joined in April 2024 and has built an enviable reputation as a secondary school teacher, and examiner of modern foreign languages. Carol lives in west Yorkshire.

Dan Walmsley joined in April 2024, is an outdoor enthusiast and together with his wife has built a successful business, providing outdoor education lessons for schools all over England and Wales.

The Trustees believe that these appointments will bring valuable new insights and a range of skills that will help achieve the Charity's objectives.

Whilst there have been changes to personnel, Trustees remain unwavering in their purpose, mission, and values. Their commitment to CRS, its pupils, parents, and community has remained their sole focus. The continuity and strong leadership provided by our Director, and continuing Trustees, has been invaluable in helping us navigate this transition effectively.

The year end for the charity has been changed to July 31st. By aligning our year end with CRS's and with the academic year, we will have simplified both budgeting and reporting going forward.

IMPACT STATEMENT

FRIENDS OF CONAKRY REFUGEE SCHOOL



April 2024 - July 2025



400 students received excellent education

25 teachers earned decent wage

60 student completed education



Scholarships

60 for the most vulnerable
50% to girls



Academic excellence

100% pass rate external
exams primary and lower
secondary



Science education

80 accessed practical science
40 visiting students used lab



Digital Skills

400 students IT classes
40 attend coding club
20 Attend summer school
10 Awarded Tech internships



Girls' education

300 gifted menstrual kits
450 days of absence avoided
200 benefited from health support
(Health Club, school nurse and
menstrual and sexual education)



School feeding

400 students accessed the
breakfast club and canteen
and two free meals a week



UK charity no. 1124736



www.fcrs.org.uk

A. FCRS's Impact

FCRS works almost exclusively in Guinea at our partner school Conakry Reliance (formerly Refugee) School. The school roll fluctuates but has been around 400 for the last few years with the space to expand to 550-600.

Our work is mainly across 5 programmes

- School feeding - free meal provision and subsidy of the school canteen
- Scholarships
- STEM education – science lab and IT room
- Digital skills – 3-year digital incubator, after school clubs, summer schools, and internship
- Girls access to education –sexual and menstrual health support, reuseable menstrual kits, Health Club, school nurse, and WASH facilities

As our programmes tackle issues relating to short term poverty reduction (scholarships, meals kits) as well as longer term prospects for improved livelihoods our impact goes beyond the immediate impact on these 400 students to improvements in the livelihoods of their parents and siblings.

Ensuring a decent and regular wage is paid for 25 teaching staff and 10 non-teaching staff extends our impact to them and their families.

During this period CRS began to open its science lab and IT facilities to students from neighbouring schools. Menstrual kits were also distributed to external students attending the IT summer school.

B. Trips to Conakry

Across 16 month four trips to Conakry were undertaken by FCRS Trustees and supporters. Trips to Conakry are not taken lightly and Trustees are always careful to weigh up the benefits of an in person visit against the use of funds. Trustees believe that at least one trip each year is necessary to maintain relationships with CRS staff, students and parents and have an accurate picture of how our funds are being spent. Additionally, Trustees and supporters with professional skills and experience that are relevant to CRS's situation have spent time at the school. FCRS budgets for two Trustee's or supporter's costs to be covered by FCRS funds every year. Any additional trip costs have been covered by restricted donations from the individuals involved. Safeguarding measures are always fully put in place when any Trustee or supporter visits the school.

1. 27th August – 15th Sept 2024

Jackie Watkins FCRS Director, MA in International Development Project Management

Carol Jowitt FCRS Trustee, education management professional, language teacher

Andy Nichol FCRS donor and senior IT professional with PhD in Physics

Meg Penney, FCRS supporter, social media specialist

The trip took place in the summer break. Not all staff were in Conakry, but the management team and several others were on campus most days. CRS were running catch up classes for students who

had not passed their exams to move up to the next grade, and the CAST summer school ran every day, so there were students around.

The primary focus of the trip was

- to set up the menstrual Health Project
- to set up the Digital Incubator programme

We hope these two projects will generate income for the school enabling it to pay the rent in the future.

The secondary aims were

- teacher training
- networking to highlight the schools' success and generate registrations and funding.

The Menstrual Health Kit Project: Kike AfricHer

We received £1305 plus gift aid funding for the Menstrual health project through an online campaign in May 2024. Although we originally thought we would run workshops to find women to sew for the project, being on the ground and meeting Ruth, one of the women who sewed the prototype, we were able to come to the decision that she was an ideal candidate. Ruth is a single mother with a child at the school and is a Liberian ex-refugee. She speaks English well and is also a fluent Susu speaker, so can communicate well with the other mothers who work in the markets around the school. This saved FCRS from spending time and money going through a longer selection process.

With Ruth we visited the market to buy all the necessary equipment and set up a room in CRS for her to sew. We had a two day brainstorm with different staff and students on the branding for our kits, which culminated on the choice of "Kike AfricHer" as the brand name and "empowering girls throughout their cycle" as the tag line. Kike is the Susu name for the moon and holds meanings associated with menstruation and wisdom and being thoughtful. The brand reflects the fact that the kits come with workshops on menstrual health and girls' empowerment - so not restricted to periods. We had an afternoon focus group with women from the market who loved the idea and have formed the Kike women's group – they will support the girls in the use of the kits be brand ambassadors and will receive kits themselves when they are ready.

When we left, we had an agreed design, we had inspected samples and were happy with the quality and Ruth was set up to sew with plenty of fabric and supplies to produce 150 kits for students and staff.

CAST and the Digital Incubator

We were able to observe the second summer school in its final weeks and award certificates to those who completed the summer school.

Andy Nichol set up the structure of the internship with Mr Bah and made plans to oversee the mentorship process. 10 students from the first Cohort are still working on their digital skills and will enter the mentorship phase this autumn.

A formal internship agreement was set up with code of conduct agreed with CRS management, interns and FCRS, and commitments from CRS and FCRS laid out.

It was very beneficial to be able to meet with all family members of the interns to discuss the internship and living arrangements. Families were very positive about the internship and excited that their children had the opportunity to further their education and get work experience. Interns will be supported in this by CRS management who will act as guarantors to landlords. A female member of CRS staff will live with the three girls, and Musa Kesselly and Sidiki Kamara will oversee the boys.

Networking

The UK Government in Guinea



On Thursday 12th 30 plus members of CRS and FCRS plus guests were hosted by Max Milner the Deputy Ambassador at the embassy. CRS management, students, alumni and Mr Bah presented alongside Jackie and Andy. We presented the work the students were doing in the digital incubator and the Menstrual Health Kit project. The audience was made up of representatives from Orange Guinée, Mouna (the internet provider) Kofi Annan University, Sonfonia University English Department, Nimba Hub (digital start up), the school's landlord, The Consul from the Liberian Embassy Madam Catherine Doe. The event was a huge success and generated a lot of interest in our work and two further networking meetings in the following days.

The Jamila Foundation

We met Mrs Hann Dienaba Keita, the executive director of the Jamila Foundation, a private Foundation working to empower women in Guinea. Our missions overlapped almost 100%. She visited the school the next day and returned the following week to the school to attend the final ceremony for the summer school where she watched the presentations that were given at the Embassy, given to parents and fellow students. She met with mothers and alumni at the school and sat with them to hear their story. In front of the guests, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

It was hoped that the Foundation would be able to support students or help with maintenance of the school. 100 school bags were gifted to students that autumn.

Nimba Hub

We visited Nimba Hub a digital start up business that offers free coding courses for university students. They aim to give 1000 students courses but last year only 700 applied and out of this only 130 were considered good enough to attend. They are keen to work with us and offer training for our students.

Teacher Training

Jackie spent an afternoon talking through reading strategies with infant and kindergarten staff. As a former primary school teacher who set up an early learning centre in Shropshire, she was able to talk staff through the use of the books and advise on classroom management techniques. They were very appreciative of the books donated and are setting up a system for borrowing them and storing them.

2. February 3rd -11th 2025

Andy Nichol FCRS donor and senior IT professional with PhD in Physics

Dan Watkins, FCRS supporter (later interim Chair), Financial services professional

The purpose of the trip was to

- Oversee the Cast Internship programme
- Undertake an audit of CRS finances

Time was spent with the 11 interns and Mr Besmor Bah

- Mentoring sessions
- Business and employability skills
- Coding and digital design skill
- Planning for the next summer school to be held in the summer 2025



Dan went through CRS's financial control processes and undertook an audit of CRS finances

Meetings were held with

- The Jamila Foundation
- Nimba Hub
- The UK Ambassador

It is during these meeting that concerns were shared with Dan about the conduct of the CRS Director and Principal. These concerns were followed through in Conakry and on their return to the UK. Further information on these events can be found on the section about the reportable incident below.

3. May 6th – 13th 2025

Jackie Watkins FCRS Director, MA in International Development Project Management

Bethany Watkins, FCRS supporter

Following an investigation into the conduct of the CRS Principal and Director by former Director Morris Zayzay and senior staff and community members it was felt necessary for FCRS Director Jackie Watkins to visit and hold discussions face to face with staff, pupils and parents. She was accompanied by her daughter Bethany. All costs of the trip were covered by restricted donations.

The primary purpose of the visit was

- To ensure FCRS safeguarding procedures were being adhered to
- To gauge CRS staff's attitude to events and views on ways forward
- To review the Kike AfricHer project and discuss next steps
- To meet with partners in Conakry

The trip was successful and rewarding. Staff welcomed the opportunity to talk through the events that led to the dismissal of the Director and Principal and were keen to put forward views on how incidents could be avoided going forward.

- A second edition of the Governance Handbook was agreed with CRS staff and management.
- A memorandum of understanding was signed between CRS and FCRS
- We were able to sit with girls and discuss safeguarding and how to report incidents
- Meetings were held with the interns and Mr Bah and plans for the summer school finalised
- 80 reuseable kits were distributed to girls at CRS and small group discussions were held with the recipients to understand how they used the kits and the difference they made to their education.



4. July 13th - 26th 2025

Andy Nichol FCRS donor and senior technology executive PhD Oxon Physics

Dan Watkins, FCRS interim Chair, Financial services professional

Mona Soni senior technology executive, Founder of Sostibl US not-for-profit focussing on empowering young people to make communities sustainable using technology.

Primary purpose of the trip was to

- Work with interns on employability skills and develop projects to demonstrate their ability to use technology to solve local problems
- Embed the new Governance and Financial procedures at CRS
- Oversee the third CAST summer school

The summer school was led by graduates from the previous schools who relished the opportunity to pass on their knowledge and give back to the school

For the first time students from neighbouring schools were awarded places at the summer school



Workshops with the interns yielded several projects that were further developed remotely over the following months.

Mona Soni was impressed with the ability of the interns and their teamwork and a strong working relationship between her organisation and FCRS's CAST project was formed.

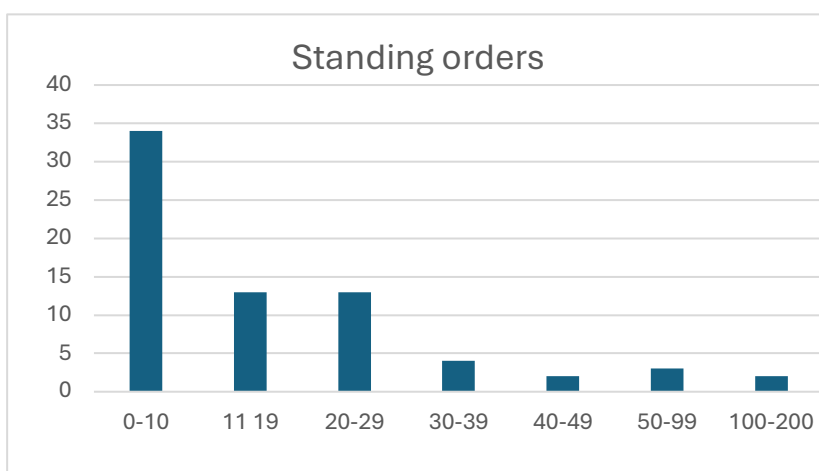
C. Fundraising

Events

FCRS continues to organise local events to raise funds and maintain visibility. During the 16 months

- Rolf and Pauline Levesley held a quiz in Much Wenlock raising £1,000
- Dan Walmsley and his family did a sponsored dawn walk up Snowden raising £1,221
- A wildlife talk organised by the fundraising team held in Church Stretton raised £910

Standing Orders



71 standing orders are in place with one regular payment through the charities aid foundation. This is two less than last year although some donations have been increased.

Standing orders represent 10% of income; 75% of this is from donations less than £20.

The Big Give

For the first time last year we ran two campaigns through the Big Give.

- In October 2024 we successfully raised £5000 by accessing funding in the Women and Girls campaign. This was a match funding campaign but didn't need us to find funds. The Big Give Foundation put up £2500, and we raised £2520 through donations.
- 47 individuals donated with an average donation of £53. Approximately 50% of donations came from new supporters. The campaign was supported by a newspaper article; a social media campaign and events organised our fundraising volunteers.
- In November we successfully raised £15,000 through the Christmas Challenge; raised £7500 in donations in a week; £3750 in a private pledged; £3750 was given by a champion. £1425 was subsequently claimed in gift aid.
- 31 individuals donated with the average donation being £241. Three donors were not regular supporters with one large donation

Supporting our campaign with social media and publicity had a positive impact on our reach and the amount we raised.

Grants

One grant application was successful, for £500 from the St James Place Foundation. One further grant application was made but was unsuccessful.

Easyfundraising, JustGiving, PayPal Giving

- Easyfundraising: Although 53 supporters are registered only 6 are active.

- Just Giving: we stopped paying for the platform in January 2025 as the £18/month seemed unnecessary and we only had one regular payment though the platform. It is still possible to raise funds for FCRS using JustGiving – fees are deducted when the platform is used.
- PayPal Giving: £141 raised on Instagram or Facebook came to FCRS through PayPal Giving.

D. Conakry Reliance (formally Refugee) School

FCRS Trustees are proud of the impact that we have been able to help bring about. We provide far more than just funding and resources to CRS. We actively engage with management, staff, and pupils to provide guidance, advice, ideas, and support. During this period, we have undertaken 4 separate trips to Conakry, all of which have involved staff meetings, individual meetings, lesson observations, event participation, and input to professional development. We are proud of our input, whilst recognising that we could do nothing without the dedicated staff and impressive young students of CRS, who continue to enthuse and excite us with their talent every time we meet them.



Musa Kesselly with Dan Watkins



Morris Zayzay with Jackie Watkins

A new Director and Principal were appointed in June 2025. Morris Zayzay was reappointed as Director (an unpaid role similar to Chair of Governors at a UK school) after a couple of years absence while he served on the International Office of Migration's mission in Haiti. He was a teacher at CRS in the early 2000s and Director from 2014 -2023. Musa Kesselly was elected to the role of Principal by CRS staff in May 2023. Musa, a refugee from Liberia, has taught at CRS since 2000 when he arrived in Conakry, and has served as Head of Science, led the Health Club and is regularly voted best class sponsor by the students. He was awarded a Higher Teaching Certificate in Integrated Science in 2019 and completed training in the teaching of practical science and running a science laboratory 2020-2021.

These appointments have been greeted enthusiastically by staff and community leaders alike. Indeed, the response of the staff has been fully supportive, and their enthusiasm to reinvigorate the core beliefs of CRS has been very encouraging. An inter-class football tournament for boys and girls

was organised at Easter, a first-ever closing ceremony to celebrate the students' achievements was arranged, and a publicity push planned for the summer. Relationships with community leaders across all faiths have been renewed and more than 100 new students were recruited in the summer of 2025.

Results in public examinations have remained outstanding with 100% pass rate across the cohort at in the external exams at the end of primary school (NPSE) and lower secondary (BECE). Pass rates in external exams at the end of secondary (WASSCE) are harder to calculate as students receive their results individually and do not always share them with the school. In July 2024 the results collected by CRS show a 70% pass rate.

In July 2025 the Chair worked with the newly appointed Director and Principal to build a budget for CRS to cover the 2025-26 academic year. FCRS approved expenditure on a refurbishment of the building and other improvements to the learning environment, and these were completed during the summer.

Scholarships

In May 2025 a new policy on scholarships was agreed.

60 scholarships will be awarded

- 8 scholarships per grade in grades 7-12

- 8 scholarships to be awarded where there are exceptional circumstances in lower grades

- 4 scholarships to be retained for unexpected financial difficulty within the year

Over the scheme at least **50% of scholarships must be awarded to girls**

All cases must be individually agreed with FCRS before being awarded.

Scholarships will cover all fees **including external exam costs in exam years** (exam fees, travel, food, medical, and accommodation for exams in SL)

FCRS will pay the costs of **exam revision classes and mocks for all students** (scholars and non-scholars) in exam grades

Scholarship fees will be paid according to the billing timetable issued to other students

Scholarships are expected to be re-awarded until the next public exam, unless there is a material change in circumstances.

A scholarship ceremony must be held where scholarships are awarded in front of the school community with certificates dated and signed by CRS and FCRS Directors.

Process

A scholarship committee consisting of the Bursar and Vice Principal of Instruction will consult with class sponsors and produce a list recommending students to be awarded scholarships.

The list must be shared with FCRS Director by the beginning of August each year for approval.

Scholarships will be awarded before the start of the academic year

Any changes to scholarships throughout the year must be discussed and agreed with FCRS Director.

Three criteria to be considered

1. Ability to pay for education. This will be judged with reference to
 - Family circumstance (orphan, single parent, unemployed, number of children)
 - Record of payment in previous academic year (% paid in previous year)
 - A home visit will be made by a representative of the school approved by the committee, to validate the financial/social situation of the proposed scholar's family. A written report will be submitted to the committee and retained as evidence.
2. Academic ability
 - Class position: in top 50% of class or above 70% in end of year exam
 - Grade 7-9 NPSE exam results in Grade 6 in top 50%
 - Grade 10-12 BECE exam results in Grade 9 in top 50%
3. Class sponsor's judgement on the student's potential to do well at school e.g. they may be attending spasmodically and not achieving according to the academic criteria but have the potential to do well if given a scholarship.

In September 2025 60 scholarships were awarded at a public ceremony attended by the CRS board and many community elders.



The impact of scholarships Jeremiah Reeves

I was raised by my aunt who has five children in a crowded, noisy, and poor neighbourhood called Lansanayah Barrage in Guinea Conakry. We didn't have much, so I had to help my aunt with the housework and also help sell for her. I first started selling candy during traffic in 2017 and later. Living with her was quite challenging for me; there were years that I dropped out of school because she complained of not having money to fund my education and that of her children at the same time. In 2019, I started working in a local barbershop to earn money to help pay for my school fees, lunch, and transportation. This was quite challenging for me because I had my right foot broken due to an accident in 2010, and standing on it for long caused me pain, but I had to do it! My journey wasn't easy, but I knew that for me to be in a better position as a disabled person in the future, I needed to be educated. In 2021, I explained my situation to a teacher named Mr. Musa Kesselly seeking school assistance. He promised me that when the school sponsor arrived, he would make sure that I

explained my situation to them, which he did. I was able to meet with Ma Jackie (FCRS) for the first time and was awarded a scholarship which enabled me to finish my secondary school. To be honest, that was the very first time I experienced real joy because I knew what it meant to me.

Conakry Academy of Software and Technology (CAST)

At the beginning of this period CAST was in its infancy; by the close we have built a scalable, repeatable process with demonstrably successful results. The impact that we believe CAST can make, is illustrated by the story of Aminata Kante.



When we were first introduced to Aminata she was about to drop out of school. She lived with her father, and he was struggling to find work. FCRS awarded her a scholarship and paid her exam fees. She took part in our first summer school and emerged as a talented coder. She has developed her skills rapidly through our programme, including participation in external courses we have identified. She is now thriving in studying computer science at university and is being mentored by a team of tech entrepreneurs in Bulgaria with great employment possibilities. At first painfully shy and nervous when presenting she has developed her skills to the extent that she has been picked as class lead. She is now paying back by building a menstrual health app to educate girls in Guinea and help them stay in school.

During the period we have

- Run a second summer school for 20 students (2024) which was taught by graduates of the first summer school
- Two summer schools were arranged for 2025; the first, taught by graduates of the 2024 school provided 20 places for students from other local schools (Dele and Believers); the second an intensive course for selected graduates of the 2024 school
- An internship programme was established for 10 students to provide in depth technology skills, and work on projects that will provide broader business and leadership training

The programme has been highly successful and attracted the interest of several senior experts in the technology industry who have become new donors to FCRS. These people are very supportive of the aims of the programme and have given their time as well as money. Thus far, their generous

donations have broadly covered the costs of running the programme which have included providing enhanced IT facilities and Wi-Fi in the school, from which all students and staff benefit. With an established and successful programme, we now hope to raise further contributions from other new donors, that will ensure the continued success of CAST and help FCRS' overall funding position.

Kiké AfricHer

From the onset of puberty girls all over the world must navigate how to continue their normal daily activities while menstruating. At the very minimum this means they require access to toilets and wash facilities throughout the school day and outside of their home. They also require some products to deal with their menstrual flow hygienically. As menstruation can begin at any point, these facilities need to be readily available or carried at all times.

Menstrual pads are expensive costing £1-1.50 per month. Pads available in the market are often cheap versions of western brands that risk infection and toxic shock. This means the cost of paying for pads can be a greater barrier to education than cultural norms or school fees; for context a CRS school cook earns £80 a month, a teacher between £100 and £150 a month and school fees at CRS start at £15 a month and rise to £53 a month in the final exam year.

This has several implications for girls' school attendance:

- A girl may not be able to deal hygienically with menstruation if wash facilities are not available
- If menstruation is not supported at school a girl may be so concerned about the possibility of starting her period during the school day that she may stay home.
- A girl's parents/guardians may not be willing to meet the additional financial cost of purchasing the menstrual products necessary if a girl is to attend school though her period and so may decide it is not worth her being educated beyond puberty.

Lack of support for menstrual health and financial support to purchase menstrual health products, when added to considerable gender inequality in the home and education, contributes to even greater gender imbalance in education.

- Guinea is 163rd out of 170 countries in the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index 2023
- 15% of girls are married by 15
- 97% are subject to FGM (female genital mutilation)
- 56% primary completion rate for girls (70% for boys) falling to 30.8% at lower secondary (39% for boys).

Our Solution

To design our own kits and put production in the hands of Guinean women and deliver a wider programme of sexual and menstrual health support

Reusable menstrual health kits come in a drawstring bag and consist of several cotton fabric pads that fit inside a shield fastened to girl's underwear, and a plastic watertight bag. The pads are highly absorbent and can be washed and reused for up to 2 years before they need to be replaced. When provided for free the livelihood impact of each kit is the equivalent of £48 uplift in family income (£2 each month for two years) and uninterrupted school attendance through 6-8 post puberty years. What is more, the uplift in income goes directly to women who are more likely to spend it on food, health, and education.

May 2024

We raised £1000 seed funding for a menstrual health project.

We surveyed all CRS female students about their use of menstrual products and the impact on their school attendance and health.

- At CRS the average number of days lost due to lack of menstrual supplies was 1.4 days per month
- Average spend for those who could buy pads was 15,000 GF (£1.50)
- 78% of girls had been subject to FGM

September 2024

We travelled to Guinea and met with mothers from the community and discussed their thoughts about the pads used and alternative solutions.

- We found universal support for the kits that they recognised as a similar solution to what was used by their mother in the village.
- We brainstormed a name for the project and came up with Kike AfricHer (Kike meaning moon in Sousso and associated with menstruation and female empowerment).
- We set up and resourced a sewing room in CRS.
- We employed Ruth, a single mother and skilled seamstress who lost her business when her sewing room, machine and stock was cleared from the roadside during road upgrades.

October 2024

We raised £5000 to run the project for a year

- We employed Ruth for year
- 300 kits were sewn and distributed to CRS students and to girls attending our IT summer school from neighbouring schools
- 4 educational events were held in the following year where Ruth also distributed kit

E. Funding

The strategic challenge for CRS remains the same as previously: the costs of providing a high-quality education, in a well-equipped building, for an economically excluded and marginalised community, are greater than the fees they can raise from students of that community. The new senior managers appointed in April 2025 have made a good start in identifying actions that will help reduce the funding gap.

FCRS continue to believe that the provision of a high-quality education is the best means to help development and improve prospects for this community. The strategic challenge for FCRS is that it has not been easy to raise more money from our traditional funding base in Shropshire. We have therefore taken steps to broaden our potential funding sources, both geographically and by age profile.

We have appointed two new Trustees, one who lives in London and the other in Yorkshire, that helps broaden our geographic reach. And we are delighted that two young professionals, both females, have visited CRS with us. Each made outstanding contributions while at the school, and since returning, each have promoted the charity and themselves become donors.

We have developed two programmes that we believe will be good in themselves and that will have appeal to new donors. These programmes are based on technology and menstrual health; each have made considerable progress during the period under review. Trustees have actively monitored these programmes and the impact they are having, both their benefits and their potential financial contribution.

FCRS have developed enhanced financial reporting to support CRS management in their decision-making and to enable Trustees to better understand the likely funding needs of the school

Governance Documents and Policies

As described above, in the spring of 2025 we created a new handbook that governs our relationship with CRS. This was accepted by CRS, communicated to all the staff, and implemented within 3 months.

At the same time, Trustees updated our safeguarding policy and risk management framework.

Risk Management

The Trustees maintain a risk register and appropriate policies that are reviewed regularly. During the year the risk register was fully revised to reflect the impact of actions taken and new mitigating actions introduced.

Reportable Incident

During the period under review, both FCRS and CRS were severely tested in responding to a whistleblowing incident.

The Chair visited Conakry in February 2025 accompanied by Andy Nichol. During that visit, two of the CAST interns raised concerns about the behaviours of the two most senior members of the CRS management team, the Director and the Principal. They alleged financial misconduct and inappropriate relations with female students. Concerns about financial misconduct were raised separately by a senior member of the teaching staff.

While in Conakry, the Chair gathered the available evidence and arranged for further information to be gathered. Immediately on his return to the UK, an emergency Trustee meeting was arranged. Trustees reviewed all the evidence, considered the safeguarding policy, and the handbook governing behaviours, and determined that decisive action was required immediately. The following actions were taken

- The incident was reported to the Charities Commission
- Arrangements were made to ensure the safety of the female students
- The Director and the Principal were suspended without pay
- Access to the bank accounts was secured
- A formal investigation was initiated
- The local police were informed

At the conclusion of the investigation, both individuals accepted the findings and were dismissed from their roles. The Director of FCRS went to Conakry in May to ensure that staff, parents, and students were fully aware that we had zero-tolerance of these behaviours, and that we would support anyone who needed to raise their concerns. The Chair returned to Conakry in July.

A completion report was made to the Charities Commission. There has been no requirement for any further action.

The Trustees were pleased that the policies in place had proved to be clear, robust and sufficiently strong to be used in a disciplinary investigation. They were also pleased that several individuals had felt confident to raise concerns directly with the Chair. However, there was a recognition that the power and influence invested in the two roles had been used to silence the majority of people. The Trustees determined that further controls and communications would be necessary to reduce the chance of a similar situation arising in future.

The subsequent actions fall outside the reporting period, but I can report that multiple new controls have been agreed, and that I have returned to Conakry in January 2026 to ensure that they are being implemented, and to reinforce the messages given by the Director.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Charity Name: Friends of Conakry Refugee School

Other name charity is known by: FCRS, Friends of CRS

Registered charity number: 1124736

Charity's principal address

Gretton Mill, Gilberries Lane, Cardington, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 7HZ

The names of the Trustees who managed the Charity are as follows:

Rolf Levesley	Retired October 4 th 2024
Daniel Watkins	Appointed October 4 th 2024
Jacqueline Watkins	Reappointed July 18 th 2021
Ruth Walmsley	Reappointed June 23 rd 2023
Mark Walmsley	Retired July 3 rd 2024
Tanya Walmsley	Reappointed June 23 rd 2022
Angela Saganowska	Retired July 16 th 2025
Jana Kaminski	Retired October 4 th 2024
Jeanette Whitford	Reappointed February 11 th 2023
Carol Jowitt	Appointed April 10 th 2024
Nigel Hankin	Appointed 3 rd July 2024
Dan Walmsley	Appointed 10 th April 2024

Volunteer Director: Jacqueline Watkins

Volunteer Treasurer: Pauline Levesley until October 2024. Nigel Hankin from October 2024

Independent Examiner: Claire Angus CPA CA MSc (*Charity Accounting & Financial Management*)

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Type of governing document: Trust deed signed 23rd June 2008

How the charity is constituted: Trust

Trustee selection methods

New Trustees are selected based on the skills, knowledge and experience needed for effective administration of the Charity and to ensure the overall body has a complementary range of skills. New Trustees are recommended by the Chair and appointed by the full Trustee body.

During the period four new Trustees have been appointed (detailed above). The Trustees believe that these appointments bring valuable new insights and a range of experience and expertise that will help achieve the Charity's objectives.

6 Trustee Board meetings were held during the 2024/25 financial year. Minutes of meetings are recorded, and once approved at the following meeting, archived.

Considerable work was undertaken outside of these meetings through working groups.

Trustee length of service

Tanya and Ruth Walmsley, Founding Trustees, have served continuously for over nine years.

Trustees believe that extending their terms is invaluable in helping achieve the overall objectives of the Charity, given that they founded the Charity and that Tanya has extensive ongoing experience in international development with refugees and in conflict resolution.

Additional governance issues

Relationship with any related party. There were no payments to related parties.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Summary of objectives of the charity set out in its governing document:

To advance the education and relieve the financial hardship of those refugee children and children of refugees who require schooling and attend Conakry Refugee School, (CRS) Guinea, which is currently not supported by the Government of Guinea or any other agency.

The school is registered with the Guinean government as CRS. This was an abbreviation of Conakry Refugee School. In September 2022 the school decided it would be beneficial to continue to call itself CRS but in future the initials should stand for Conakry Reliance School as too many prospective parents did not expect the school to charge fees as they expected a Refugee School to provide free education. As they still have the same educational and social objectives and ethos, FCRS Trustees have decided to retain the charity's name to maintain continuity and avoid confusion but wherever possible use the abbreviated name FCRS or Friends of CRS.

Who we are

Friends of CRS is a volunteer led UK based charity who have supported education at CRS since 2005. We share a vision of a better future for some of the world's most disadvantaged children and young people.

Our purpose

To create a better future for some of the world's most marginalised and disadvantaged children and young people through education.

Our vision

For every child and young person to be educated, protected, respected, and valued regardless of their, gender, faith, ethnic background, or financial circumstance.

Because we believe,

Education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential, improving their life chances, equipping them to gain employment and enabling them to play an active role in advancing their community.

All children and young people have an equal right to access education, support in education and progress through education.

Good quality education requires good teaching staff who are appropriately trained and remunerated for their work, a good school environment and well-equipped classrooms.

A school must be financially and environmentally sustainable if it is to deliver these benefits to children, young people, and the community.

Children and young people who are vulnerable and marginalised need extra support to realise the benefits of their education and build better lives post school.

Our Values

Respect; Equality; Learning; Inclusion; Accountability; Nurturing; Collaboration; Excellence

Our Mission

To actively engage, programme manage and provide resources for developments through Conakry Reliance School (CRS), to improve gender equality, educational outcomes and the life chances of marginalised and vulnerable children and young people. To support these young people in realising the benefits of their education by identifying or creating opportunities for further education or employment. To advance access to education through the awarding of basic scholarships and a school feeding programme.

Our partners

Conakry Refugee School was set up in the 1990s by refugees from the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia and has educated refugees and their children since then. In 2023 they changed their name to Conakry Reliance School to reflect the fact that their students are now born in Guinea, and their community has settled in Conakry. As an English-speaking school, it attracts students from English speaking refugee backgrounds and increasingly, Guineans who want to access an affordable good quality education in English. It is a remarkable establishment; its ethos and values of equality, tolerance, compassion, and its quest for excellence in education sets it apart from other schools in Guinea. Its

promotion of access and education for girls and its stance on issues like FGM and early marriage makes it unique.

A school of over 400 students, it provides both primary and secondary school education and has an excellent reputation in external exam performance. Over 50% of students at the school are female, including in the most senior classes and in the science stream. Although many of its pupils come from very disadvantaged backgrounds and are often living with single parents or extended family members there is a trend towards more financially able students enrolling to access an excellent education in English, especially since the provision of a practical science laboratory and computer room. It functions as more than just a school, providing a safe haven for vulnerable and at-risk young people as well as serving as a community resource.

Our Objectives

- Equal access to education
- Gender equality
- Student wellbeing
- Teacher support
- Educational excellence
- Tolerance
- To extend these benefits outside of the school into the community, and where realistic to make our facilities available to other schools in the area.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

Trustees consider the guidance provided by the Charity Commission relating to public benefit and consider their objectives and the activities undertaken in pursuance of those objectives are for the public benefit. Tangible evidence for this belief is provided at the beginning of this document.

Summary

Our approach has always been to work in true and equal partnership with CRS, and we continue to challenge our actions, language and behaviour to ensure we adhere to this.

We acknowledge that we have considerable privilege and power, and we must pay attention to issues of race and avoid a paternalistic approach. FCRS will continue to focus on our belief that good quality education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential and improving their life chances. We will create a narrative that emphasises self-determination and constantly review our policies and programmes and challenge each other to ensure that we are not inadvertently using discriminatory policies or practicing discriminatory behaviour. We will engage the CRS management in all decisions about funding and use of funds.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Policy on reserves

FCRS has no overheads, does not have paid staff and therefore has no ongoing commitments in terms of its day to day running costs in the UK. It therefore does not need to ensure a level of reserves be retained to meet legal or contractual liabilities within the UK.

FCRS's income is used to support programmes at CRS that will advance the education and life chances of marginalized children and young people, many of whom were originally from the refugee community.

To give CRS more stability and help them better manage their finances, Trustees annually determine the nature and scale of programmes we can realistically provide for CRS for the whole of the following academic year. That support is based upon CRS's needs as identified within the budget setting process that we have put in place, and the amount of money FCRS has at the end of July.

Trustees will ensure that there is sufficient income held to honour the agreed support.

Principal sources of funds

Principal Sources of Funds

- Individual donors: £52,124
- Major Donors: £68,383
- Trip participants: £16,500
- Fundraising events: £3,181
- Gift Aid: £28,386
- Interest: £709

Total £169,283

See section on fundraising above (page 8 and following)

How expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity

The charity has no overheads and all the funding that we raise goes directly to CRS for the identified programmes detailed above. This year we sent £ 142,924 directly to CRS, of which

- £ 48,056 was for individual student scholarships
- £ 28,878 was for school meals and health initiatives

During this period, we incurred costs of £ 20,215 for visits to the school (2023/24 £ 6,030). We undertook a larger number of visits, partly to support development of local capacity for the IT and menstrual health programmes, and partly in response to the serious incident. These costs were covered by specific donations.

Everyone who undertakes work for FCRS does so voluntarily. The only costs that FCRS directly incur are

- Money transmission fees
- Bank charges from Nat West
- Fundraising event costs
- Costs to cover an annual visit to Guinea for two people (flights, accommodation, and food)

These expenses are more than covered by the gift aid that we can claim on donations.

DECLARATION

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees report above

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustee

Dan Watkins

DAN WATKINS, (INTERIM) CHAIR

15th April 2026

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Friends of Conakry Refugee School

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Friends of Conakry Refugee School (Trust) for the 16 months ended 31 July 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 accounts carried out under s. 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable directions given by the Charity Commission under s. 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act.
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do 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.

Claire Angus

Claire Angus

April 15, 2026

CPA CA (CICA) MSc, (City St. George's, University of London)

89 Frognal, London, NW3 6XX

Friends of Conakry Refugee School
Receipts and Payment Accounts for the period 1st April 2024 to 31 July 2025

			16 months	12 months
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
Receipts				
Student sponsors	-	4,538	4,538	2,876
Fundraising events	3,181		3,181	150
Donations & grants	56,848	104,007	160,855	118,639
Interest	709		709	588
Total receipts	60,738	108,545	169,283	122,253
Payments				
Scholarships/sponsored students	4,361	43,696	48,056	25,385
Other school programmes	15,403	13,475	28,878	79,274
Visits to school	20,215	-	20,215	6,030
Other school expenses	12,053	53,937	65,989	130
Revenue raising costs	215	-	215	1,014
Total payments	52,246	111,108	163,354	111,834
Net of receipts/(payments)	8,491	- 2,562	5,929	10,419
Transfer between funds				
Cash funds last year end	22,394	27,450	49,844	39,425
Cash funds this year end	30,886	24,888	55,773	49,844

Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
Cash funds: In bank	30,886	24,888	55,773	49,844

Signed by Dan J. Watkins, Chair of the Trustees on behalf of all the Trustees

Dan Watkins

Date of Approval 15 April 2026

Signed by Claire Angus, External Examiner

Claire Angus

Date of Approval 15 April 2026

Accounts

Trustees Annual Report for the period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

1. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Charity Name	Friends of Conakry Refugee School
Other name charity is known by	FCRS
Registered charity number	1124736
Charity's principal address	Gretton Mill Cardington Church Stretton Shropshire SY6 7HZ

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity:

Rolf Levesley	Chair	Reappointed 23 rd June 2021
Mark Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2022
Tanya Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2022
Rachel Roland	Trustee	Until 12 th October 2023
Angela Saganowska	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2022
Ruth Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2023
Jacqueline Watkins	Trustee	Reappointed 18 th July 2021
Jeanette Whitford	Trustee	Reappointed 11 th February 2023
Jana Kaminski	Trustee	Appointed 8 th December 2021

Name of the volunteer Director

Jacqueline Watkins

Name of the volunteer Treasurer

Pauline Levesley

Name of the Independent examiner

Kate Chetwood.

2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

<i>Type of governing document</i>	Trust deed signed 23 rd June 2008
<i>How the charity is constituted</i>	Trust
<i>Trustee selection methods</i>	New Trustees will be selected for appointment by the Trustees with regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the Charity

There were 4 Trustee Board meetings during the 2023/24 financial year. Considerable work was undertaken through working groups and meetings to amend and update the Safeguarding Policy and Risk Management. There were also Fundraising group meetings.

Trustee length of service

Three of the above Trustees have served continuously for over nine years.

Rolf Levesley (Chair)

Mark Walmsley Founding Trustee

Tanya Walmsley Founding Trustee

The Charity has succeeded in attracting a variety of Trustees with appropriate skill sets since inception in the interests of refreshing the Board. The Board have agreed unanimously to the extensions of the terms of office of the three Trustees referred to above for exceptional reasons as follows:-

1. Rolf Levesley (Chair) has been a Trustee since inception and offers particular skills as a retired solicitor not otherwise available and has broad experience as a Chair in local government, health and housing association sectors.
2. Mark Walmsley founded the Charity and has invaluable in-depth experience in education and knowledge of Conakry Refugee School and an extensive range of friends and supporters who have supported the school for years
3. Tanya Walmsley also founded the Charity and has current and extensive experience in international development with refugees and conflict resolution which Trustees feel, again, is invaluable.

Additional governance issues

Relationship with any related party. There were no payments to related parties.

4. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Summary of objects of the charity set out in its governing document:

To advance the education and relieve the financial hardship of those refugee children and children of refugees who require schooling and attend Conakry Refugee School, (CRS) Guinea, which is currently not supported by the Government of Guinea or any other agency.

The school is registered with the Guinean government as CRS. This was an abbreviation of Conakry Refugee School. In September 2022 the school decided it would be beneficial to continue to call itself CRS but in future the initials should stand for Conakry Reliance School as too many prospective parents did not expect the school to charge fees as they expected a Refugee School to provide free education. As they still have the same educational and social objectives and ethos, FCRS Trustees have decided to retain the charity's name to maintain continuity and avoid confusion but wherever possible use the abbreviated name FCRS or Friends of CRS.

Who we are

Friends of CRS is a volunteer led UK based charity who have supported education at CRS since 2005. Originally named Friends of Conakry Refugee school, we now use the name Friends of CRS to reflect their change of identity and name. We share a vision of a better future for some of the world's most disadvantaged children and young people.

Friends of CRS is one of the only organisations involved in enhancing the education and wellbeing of English- speaking children in Guinea. We do not underestimate the challenges of working in a country where over 50% of the population live in poverty and is globally in the bottom ten countries in terms of gender equality, literacy, and life expectancy. Our successes are based on the direct and honest working relationship we have built over two decades in the country based on mutual respect and collaboration with our partners.

Our purpose

We believe we can create a better future for some of the world's most marginalised and disadvantaged children and young people through education.

Our vision

For every child and young person to be educated, protected, respected, and valued regardless of their, gender, faith, ethnic background, or financial circumstance.

Because we believe,

Education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential, improving their life chances, equipping them to gain employment and enabling them to play an active role in advancing their community.

All children and young people have an equal right to access education, support in education and progress through education.

Good quality education requires good teaching staff who are appropriately trained and remunerated for their work, a good school environment and well-equipped classrooms.

A school must be financially and environmentally sustainable if it is to deliver these benefits to children, young people, and the community.

Children and young people who are vulnerable and marginalised need extra support to realise the benefits of their education and build better lives post school.

Our Values

Respect;
Equality;
Learning;
Inclusion;
Accountability;
Nurturing;
Collaboration;
Excellence

Our Mission

To actively engage, programme manage and provide resources for developments through Conakry Reliance School (CRS), to improve gender equality, educational outcomes and the life chances of marginalised and vulnerable children and young people. To support these young people in realising the benefits of their education by identifying or creating opportunities for further education or employment. To advance access to education through the awarding of basic scholarships and a school feeding programme.

Our partners

Conakry Refugee School was set up in the 1990s by refugees from the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia and has educated refugees and their children since then. In 2023 they changed their name to Conakry Reliance School to reflect the fact that their students are now born in Guinea and their community has settled in Conakry. As an English-speaking school, it attracts students from English speaking refugee backgrounds and increasingly, Guineans who want to access an affordable good quality education in English. It is a remarkable establishment; its ethos and values of equality, tolerance, compassion, and its quest for excellence in education sets it apart from other schools in Guinea. Its promotion of access and education for girls and its stance on issues like FGM and early marriage makes it unique.

A school of nearly 500 students, it provides both primary and secondary school education and has an excellent reputation in external exam performance. Over 50% of students at the school are female. Although many of its pupils come from very disadvantaged backgrounds and are often living with single parents or extended family members there is a trend towards more financially able students enrolling to access an excellent education in English, especially since the provision of a practical science laboratory and computer room. It

functions as more than just a school, providing a safe haven for vulnerable and at- risk young people as well as serving as a community resource.

Our Objectives

- Equal access to education
- Gender equality
- Student wellbeing
- Teacher support
- Educational excellence
- Tolerance
- To extend these benefits outside of the school into the community.

5. PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

FCRS has 7 objectives which are not mutually exclusive and are aligned with our vision and mission. We deliver our objectives through a series of programmes.

Trustees have had regard to the guidance provided by the Charity Commission relating to public benefit and consider their objectives and the activities undertaken in pursuance of those objectives are for the public benefit.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects in 2023/24

1. To support equal access to education
 - Scholarships
 - School feeding
2. To support gender equality
 - Scholarships 50% of scholarships for disadvantaged students are awarded to girls.
 - Wash facilities and toilets on every floor.
 - School nurse employed with equipped sick room.
 - PHSE classes throughout the school
 - Health club for 50 boys and girls discussing FGM, early marriage and sexual health.
3. To support student wellbeing
 - Support and mentorship for Safeguarding child protection policy and procedures.
 - Improvements to the school environment (wash facilities, school nurse, upgrading of floors and furniture, air conditioning in science and IT laboratories)
 - Health and wellbeing education
 - Extra curricula activities (debate, sport, Health, and IT club)
4. To support teachers
 - Management team leadership mentoring
 - Professional development session at the start of each academic year

- Governance and budget management advice and mentorship
 - IT classes for staff
 - Provision of basic wage for all staff
5. To enable educational excellence
 - Exam scholarships for able but disadvantaged students
 - Conakry Academy of Science and Technology (CAST) IT club, coding summer school, internships, and work experience
 - IT classes for staff and skill development for managers
 - Science lab and training for staff
 6. To actively work to extend these benefits outside of the school to the wider community
 - IT classes for the community
 - Health club dramas and outreach work
 - CAST internships and community business support
 7. To promote a more tolerant society
 - UK school outreach
 - Talks and presentation to UK organisations (WI, Rotary U3A)

Our approach

Our aim has always been to work in true and equal partnership with the school and we will continue to strive and challenge our actions, language and behaviour to ensure this approach.

F CRS acknowledges we have considerable privilege and power and we must pay attention to issues of race and avoid a paternalistic approach. F CRS will continue to focus on our belief that good quality education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential and improving their life chances. We will create a narrative that emphasises self-determination and constantly review our policies and programmes and challenge each other to ensure that we are not inadvertently using discriminatory policies or practicing discriminatory behaviour. We will engage the CRS management in all decisions about funding and use of funds.

Synopsis of the year

Having helped CRS move into the new school building for the start of the 2021/22 academic year, Trustees recognised that it would be difficult to balance celebrating that achievement while giving the strong message that CRS still needs a lot of support to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are able to receive an excellent education.

Trustees were also very aware that the need to start paying rent at the end of the rent free period at the beginning of September 2023 would be a considerable challenge.

The February 2023 visit had made it very clear that CRS would not be able to attract sufficient numbers of additional fee-paying pupils as the cost of living crisis continued to be a severe problem in Guinea. In addition to the global cost of living crisis, the rising economic and financial success of Conakry has led to higher rents due to pressures for buildings and attempts at taxation thus further increasing the cost of living for CRS pupils, their families and CRS staff.

For CRS this has meant that the cost of running the school has increased while its students' families are even more hard pressed than usual and they find it even more difficult to pay school fees therefore staff wages have had to remain static making life even more difficult for them.

CRS has worked to the best of its ability to use the improved facilities to raise more funds through fees and meet these challenges only to be thwarted at each turn by forces at a national and international level over which it has no control.

It was clear that CRS would require help with paying the rent if the school were to survive.

The visit, however, strongly reaffirmed the value of the education CRS was providing for all its pupils and increased the determination of those who had just visited and Trustees that CRS must survive.

It was agreed that the way forward would need to tap into the growing economy of Guinea to generate the necessary additional income.

One of the people who had accompanied the Director on that visit was Andy Nichol who has extensive experience at a high level in the IT sector and science. During the visit he had organised a highly successful and enthusiastically received software coding weekend workshop for students and staff.

He identified a mismatch between the supply and demand for computer technological capability in West Africa and thought CRS as an English-speaking school could potentially help fill the gap by developing a Software Academy to enable Guineans, living in Guinea, to build software to help Guinean businesses and other organisations while creating income for CRS. This vision was developed through discussion with the

Director, friends and colleagues in the tech industry into a project that has been further developed and toned throughout the whole of this year – Conakry Academy of Science and Technology (CAST).

Recognising that the project required seed funding to get established and that it could not generate the amount of money required to pay the school rent by September 2023, Andy personally donated the first year's rent and the required seed funding.

The project has already greatly improved the IT facilities of the school and enhanced the education and life prospects of CRS students.

During the summer 20 students attended a 6 week Summer Software Academy where they learnt Microsoft Office and how to code.

In October 2023 the Director, Andy Nichol, Alan Farnaby and Dan Watkins undertook the 2023/24 Academic Year visit to Conakry. (Further details of the visit below) During that visit a Summer Academy Presentation Ceremony was organised by CRS staff when the students who attended the academy confidently presented and demonstrated their work to a large audience of parents, school staff and Conakry Dignitaries, all of whom were hugely impressed by their confidence and achievements and the reputation of CRS was enhanced.

Trustees wish to express their great gratitude and appreciation for his generosity and also thank him and all the other people who have freely given their time and expertise to the development of this project.

Trustees can therefore happily report that 2023/4 has been another successful year

The school rent has been secured until September 2025, Conakry Academy of Science and Technology (CAST) has been developed providing a six week coding summer school, presentation ceremony, wifi for the school, improved IT facilities, term-time IT club for pupils and IT classes for staff. The school library has also been refurbished.

In addition, we are pleased to be able to report that we have been able to maintain all our planned programmes – Scholarships for the most vulnerable pupils, exam scholarships for the most able of those scholarship pupils, hot school-meals for all the school pupils 8 days per month, a breakfast and lunch club, PHSE support and professional development support. (See below for details)

The Challenge for 2024/5 will be to maintain FCRS's current support for CRS but also further develop CAST and other projects that will hopefully mean that the school can pay the rent when September 2025 arrives.

We hope that that this annual report helps explain the excellent work carried out by the charity together with the challenges ahead.

All our sincere thanks and appreciation go to all our loyal supporters, volunteers, donors and The Reed Foundation for being our Champion this year in the Big Give 2023 Christmas Challenge. Your generosity and support has ensured we could achieve our objectives.

The detailed sections set out below, provide information on the performance of our priority programmes.

A Student Scholarships and Examination Achievements

Scholarships are awarded annually for an academic year. The criteria for choosing which students are awarded scholarships ensures that the many marginalised and vulnerable pupils are able to continue their education. If a student's circumstances do not change for the better and they have attended school regularly they are eligible for a scholarship the following year.

In addition, each academic year if finance allows, at least 12 of the most able scholarship students taking external exams are awarded with exam scholarships. This means the students know that all their exam fees and other costs associated with taking their exams will be paid by FCRS. They are therefore able to put all their energy and effort into achieving high standards in the exams rather than being worried that they may not be able to afford to take them.

At least 50% of scholarships and exam scholarships are awarded to girls enabling them to continue their education beyond primary school level and gain recognised qualifications,

During school visits parents and students have consistently reported the positive and important impact of the scholarship programme on both pupils and their families. It means families can more easily afford to pay transport costs and therefore send their children to school on a regular basis. The exam scholars all reported that the scholarships gave them an opportunity to take exams they could not afford and extra motivation to do well.

The fees that FCRS pay for the scholarship students are used by CRS to provide members of staff with a guaranteed minimum wage each month and therefore staff receive a higher level of pay than could have delivered if CRS was reliant on fee payment by pupils alone. Staff with children have also been awarded one scholarship per family thus further helping their families' well-being. Without this support many of the staff would not be able to continue working at the school. Ensuring a higher wage is important for their well-being, motivation and morale and also helps CRS retain the right people thus contributing to the quality of education.

- Scholarships mean students are able to attend school and concentrate upon their education throughout the academic year with total confidence knowing that their school fees and registration costs will be paid in spite of the poverty of their family / guardian

- Exam scholarships mean that students are able to take their external exams and put all their energy and effort into achieving high standards in the exams rather than being worried that they may not be able to afford to take them.
- All members of staff have received a higher wage than the school would otherwise have been able to afford. Since August 2019 at CRS's request, FCRS has divided the fee money by 12 so staff receive some money throughout the year

The 2023/4 financial year covered the last term of CRS's 2022/3 academic year and the first two terms of their 2023/4 academic year.

Throughout the 2022/3 academic year

- 102 pupils were awarded scholarships
- 20 students were able to take their external exams in Summer 2023 because FCRS paid for all their exam fees
 - 4 took their grade 6 exams
 - 9 took their grade 9 exams
 - 7 took their grade 12 exams thus being able to graduate from school with recognised academic qualifications.

Throughout the 2023/24 academic year

- 111 pupils were awarded scholarships. (61 girls)
- 24 students will be able to take their external exams Summer 2024 because FCRS is paying all of their exam fees
 - 4 will be able to take their grade 6 exams
 - 9 will be able to take their grade 9 exams
 - 11 will be able to take their grade 12 exams and be able to graduate from school with recognised academic qualifications.

These figures include 4 extra grade 12 scholarships awarded by the CAST programme. CAST is paying their fees and their exam costs.

B School feeding programme

Hot School Meal

- A hot midday meal was provided for all pupils attending school. The provision of a school meal increases the concentration and learning of all pupils but for many it is vitally important to them and for some it is their only meal. It also encourages regular attendance at school.
- Students were better nourished than they would otherwise have been and were incentivised to attend school in spite of their poverty
- Unfortunately, it has only been possible to provide 8 meals per month this year as the cost of food has increased and FCRS has not been able to raise any more money for this programme.
- The provision of school meals remains a priority for CRS and FCRS Trustees. Each visit reports back the importance of the school meal. The school reports there were noticeable differences at school on the days when school meals

were not provided – poorer attendance, students are hungry. Many have to leave home as early as 6am to get to school on time.

Breakfast and Lunch Club

- FCRS has continued to support a term-time breakfast and lunch club that produces cheap food at the start of the day by providing 2 catering staff with a guaranteed minimum salary.
- All pupils have been able to purchase cheap food at the start of the day after their journey to school.
On the days when the free meal cannot be provided, cooks make simple and cheap food and drinks.
- A small profit is made providing both the staff and CRS with a small amount of extra income.

C. PHSE and Sanitation materials

During the pandemic, water and hygiene was, and still is, highly important. The Guinean Government set out stringent hygiene measures that schools had to undertake before they were allowed to reopen and once open schools had to abide by further strict measures.

It is also important for older girls and female staff, ensuring they can attend regularly throughout the month.

FCRS has helped achieve and maintain these measures.

The new school itself is a major step forward for hygiene and sanitation as it provides wash facilities and toilets on each floor. However, resources are still required to maintain and keep these facilities clean and in good working order and ensure pupils know how to use them properly.

The teaching of good hygiene is also of paramount importance.

Throughout the year FCRS has provided monthly support to help provide the PHSE and Sanitation materials required.. It is up to the Management Team to determine exactly what is required to ensure the maintenance of the PHSE programme and good hygiene and sanitation within the school.

- PHSE classes are provided for all students
- A school nurse is employed to support hygiene good practice
- Water, soap, towels are provided
- Students have increased their understanding of the importance of hygiene and diet
- Students have been able to practice good hygiene at school reducing the potential occurrence of disease and absence from school

D Female Hygiene Kits

Sanitary pads are expensive in Guinea, in some cases costing up to 25% of female staff's monthly salaries. In many cases, because they are too expensive for them, girls are not

able to go to school. Reusable sanitary wear saves money for both them and the PHSE budget and should decrease female student absenteeism.

For several years FCRS has sent sustainable sanitary kits made by volunteers in the UK with the people who have gone to Conakry. These kits have been given to female staff and older girls.

This year the Director and Carol Jowitt, who went to Conakry February 2023, have been investigating potential ways of making and financing the making of similar kits in Conakry. It is hoped that a potential project can be launched Summer 2024.

E, Health Club

The club has been able to meet and flourish thanks to the extra resources previously made available. Both boys and girls attend the club. Their meetings continue to provide a safe place and space where girls can be educated about their rights, inspired to stay in school and supported in avoiding FGM and Early Marriage.

- A Health Club office has been created
- During the year the pupils have met weekly to discuss issues relating to sexual and reproductive health and girls' safety. They provide each other support and have developed and performed new dramas based on their discussions.

F. The School Building and Advancement of Science and IT

During the 2023/24 financial year, FCRS has been able to further upgrade the building and learning environment and also advance the quality of science and IT teaching:-

- The Avonbrook Foundation gave permission to use the money remaining from their grants to be used to refurbish the library, shelving and new furniture plus a quiet reading room
- A new staff room has been provided
- During the visit Alan Farnaby spent considerable time with the science teachers and mentored both science teachers in developing the science curriculum and teaching practical science. He gave a masterclass in practical chemistry to senior student.
- Chemicals for practical science were replenished for the 2023/4 academic year's practical science classes

Conakry Academy of Science and Technology (CAST)

As described in the synopsis and above the new Conakry Academy of Science and Technology (CAST) has already started providing multiple benefits to existing programmes e.g. scholarships and professional development but also to the school building and of course the advancement of IT:-

- Wifi has been installed in the school
- The IT room has been improved with air conditioning, tiled floors and new furniture
- 20 students were able to attend the free 6 week Software academy during summer 2023

- A coding club was run throughout the school year allowing 11 students who attended the summer school to continue to learn and explore the world of coding with virtual support from Andy Nichol.
- Extra IT classes were provided for staff
- Existing laptops have been repaired

Thus

- Pupils are now being taught in a modern building providing an improved, effective learning environment.
- Pupils are being taught in a healthier environment in a building with flushing toilets and running water.
- Pupils are now being taught practical science in a fully fitted science laboratory by qualified staff supported both during the visit and since remotely by Alan Farnaby
- The number of senior students studying science has increased.
- Girls make up at least 50% of senior science classes and IT classes and during the last visit it was noted that they were confident demonstrating their knowledge in front of the class.
- Pupils have an enhanced opportunity to study IT which will not only improve their education but also open up their employment opportunities once they leave.

G Professional Development

The Avonbrook Foundation has now officially closed but since 2017 has awarded FCRS grants so that members of staff could attend three-year training courses that lead to a professional higher teacher certificate thus increasing the quality of education at the school. The training comprises three residential courses in Sierra Leone per year normally held during the Christmas, Spring and Summer holidays and a period of teaching practice also in Sierra Leone either during the Autumn or Spring terms of their second and third years.

Five members of staff have successfully completed their training under this programme.

The increased skills of all those trained are benefitting not only the education of their pupils but also benefitting other members of staff and their pupils, as they share their new knowledge and ideas both informally and formally through staff workshops.

During FCRS visits to Conakry highly qualified professionals have been able to share their knowledge and expertise with teachers and management and, having built that relationship, have continued to mentor them online.

During the 2023/4 financial year:-

- The fifth member of staff completed his final year and graduated in October 2023.
- The increased skills of all those trained are benefitting not only the education of their pupils but also benefitting other members of staff and their pupils, as they share their new knowledge and ideas both informally and formally. The

- CRS staff workshop in October 2023 was led by the staff who had benefited from the higher teaching certification training.
- 14 members of staff have attended the extra IT classes financed by CAST. More than half of them were female and many of them had no previous IT skills. These skills will not only help them but also help the school considerably.
- During the October 2023 visit Alan Farnaby spent considerable time with the science teachers and mentored both science teachers in developing the science curriculum and teaching practical science. He has been mentoring them since his return, especially on alternative cheaper options for chemicals and equipment.
- Dan Watkins who had a high level career in finance undertook an audit of CRS's 2022/3 accounts during the October 2023 visit but also worked closely with the management team on setting up more transparent processes while in Conakry has also continued mentoring them from the UK.
- Carol Jowitt who worked in education for 30 years and headed a humanities team worked with staff on curriculum management, educational data and teaching language methodologies while in Conakry May 2022. Since coming back to the UK she has continued her mentoring role with the French teacher.

H. To maintain that support and raise awareness and knowledge of life in Guinea

- Raised awareness through fundraising activities, talks to community groups, the website and Facebook
- Emailed regular newsletters to supporters.

6. FINANCIAL REVIEW

i. Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

FCRS has no overheads, does not have paid staff and therefore has no ongoing commitments in terms of its day to day running costs in the UK. It therefore does not need to ensure a level of reserves be retained to meet legal or contractual liabilities within the UK.

FCRS's income is used to support programmes at CRS that will advance the education and life chances of marginalized children and young people, many of whom were originally from the refugee community.

To give CRS more security and help them better manage their finances, Trustees have decided that they will annually determine the programmes FCRS can realistically provide for CRS for the whole of the following academic year. That support will be based upon CRS's needs and the amount of money FCRS has at the end of July.

Once the annual amount has been agreed FCRS will support other requests from CRS only if extra funding / grants are obtained over and above those needed to provide the agreed support for the year and build up a fund for the following year's support.

This means that although the amount of money held during the year will fluctuate Trustees will ensure that there is sufficient income held to honour the agreed support and any other agreed projects.

For 2023/24 Trustees were working towards ensuring that by the end of July 2024 (the end of CRS's academic year) there would be £30,000 in the bank that could be committed for the 2024/25 academic year.

At the end of this financial year we had £22,394.17 unrestricted funds and £27,450.13 in restricted funds. Total £49,844.30

Restricted funds

Big Give 2022 for 2023/24 scholarships	£ 5,357.35
Big Give 2023 for 2024 scholarships	£ 14,125.27
Software Academy (CAST)	£ 7,967.51

This was sufficient to fulfil all our commitments for the academic year ending July 2024 and ensure that by the end of July FCRS would reach its target of at least £30,000 for the 2024/5 academic year.

Trustees would like to thank all our generous supporters who ensured that, despite the cost of living crisis, we reached that target by the end of July 2024.

ii) Principal sources of funds

Donations

General (unrestricted) fund	-	£27,053.05
Student sponsors	-	£ 2,876.00
Big Give 2023 donations	-	£ 9,702.52
Thank you bonus for staff	-	£ 1,638.55
School Meals	-	£ 1,840.00
Software Academy & Rent	-	£58,801.05

Raised by

- 63 supporters who gave monthly donations to the general fund (1 of whom donate via the Charities Trust (pay as you earn scheme) and another via Just Giving)
- 13 supporters who made regular monthly standing orders to support students within the scholarship programme.
- 27 one-off donations from individuals and businesses mainly as a result of the newsletters and "fundraising events" outlined below but also birthday presents, circle dancing, community group collections etc
- 1 person donated £1,638.55 to provide staff with a Christmas thank you bonus.
- 37 people who donated or held events and donated the proceeds for 2024/5 scholarships via the 2023 Big Give Challenge

- donations from the members of Hanna Lawrence's singing groups who donated £1,150 for school meals
- 2 donors who have supported the software academy including one person who donated £58,301.05 for the school rent and the academy.
- a further unknown amount of people who donated £645.08 via PayPal Giving, £202.15 via Easy Fundraising, £1,205 via Just Giving and £58.18 via Amazon Smile.

Gift Aid has been claimed on all eligible donations raising a further £17,603.64.

Grants Received 2023/24

Big Give 2023

- The Big Give is a mixture of donations and grant. The 2023 Big Give appeal for 2024/25 Scholarships raised a total of £14,125.27. Our champion this year, the Reed Foundation, provided £2,000 of that total.

The Avonbrook Foundation

- The Avonbrook Foundation has provided us with many grants over the past 2 decades. In recent years it has supported our Professional Development project which has successfully enabled 5 members of staff undertake professional courses to become fully qualified teachers and last year granted us £4,787 to help CRS improve the facilities for serving the Breakfast and Lunch Club food.
The Foundation has now officially closed but beforehand agreed to allow FCRS to use the £1,730.65 remaining from these grants to refurbish the school library.

Trustees and all the staff and pupils of CRS would like to thank everyone who has supported the school with their money and their time during the year. They would like to especially thank the volunteers for all their hard work

iii How expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity

Most of FCRS's income goes straight to CRS for the identified programmes detailed above. This year we sent £104,659.06. Considerably more than last year when we sent £59,728.46.

Last year was a year of consolidation following a grant from the Merck Foundation to relocate CRS to new improved premises with the first two years rent paid in advance. August 2023 saw the end of that two year period. A private donation allowed CRS to pay 12 months rent (£38,259.23 for 1st September 2023 – 31st August 2024) early in return for an extended lease with no rent increase until 31st August 2027.

CRS gives FCRS detailed estimates and sends scanned receipts. In past years this expenditure has been externally audited by qualified persons in Guinea. This year the audit was undertaken during the visit by Dan Watkins.

Bank Transfer fees are charged each time we send money to Guinea. This year we spent £130 in bank fees compared to £90 last year.

Visit to school. FCRS believes that visits to the school are an essential way of ensuring its programmes are still relevant and fulfilling their objectives. They provide up to date understanding of the problems and issues the school faces and a reminder of the considerable positives of CRS and FCRS's work. Visits also allow items such as hygiene kits, secondhand text books, refurbished laptops to be taken to Conakry from the UK. The cost of posting such items would be prohibitively high and undependable.

Following each visit an action plan is developed covering actions both CRS and FCRS will undertake over the following months. This ensures FCRS's work is relevant and focused.

This year's visit took place during October 2023 with the main objectives to:-

- assess and take forward the CAST project by
 - o assessing the performance of the Summer Academy;
 - o attending and helping to organise a high profile Summer Academy Presentation event inviting Guinean dignitaries as well as pupils and parents;
 - o making contact with other organisations within Conakry
- undertaking an audit of CRS's 2022/23 school accounts and work with the Management team to help assess where improvements were needed
- further develop science and increase competence and confidence of teaching practical science

3 supporters, Alan Farnaby, Andy Nichol and Dan Watkins, who each had different skill sets went with the Director. All the objectives were achieved. Many of the valuable outcomes of this year's visit has been recorded already in this report.

As well as annual visits, FCRS is in regular email contact with CRS. The current level of 2- way communication is high. We also arrange conference calls with the school's management team when joint planning and discussion requires face-to-face communication.

The experience of Covid and the visits since then have reinforced our belief that an annual visit is essential and should be taken so long as those going feel comfortable doing so.

Revenue generating costs were £1,014.34 compared to £236.30 last year.

They paid for:-

- £ 244.80 Monthly fees to Just Giving
- £ 19.54 PayPal fees for donations/purchases made via the FCRS website
- £ 750.00 Initial fees for rebuilding the FCRS website

We received E 1,205.04 in donations via Just Giving and E1, 708.08 was received via PayPal.

The website was set up in 2014 and was both dated and inadequate. Necessary updates to the site had caused significant loss of functionality so that it was struggling to accept donations and required a great deal of the Director's time. Trustees decided that a rebuild was essential.

iv. Other information

On the 31st March 2024 there was E27,450.13 restricted money;

Big Give 2022 for 2023/24 scholarships E 5,357.35

Big Give 2023 for 2024 scholarships E 14,125.27

Software Academy (CAST) E 7,967.51

DECLARATION

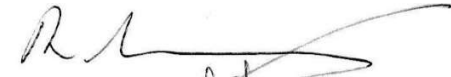
The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees report above

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustee

ROLF LEVESLEY, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Signed

Date


27th September 2024



Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees of Friends of Conakry Refugee School

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 March 2024

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 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 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 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 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.

Name: Kate Chetwood

Signed: 

Relevant professional qualification or body: AAT

Address: 'Spring Cottage' 207A Hadley Park Road, Leegomery, Telford, Shropshire, TF1 6QG

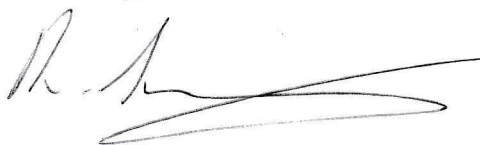
Date: 10 September 2024

Friends of Conakry Refugee School

Receipts and Payment Accounts for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Last year £
Receipts				
Student sponsors		2,876.00	2,876.00	2,953.00
Fundraising events	150.00		150.00	2,687.54
Donations	27,053.05	71,982.12	99,035.17	44,441.41
Grants		2,000.00	2,000.00	9,787.00
Gift Aid	5,055.89	12,547.75	17,603.64	11,022.44
Refund	28.80		28.80	-
Interest	559.00		559.00	110.26
Total receipts	32,846.74	89,405.87	122,252.61	71,001.65
Payments				
Scholarships / Sponsored students	2,168.44	23,216.35	25,384.79	28,241.49
Other School programmes	16,167.42	63,106.85	79,274.27	31,486.97
Visit to school	1,803.28	4,226.84	6,030.12	8,064.99
Bank Transfer fees	130.00		130.00	90.00
Revenue raising costs	1,014.34		1,014.34	236.30
Governance costs	0.00		0.00	0.00
Total payments	21,283.48	90,550.04	111,833.52	68,119.75
Net of receipts / (payments)	11,563.26	-1,144.17	10,419.09	2,881.90
Transfer between funds				
Cash funds last year end	10,830.91	28,594.30	39,425.21	36,543.31
Cash funds this year end	22,394.17	27,450.13	49,844.30	39,425.21
Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period				
	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £		
Cash funds: In bank	22,394.17	27,450.13		
Gift aid claimed but not received	0.00	0.00		
Investment assets	0.00	0.00		
Assets retained for the charity's use	0.00	0.00		
Liabilities	0.00	0.00		

Signed by Rolf Levesley, Chair of the Trustees on behalf of all the Trustees



Date of approval

27th September 2024

Signed by Kate Chetwood, External Examiner



Date of approval

10 September 2024

Accounts

Trustees Annual Report for the period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

1. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Charity Name	Friends of Conakry Refugee School
Other name charity is known by	FCRS
Registered charity number	1124736
Charity's principal address	Gretton Mill Cardington Church Stretton Shropshire SY6 7HZ

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity:

Rolf Levesley	Chair	Reappointed 23 rd June 2021
Mark Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2022
Tanya Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2022
Rachel Roland	Trustee	Reappointed 12 th October 2020
Angela Saganowska	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2022
Ruth Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2020
Jacqueline Watkins	Trustee	Reappointed 18 th July 2021
Jeanette Whitford	Trustee	Reappointed 11 th February 2023
Jana Kaminski	Trustee	Appointed 8 th December 2021

Name of the volunteer Director

Jacqueline Watkins

Name of the volunteer Treasurer

Pauline Levesley

Name of the Independent examiner

Kate Chetwood.

2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

<i>Type of governing document</i>	Trust deed signed 23 rd June 2008
<i>How the charity is constituted</i>	Trust
<i>Trustee selection methods</i>	New Trustees will be selected for appointment by the Trustees with regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the Charity

There were 4 Trustee Board meetings during the 2023/24 financial year. Considerable work was undertaken through working groups and meetings to amend and update the Safeguarding Policy and Risk Management, There were also Fundraising group meetings.

Trustee length of service

Three of the above Trustees have served continuously for over nine years.

Rolf Levesley (Chair)

Mark Walmsley Founding Trustee

Tanya Walmsley Founding Trustee

The Charity has succeeded in attracting a variety of Trustees with appropriate skill sets since inception in the interests of refreshing the Board. The Board have agreed unanimously to the extensions of the terms of office of the three Trustees referred to above for exceptional reasons as follows:-

1. Rolf Levesley (Chair) has been a Trustee since inception and offers particular skills as a retired solicitor not otherwise available and has broad experience as a Chair in local government, health and housing association sectors.
2. Mark Walmsley founded the Charity and has invaluable in-depth experience in education and knowledge of Conakry Refugee School and an extensive range of friends and supporters who have supported the school for years
3. Tanya Walmsley also founded the Charity and has current and extensive experience in international development with refugees and conflict resolution which Trustees feel, again, is invaluable.

Additional governance issues

Relationship with any related party. There were no payments to related parties.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Summary of objects of the charity set out in its governing document:

To advance the education and relieve the financial hardship of those refugee children and children of refugees who require schooling and attend Conakry Refugee School, (CRS) Guinea, which is currently not supported by the Government of Guinea or any other agency.

The school is registered with the Guinean government as CRS. This was an abbreviation of Conakry Refugee School. In September 2022 the school decided it would be beneficial to continue to call itself CRS but in future the initials should stand for Conakry Reliance School as too many prospective parents did not expect the school to charge fees as they expected a Refugee School to provide free education. As they have not officially changed their name and still have the same educational and social objectives and ethos, FCRS Trustees have decided to retain the charity's name to maintain continuity and avoid confusion but wherever possible use the abbreviated name FCRS.

Our vision and objectives

FCRS believes that every child and young person should be educated, protected, respected and valued regardless of their faith, gender, ethnic background or financial circumstance.

We believe that:-

- Good quality education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential, improving their life chances, equipping them to gain employment and enabling them to play an active role in advancing their community
- Refugees and children of refugees are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged and should be enabled to access school and other services regardless of their status
- Sustainable, good quality education requires good teaching staff who are appropriately trained and remunerated for their work
- A greater understanding of other people's lives and cultures is important for everyone and leads to a more tolerant society

FCRS supports CRS in Guinea, West Africa, to advance the education and life chances of vulnerable and marginalised children and young people, many of whom were originally from the refugee community.

We are one of the few UK charities involved in enhancing the education and wellbeing of English-speaking children in Guinea. As a value-driven organisation we are passionate about ensuring access to good education, promoting gender equality and tolerance. All our programmes are aimed at bringing about change to achieve our mission and objectives. Our successes are based on fostering a direct and honest working relationship with the school based on mutual respect and collaboration. We do not underestimate the challenges of working in a country which features in the bottom ten internationally in terms of literacy, girls' access to school and life expectancy.

Conakry is the capital of Guinea, which is one of the poorest African countries.

CRS is an English-speaking school and a remarkable establishment; its ethos and values of equality, tolerance, compassion and its quest for excellence in education sets it apart from other schools in Guinea. Its promotion of access and education for girls as well as its stance on supporting them on controversial issues like FGM and early marriage makes it unique. Over 50% of students at the school are female. It is a large school of nearly 600 students providing both primary and secondary school education, with an excellent reputation in external exam performance. The vast majority of its pupils come from very disadvantaged refugee backgrounds and are often living with single parents or extended family members. It functions as more than just a school.... It provides a safe haven for vulnerable and at risk young people as well as serving as a community resource.

CRS receives no government support and without the support of FCRS the school would have to rely totally upon the fees of the students. The fees have to be very low because the students are very poor, yet many are still unable to afford them.

4. PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

Trustees have had regard to the guidance provided by the Charity Commission relating to public benefit. In deciding upon the objectives listed below they recognise the activities undertaken in pursuance of those objectives are for the public benefit.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects in 2022/23

FCRS has 7 objectives listed below which are not mutually exclusive and are aligned with our vision and mission. We deliver our objectives through a series of programmes. We actively engage, provide resources and programme-manage developments, aligned with our vision on education, in support of CRS, to improve the life chances and advance the education of marginalised and vulnerable children and young people.

Objective - Focusing on Marginalised and Vulnerable Children and Young People

- Scholarship and Student support programme
- Hardship Fund

Objective – Achieving excellence in education

- Exam scholarship programme
- Professional Development programme
- Relocation of the school building and improved facilities
- Advancement of science education and IT education

Objective – Supporting the school towards realistic sustainability

- Relocation of the school building and increasing students and/or fee levels
- Provision of resources and mentorship in setting up a science lab
- Governance and budget management advice for a more self-sustaining management team
- Assisting the school in their marketing plans

Objective – Well-being and safety for all

- School meals programme and Breakfast Club
- Health Club / Girls and Young Women's programme
- Female hygiene and sexual health in collaboration with other organisations
- Support and mentorship to introduce / implement safeguarding child protection policy and procedures
- Relocation of the school building and a better and healthier school environment
- PHSE programme

Objective – Building equality

- Scholarship programme
- Female hygiene programme
- Health Club

Objective – Building professional development and leadership training

- Professional training programme
- Management team leadership programme

Objective – Promoting a more tolerant society by raising awareness and knowledge of life in Guinea

- FCRS newsletter and website
- Presentations on the work of FCRS and CRS

Our approach

Our aim has always been to work in true and equal partnership with the school and we will continue to strive and challenge our actions, language and behaviour to ensure this approach.

FCRS acknowledges we have considerable privilege and power and we must pay attention to issues of race and avoid a paternalistic approach. FCRS will continue to focus on our belief that good quality education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential and improving their life chances. We will create a narrative that emphasises self-determination and constantly review our policies and programmes and challenge each other to ensure that we are not inadvertently using discriminatory policies or practicing discriminatory behaviour. We will engage the CRS management in all decisions about funding and use of funds.

Synopsis of the year

2022/23 has been a difficult year for both CRS and FCRS. The cost of living crisis is a global phenomena – the price of fuel and food has rocketed in Guinea as well as the UK and the exchange rate between the pound and the Guinea franc has plummeted.

For FCRS this means we needed to raise 10% more than in previous years to simply meet our commitments to CRS at a time when the cost of living crisis and continued presence of Covid has made fundraising more difficult.

For CRS it has meant that students' families are even more pressed than usual and find it even more difficult to pay school fees.

However, despite that, it has been a very successful year for FCRS.

Having last year helped CRS move into the new school building for the start of the 2021/22 academic year, Trustees recognised that 2022/3 would be a year of consolidation, celebrating that achievement while still giving the strong message that CRS still needs a lot of support over the next few years to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils would be able to still receive an excellent education.

We are therefore pleased to be able to report that we were able to maintain all our planned programmes – Scholarships for the most vulnerable pupils, exam scholarships for the most able of those scholarship pupils, hot school-meals for all the school pupils 8 days per month, a breakfast and lunch club and 2 teachers were able to continue their professional development programme. (See below for details)

In addition, FCRS has helped CRS improve the building and educational facilities further by creating a bespoke IT room refurbished so that it could safely house the computers already donated by FCRS and 23 new laptops were taken out on the 2022 visit. It was also possible to greatly improved the facilities and equipment for the breakfast and lunch club, thanks to grant from Avonbrook Foundation.

The fact that CRS enjoyed the new school building with a 2 year rent free period, following the very generous grant from the Merck Family Foundation was a terrific help.

During the year FCRS Trustees built upon the safeguarding work undertaken last year. One trustee with considerable professional safeguarding experience took the lead to amend the FCRS Safeguarding Policy with full involvement of all the Trustees and we have worked to assist and encourage CRS to produce their own policy, especially through the visits to Conakry. Additionally, as a step to improve governance FCRS have instigated a risk management plan which is reviewed at every meeting.

Covid has prevented us from achieving our aim to visit the school every academic year since May 2019. Trustees were pleased that this year we were able to arrange two visits to CRS by our Director Jackie Watkins, each accompanied by two supporters. After both

visits Jackie and all 4 supporters reported back to Trustees that the education at the school continued to be excellent, the management and staff were functioning well and the children were receiving a high quality education in a safe, caring and inclusive environment.

In mid May 2022 (during the 2021/22 Academic year) our Director Jackie Watkins accompanied by two supporters- Sally and Maddy Loft. They were able to add value to the visit by looking into the whole issue of safeguarding at the school, talking to both pupils and staff. It was apparent to them that pupils felt safe in the school and able to go to staff if they had problems. Whilst staff and pupils may have had difficulties understanding the terms of safeguarding, safeguarding procedures were in place but not written down as a policy. FCRS has therefore been able to mentor CRS's management to develop their own safeguarding policy.

The second visit, in February 2023 (during the 2022/23 Academic year), Jackie was accompanied by Andy Nichol, who has extensive experience at a high level in the IT sector and science and Carol Jowitt who worked in education for 30 years and headed a humanities team. She was able to work with staff on curriculum management, educational data and teaching language methodologies.

Andy gave a talk on the importance of science education, worked alongside the science teachers to help develop some of the more challenging topics on the chemistry and physics curriculum and organise a software coding weekend workshop for students and staff.

As always, Jackie was able to carry out an extensive programme of work looking at all the educational activities at the school, the finances, health and well being of the children etc.

The resumption of visits with the input from supporters who could take a fresh perspective having never visited CRS before was especially valuable.

Trustees were very pleased that visits could resume as FCRS feel the direct personal contact is invaluable.

Trustees recognised that at the end of the rent free period the continued financing of CRS will be a considerable challenge. Attracting sufficient numbers of additional fee paying children was proving to be extremely difficult and Trustees recognised that the solution would have to involve some way to tap into the growing economy of Guinea to generate the necessary additional income. This will be the major priority for the following year.

We hope that that this annual report helps explain the excellent work carried out by the charity together with the challenges ahead.

All our sincere thanks and appreciation go to all our loyal local supporters and donors, together with our volunteers and contributors to all our fundraising events during the year.

We would also like to thank our major donors this year; the Avonbrook Foundation, and the Waterloo Foundation (via the Big Give 2022 Christmas Challenge) whose generosity and support has been important in helping us achieve our objectives.

The detailed sections set out below, provide information on the performance of our priority programmes.

a. The School Building and Advancement of Science and IT

Last year the grant from The Merck Family Foundation gave FCRS the resources to

- help CRS move to a new building to improve the physical learning environment,
- provide a science lab so that students could have practical science lessons which form an obligatory part of the science exam curriculum
- provide training to improve science teaching and ensure the new science lab was used to its best advantage.

Staff and pupils successfully moved into the new building in October 2021.

During the 2022/3 financial year, FCRS has been able to further upgrade the building and learning environment and advance the quality of science and IT teaching:-

- Creation of a bespoke IT room that will allow better IT teaching and safely house all the computers and laptops the school has thanks to a private donation of £5,000.
- 23 refurbished laptops were taken out on the May 2022 visit

In addition

- A weekend Software Coding Workshop was held during the 2023 visit to Conakry, making use of the IT lab and the laptops taken out in May. Using BBC micro bits and working off line, Andy led a workshop supported by Jackie and Carol showing 40 students and several keen staff members how to write simple code to control the micro bits. Female students made up at least half of the want-to-be coders, CRS are now going to set up a coding club to allow students to continue to learn and explore the world of coding with virtual support from Andy.
- Also during the 2023 visit Andy gave a talk on the importance of science education and worked alongside the science teachers to help develop some of the more challenging topics on the chemistry and physics curriculum.
- Chemicals were also replenished for the 2022/3 academic year's practical science classes following a Just Giving campaign

Thus

- Pupils are now being taught in a modern building providing an improved, effective learning environment.
- Pupils are being taught in a healthier environment in a building with flushing toilets and running water.

- Pupils are now being taught practical science in a fully fitted science laboratory by qualified staff.
- The number of senior students studying science has increased to 47 this year.
- For the 2022/23 academic year there are 19 students in Grade 10, 17 in Grade 11 and 11 in Grade 12.
- Girls make up at least 50% of senior science classes and during the last visit it was noted that they were confident demonstrating their knowledge in front of the class.

b. Student Scholarships and Examination Achievements

Scholarships are awarded annually for an academic year. The criteria for choosing which students are awarded scholarships ensures that the many marginalised and vulnerable pupils are able to continue their education. If a student's circumstances do not change for the better and they have attended school regularly they are eligible for a scholarship the following year.

In addition, each academic year if finance allows, at least 12 of the most able scholarship students taking external exams are awarded with exam scholarships. This means the students know that all their exam fees and other costs associated with taking their exams will be paid by FCRS. They are therefore able to put all their energy and effort into achieving high standards in the exams rather than being worried that they may not be able to afford to take them.

During school visits parents and students reported the positive and important impact of the scholarship programme on both pupils and their families. It meant families could more easily afford to pay transport costs and therefore send their children to school on a regular basis. The exam scholars all reported that the scholarships gave them an opportunity to take exams they could not afford and extra motivation to do well.

The fees that FCRS pay for the scholarship students are used by CRS to provide members of staff with a guaranteed minimum wage each month and therefore staff receive a higher level of pay than could have delivered if CRS was reliant on fee payment by pupils alone. Staff with children have also been awarded one scholarship per family thus further helping their families' well-being. Without this support many of the staff would not be able to continue working at the school. Ensuring a higher wage is important for their well-being, motivation and morale and also helps CRS retain the right people thus contributing to the quality of education.

- Scholarships mean students are able to attend school and concentrate upon their education throughout the academic year with total confidence knowing that their school fees and registration costs will be paid in spite of the poverty of their family / guardian
- Exam scholarships mean that students are able to take their external exams and put all their energy and effort into achieving high standards in the exams rather than being worried that they may not be able to afford to take them.

- All members of staff have received a higher wage than the school would otherwise have been able to afford. Since August 2019 at CRS's request, FCRS has divided the fee money by 12 so staff receive some money throughout the year

The 2022/23 financial year covered the last term of CRS's 2021/2 academic year and the first two terms of their 2022/3 academic year.

Throughout the 2021/22 academic year

- 154 pupils were awarded scholarships
- 13 students were able to take their external exams Summer 2022 because FCRS paid for all their exam fees
 - 4 took their grade 6 exams
 - 5 took their grade 9 exams
 - 4 took their grade 12 exams thus being able to graduate from school with recognised academic qualifications.

Throughout the 2022/23 academic year

- 102 pupils were awarded scholarships
- 20 students will be able to take their external exams Summer 2023 because FCRS is paying all of their exam fees
 - 4 will be able to take their grade 6 exams
 - 9 will be able to take their grade 9 exams
 - 7 will be able to take their grade 12 exams and be able to graduate from school with recognised academic qualifications.

c. School meals programme

- A hot midday meal was provided for all pupils attending school. The provision of a school meal increases the concentration and learning of all pupils but for many it is vitally important to them and for some it is their only meal. It also encourages regular attendance at school.
- Students were better nourished than they would otherwise have been and were incentivised to attend school in spite of their poverty
- Unfortunately, it has only been possible to provide 8 meals per month this year as the cost of food has increased and FCRS has not been able to raise any more money for this programme.
- The provision of school meals remains a priority for CRS and FCRS Trustees. Each visit reports back the importance of the school meal. The school reports there were noticeable differences at school on the days when school meals were not provided – poorer attendance, students are hungry. Many have to leave home as early as 6am to get to school on time.

d Breakfast and Lunch Club Programme

- FCRS has continued to support a term-time breakfast and lunch club that produces cheap food at the start of the day by paying the rent and providing 2 catering staff with a guaranteed minimum salary.
- All pupils have been able to purchase cheap food at the start of the day after their journey to school.
On the days when the free meal cannot be provided. Cooks make simple and cheap food and drinks. All prepared and served in the improved facilities (see school building above)
- A small profit is made providing both the staff and CRS with a small amount of extra income.
- This year, thanks to a grant from the Avonbrook Foundation, we were able to greatly improve the facilities and equipment for serving food by building a shelter over the area where the catering staff cook, tiling the floor of the kitchen and providing new cooking and serving equipment. These improvements were welcomed by both staff and pupils during the February 2023 visit. The cooks were overjoyed at the shelter from the sun and rain that had been constructed

e. PHSE and Sanitation materials

During the pandemic, water and hygiene has been, and still is, highly important. The Guinean Government set out stringent hygiene measures that schools had to undertake before they were allowed to reopen and once open schools had to abide by further strict measures. There were regular visits from Ministry of Education officials to check that these measures were in place and were being implemented. Throughout FCRS has helped achieve and maintain these measures.

The teaching of good hygiene is of paramount importance.

Whereas the old school had no running water and very poor toilet facilities the new school has running water and proper toilets on each floor of the building. The new school itself is therefore a major step forward for hygiene and sanitation. However, resources are still required to maintain and keep these facilities clean and in good working order and ensure pupils know how to use them properly.

Throughout the year FCRS has provided monthly support to help provide the PHSE and Sanitation materials required for the month. It is up to the Management Team to determine exactly what is required to ensure the maintenance of the PHSE programme and good hygiene and sanitation within the school.

- PHSE classes are provided for all students
- A school nurse is employed to support hygiene good practice
- Water, soap, towels are provided
- Students have increased their understanding of the importance of hygiene and diet
- Students have been able to practice good hygiene at school reducing the potential occurrence of disease

f. Female Hygiene Kits

Over 200 sustainable sanitary kits made by volunteers of the Penrith Chapter of Days for ,supporters when they visited Conakry in May 2022.

Sanitary pads are expensive in Guinea, in some cases costing up to 25% of female staff's monthly salaries. In many cases, because they are too expensive for them, girls are not able to go to school. Reusable sanitary wear saves money for both them and the PHSE budget and should decrease female student absenteeism.

g. Health Club

Many of the activities were curtailed because of COVID restrictions but the club has been able to meet and flourish thanks to the extra resources previously made available. Their meetings continue to provide a safe place and space where girls can be educated about their rights, inspired to stay in school and supported in avoiding FGM and Early Marriage.

- During the year they have developed and performed a new drama based on their discussions about corporal punishment and the treatment of children – what is acceptable and what isn't.
- The club bought drums and costumes to support their dramas with money raised by FCRS.
- In June 2022 two female members of staff were able to attend the 10th African conference on sexual health and rights held in Freetown. The conference was organized by “we are purposeful” an African-rooted global hub for girls activism. Their trip was paid for by a supporter who saw the opportunity for CRS to network with others who are working in Africa on the issues of early marriage and FGM. They met with many people from different organisations, and dignitaries and hope to use their new contacts to secure funding for the activities of CRS's health club.
- Also in June 2022 Health Club students went with 4 members of staff to the National Museum of Guinea in the administrative centre of Guinea, just a few miles away, on their first trip on a coach. They also visited the Blue Zone a multi media and sports complex. For many of the students the greatest excitement may have been the trip on the coach – feeling they are worthy of the same treatment as more privileged young people is a powerful message and will motivate them to reach for their potential in the future.
- Inspiring literature and videos were taken to Conakry for the club on the May 2022 visit.

h Professional Development

Since 2017 the Avonbrook Foundation has awarded FCRS grants so that members of staff could attend three-year training courses that lead to a professional higher teacher certificate thus increasing the quality of education at the school. The training comprises three residential courses in Sierra Leone per year normally held during the Christmas,

Spring and Summer holidays and one period of teaching practice also in Sierra Leone either during the Autumn or Spring terms of their second and third years.

February 2022, the Avonbrook Foundation gave us their final grant for this programme. At that time three members of staff had successfully completed their training under this programme. Two other people were undertaking the training. The final grant allowed the two people currently on the programme to complete their courses.

During the 2022/3 financial year:-

- The FCRS scholarship student who had begun her training in Sept 2019 successfully completed her final year and in September 2022 became a qualified teacher.
- The other member of staff successfully completed his second year and progressed onto his third and final year. He has successfully completed his second period of teaching practice. It is hoped that he will satisfactorily complete his final year Summer 2023.
- The increased skills of all those trained are benefitting not only the education of their pupils but also benefitting other members of staff and their pupils, as they share their new knowledge and ideas both informally and formally through staff workshops.
- A workshop for all CRS staff on new teaching techniques and methodologies was led by the staff who had benefited from the higher teaching certification training in Sierra Leone in October 2022.
- With the help of a £2,500 donation given last year, 2 CRS science teachers have been able to complete the specialist courses during their school vacations and are now fully qualified practical science teachers able to make full use of the new science lab, having obtained the highest qualification in teaching practical science. Students now have both the facilities and qualified teachers in practical science which is a compulsory part of the Grade 12 science exams. Few other schools in Conakry have any facilities for practical science nor teachers qualified to teach practical science.
- As explained above, during the May 2023 visit Andy gave a talk on the importance of science education and worked alongside the science teachers to help develop some of the more challenging topics on the chemistry and physics curriculum.
- Also on the May 2023 visit, Carol, herself a retired French teacher, was impressed by the quality of learning and spoken French but underlined the importance of using French grammar accurately in exams to achieve the highest grades that would allow students to study in French in Guinean universities. She worked with the French teacher to inject some interactive teaching styles into lessons - feedback session staff expressed thanks and enthusiasm to try out different approaches.

i. To maintain that support and raise awareness and knowledge of life in Guinea

- Raised awareness through fundraising activities, talks to community groups, the website and Facebook

- Emailed regular newsletters to supporters.

6. FINANCIAL REVIEW

i. Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

FCRS has no overheads, does not have paid staff and therefore has no ongoing commitments in terms of its day to day running costs in the UK. It therefore does not need to ensure a level of reserves be retained to meet legal or contractual liabilities within the UK.

FCRS's income is used to support programmes at Conakry Refugee School that will advance the education and life chances of marginalized children and young people, many of whom were originally from the refugee community.

To give CRS more security and help them better manage their finances, Trustees have decided that they will annually determine the programmes FCRS can realistically provide for CRS for the whole of the following academic year. That support will be based upon CRS's needs and the amount of money FCRS has at the end of July.

Once the annual amount has been agreed FCRS will support other requests from CRS only if extra funding / grants are obtained over and above those needed to provide the agreed support for the year and build up a fund for the following year's support.

This means that although the amount of money held during the year will fluctuate Trustees will ensure that there is sufficient income held to honour the agreed support and any other agreed projects.

For 2022/23 Trustees were working towards ensuring that by the end of July 2023 (the end of CRS's academic year) there would be at least £30,000 in the bank that could be committed for the 2023/24 academic year.

At the end of this financial year we had £10,830.91 unrestricted funds and £28,594.30 in restricted funds. Total £39,425.21

Restricted funds

Big Give 2022 for 2023/24 scholarships	£ 23,438.80
Big Give 2021 for 2022/3 scholarships	£ 2,258.90
Professional Development (Avonbrook)	£ 2,162.51
Breakfast & Lunch Club Grant (Avonbrook)	£ 734.09

This was sufficient to fulfil all our commitments for the academic year ending July 2023 but required fundraising by the end of July to be able to commit £30,000 for the 2023/4 academic year.

Trustees would like to thank all our generous supporters who ensured that, despite the cost of living crisis, we reached that target by the end of July 2023.

ii) Principal sources of funds

Donations

General (unrestricted) fund	- £22,107.83
Student sponsors	- £ 2,953.00
Big Give 2022 donations	- £14,868.80
Science Equipment & training-	£ 6,434.78
School Meals	- £ 1,030.00

Raised by

- 64 supporters who gave monthly donations to the general fund (1 of whom donate via the Charities Trust (pay as you earn scheme) and another via Just Giving)
- 12 supporters who made regular monthly standing orders to support students within the scholarship programme.
- 31 one-off donations from individuals mainly as a result of the newsletters and “fundraising events” outlined below but also birthday presents, circle dancing, community group collections etc
- 1 person donated £5,000 to improve IT provision.
- 36 people who donated or held events and donated the proceeds for 2023/4 scholarships via the 2022 Big Give Challenge
- donations from the members of Hanna Lawrence’s singing groups who donated £1,030 for school meals
- a further unknown amount of people who donated £706.61 via PayPal Giving
- donations have also been received from Easy Fundraising, Just Giving and Amazon Smile.

Gift Aid has been claimed on all eligible donations raising a further £11,022.44.

Grants Received 2022/23

Big Give 2022

- The Big Give is a mixture of donations and grant. The 2022 Big Give appeal for 2023/24 Scholarships raised a total of £23,438.80. Our champion, once more, was the Waterloo Foundation provided £5,000 of that total.

Breakfast and Lunch Club Grant

- The Avonbrook Foundation paid £4,787 to help CRS improve the facilities for serving the Breakfast and Lunch Club food by building a shelter over the area where the catering staff cook, tiling the floor of the kitchen and new cooking and serving equipment.

Fundraising

Fundraising events not only raise income they also provide important opportunities for raising awareness, support and donations.

The pandemic meant that live fundraising events were not possible. Last year our Fundraising Group ran two smaller events early 2022 which plus sales of Christmas

cards, yoga bags and other items made by volunteers from material bought in Conakry before the pandemic raised £1,173.50.

In 2022/3 the Fundraising Group organised a book sale, auction, walking day around Cardington and yoga day and butterfly talk by Andrew Peters. Unfortunately, whilst the walking day proved very successful despite being held on the hottest day of 2022, the butterfly talk had to be cancelled very late due to the severest snowfall of early 2023. We would like to thank all those people who agreed to either donate their ticket money or keep their tickets for a rearranged talk November 2023. In total these events plus sales of yoga bags and other items made by volunteers raised £2,687.54.

Trustees and all the staff and pupils of CRS would like to thank everyone who has supported the school with their money and their time during the year. They would like to especially thank the volunteers for all their hard work and the people who led the walks in such extreme heat.

*iii **How expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity***

Most of FCRS's income goes straight to CRS for the identified programmes detailed above. This year we sent £59,728.46. Considerably less than last year because last year we spent £85,686.53 securing and improving new premises and relocating CRS.

CRS gives FCRS detailed estimates and sends scanned receipts.

Bank Transfer fees are charged each time we send money to Guinea. This year we spent £90 in bank fees compared to £130 last year.

Visit to school. FCRS believes that visits to the school are an essential way of ensuring its programmes are still relevant and fulfilling their objectives. They provide up to date understanding of the problems and issues the school faces and a reminder of the considerable positives of CRS and FCRS's work. Visits also allow items such as hygiene kits, secondhand text books, refurbished laptops to be taken to Conakry from the UK. The cost of posting such items would be prohibitively high and undependable.

There were two visits during the 2022/3 financial year. One in mid-May 2022 for the 2021/22 academic year – the first possible date following two years without a visit because of Covid. The second, during the 2022/2023 academic year, was in February 2023. Both of these visits were highly successful.

The Director went on both visits but each time was accompanied by 2 different supporters who each had different skill sets that could be utilised to make the visits even more positive and useful for CRS. Many of the valuable outcomes of this year's two visits have been recorded already in this report.

Following each visit an action plan is developed covering actions both CRS and FCRS will undertake over the following months. This ensures FCRS's work is relevant and focused.

As well as annual visits, FCRS is in regular email contact with CRS. The current level of 2- way communication is high. We also arrange conference calls with the school's management team when joint planning and discussion requires face-to-face communication.

The experience of Covid and these two visits has reinforced our belief that an annual visit is essential and should be taken so long as those going feel comfortable doing so.

Revenue generating costs were £236.30 compared to £520.10 last year.

They paid for:-

- £216 Monthly fees to Just Giving
- £ 20.30 PayPal fees

We received £2,060.22 in donations via Just Giving and £1,556.61 was received via PayPal.

iv. Other information

On the 31st March 2023 there was £28,594.30 restricted money;

Big Give 2022 for 2023/24 scholarships £ 23,438.80

Big Give 2021 for 2022/3 scholarships £ 2,258.90

Professional Development (Avonbrook) £ 2,162.51

Breakfast & Lunch Club Grant (Avonbrook) £ 734.09

DECLARATION

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees report above

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustee

ROLF LEVESLEY, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Signed

Date


1/11/23

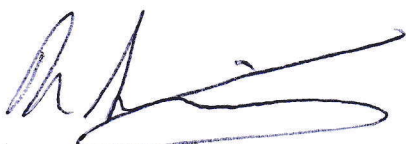
Friends of Conakry Refugee School

Receipts and Payment Accounts for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2023 Total funds £	2022 Last year £
Receipts				
Student sponsors		2,953.00	2,953.00	3,328.00
Fundraising events	2,687.54		2,687.54	1,173.50
Donations	22,107.83	22,333.58	44,441.41	39,834.59
Grants		9,787.00	9,787.00	7,642.00
Gift Aid	6,077.44	4,945.00	11,022.44	6,880.95
Refund			0.00	1,578.27
Interest	110.26		110.26	3.48
Total receipts	30,983.07	40,018.58	71,001.65	60,440.79
Payments				
Scholarships / Sponsored students	14,359.86	13,881.63	28,241.49	17,621.35
Other School programmes	15,545.76	15,941.21	31,486.97	110,269.87
Visit to school	8,064.99		8,064.99	0.00
Bank Transfer fees	90.00		90.00	130.00
Revenue raising costs	236.30		236.30	520.10
Governance costs	0.00		0.00	0.00
Total payments	38,296.91	29,822.84	68,119.75	128,541.32
Net of receipts / (payments)	-7,313.84	10,195.74	2,881.90	-68,100.53
Transfer between funds	0.31	-0.31		
Cash funds last year end	18,144.44	18,398.87	36,543.31	104,643.84
Cash funds this year end	10,830.91	28,594.30	39,425.21	36,543.31
Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period				
	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £		
Cash funds: In bank	10,830.91	28,594.30		
Gift aid claimed but not received	0.00	0.00		
Investment assets	0.00	0.00		
Assets retained for the charity's use	0.00	0.00		
Liabilities	0.00	0.00		

Signed by Rolf Levesley, Chair of the Trustees on behalf of all the Trustees

Date of approval



1/11/23

Signed by Kate Chetwood, External Examiner

Date of approval



Accounts

Trustees Annual Report for the period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

1. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Charity Name Friends of Conakry Refugee School

Other name charity is known by FCRS

Registered charity number 1124736

Charity's principal address Gretton Mill

Cardington
Church Stretton
Shropshire
SY6 7HZ

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity:

Rolf Levesley	Chair	Reappointed 23 rd June 2021
Mark Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2019
Tanya Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2019
Rachel Roland	Trustee	Reappointed 12 th October 2020
Angela Saganowska	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2019
Ruth Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2020
Jacqueline Watkins	Trustee	Reappointed 18 th July 2021
Jeanette Whitford	Trustee	Appointed 11 th February 2020
Jana Kaminski	Trustee	Appointed 8 th December 2021

Name of the volunteer Director

Angela Saganowska until 1st January 2022

Jacqueline Watkins after 1st January 2022

Name of the volunteer Treasurer

Pauline Levesley

Name of the Independent examiner

Kate Chetwood.

2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Type of governing document Trust deed signed 23rd June 2008

How the charity is constituted Trust

Trustee selection methods New Trustees will be selected for appointment by the Trustees with regard to the skills, knowledge and experience

needed for the effective administration
of the Charity

There were 4 Trustee Board meetings during the 2021/22 financial year. There were also Strategy Sub group and Fundraising group meetings.

Trustee length of service

Three of the above Trustees have served continuously for over nine years.

Rolf Levesley (Chair)

Mark Walmsley Founding Trustee

Tanya Walmsley Founding Trustee

The Charity has succeeded in attracting a variety of Trustees with appropriate skill sets since inception in the interests of refreshing the Board. The Board have agreed unanimously to the extensions of the terms of office of the three Trustees referred to above for exceptional reasons as follows:-

1. Rolf Levesley (Chair) has been a Trustee since inception and offers particular skills as a retired solicitor not otherwise available and has broad experience as the Chair in local government, health and housing association sectors.
2. Mark Walmsley founded the Charity and has invaluable in-depth experience of Conakry Refugee School and an extensive range of friends and supporters who have supported the school for years
3. Tanya Walmsley also founded the Charity and has current and extensive experience in international development with refugees and conflict resolution which Trustees feel, again, is invaluable.

Additional governance issues

Relationship with any related party. There were no payments to related parties.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Summary of objects of the charity set out in its governing document:

To advance the education and relieve the financial hardship of those refugee children and children of refugees who require schooling and attend Conakry Refugee School, (CRS) Guinea, which is currently not supported by the Government of Guinea or any other agency.

Our vision and objectives

FCRS believes that every child and young person should be educated, protected, respected and valued regardless of their faith, gender, ethnic background or financial circumstance.

We believe that:-

- Good quality education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential, improving their life chances, equipping them to gain employment and enabling them to play an active role in advancing their community
- Refugees and children of refugees are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged and should be enabled to access school and other services regardless of their status
- Sustainable, good quality education requires good teaching staff who are appropriately trained and remunerated for their work
- A greater understanding of other people's lives and cultures is important for everyone and leads to a more tolerant society

FCRS supports CRS in Guinea, West Africa, to advance the education and life chances of vulnerable and marginalised children and young people, many of whom were originally from the refugee community.

We are one of the few UK charities involved in enhancing the education and wellbeing of English-speaking children in Guinea. As a value-driven organisation we are passionate about ensuring access to good education, promoting gender equality and tolerance. All our programmes are aimed at bringing about change to achieve our mission and objectives. Our successes are based on fostering a direct and honest working relationship with the school based on mutual respect and collaboration. We do not underestimate the challenges of working in a country which features in the bottom ten in terms of literacy, girls' access to school and life expectancy.

Conakry is the capital of Guinea, which is one of the poorest African countries.

CRS is an English-speaking school and a remarkable establishment; its ethos and values of equality, tolerance, compassion and its quest for excellence in education sets it apart from other schools in Guinea. Its promotion of access and education for girls as well as its stance on supporting them on controversial issues like FGM and early marriage makes it unique. Over 50% of students at the school are female. It is a large school of nearly 600 students providing both primary school and secondary school education, with an excellent reputation in external exam performance. The vast majority of its pupils come from very disadvantaged refugee backgrounds and are often living with single parents or extended family members. It functions as more than just a

school.... It provides a safe haven for vulnerable and at risk young people as well as serving as a community resource.

CRS receives no government support and without the support of FCRS the school would have to rely totally upon the fees of the students. The fees have to be very low because the students are very poor, yet many are still unable to afford them.

4. PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

Trustees have had regard to the guidance provided by the Charity Commission relating to public benefit. In deciding upon the objectives listed below they recognise the activities undertaken in pursuance of those objectives are for the public benefit.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects in 2021/22

FCRS has 7 objectives listed below which are not mutually exclusive and are aligned with our vision and mission. We deliver our objectives through a series of programmes.

We actively engage, provide resources and programme-manage developments, aligned with our vision on education, in support of CRS, to improve the life chances and advance the education of marginalised and vulnerable children and young people.

Objective - Focusing on Marginalised and Vulnerable Children and Young People

- Scholarship and Student support programme
- Hardship Fund

Objective - Achieving excellence in education

- Exam scholarship programme
- Professional Development programme
- Relocation of the school building and improved facilities
- Advancement of science education

Objective - Supporting the school towards realistic sustainability

- Relocation of the school building and increasing students and/or fee levels
- Provision of resources and mentorship in setting up a science lab
- Governance and budget management advice for a more self-sustaining management team
- Assisting the school in their marketing plans
- Solar Power programme

Objective - Well-being and safety for all

- School meals programme and Breakfast Club
- Health Club / Girls and Young Women's programme
- Female hygiene and sexual health in collaboration with other organisations
- Support and mentorship to introduce / implement safeguarding child protection policy and procedures
- Relocation of the school building and a better and healthier school environment
- PHSE programme

Objective - Building equality

- Scholarship programme
- Female hygiene programme
- Health Club

Objective - Building professional development and leadership training

- Professional training programme
- Management team leadership programme

Objective - Promoting a more tolerant society by raising awareness and knowledge of life in Guinea

- FCRS newsletter and website
- Presentations on the work of FCRS to schools and other charitable groups

Our UK schools programme was not possible because of the Covid pandemic

Our approach

Our aim has always been to work in true and equal partnership with the school and we will continue to strive and challenge our actions, language and behaviour to ensure this approach.

FCRS acknowledges we have considerable privilege and power and we must pay attention to issues of race and avoid a paternalistic approach. FCRS will continue to focus on our belief that good quality education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential and improving their life chances. We will create a narrative that emphasises self-determination and constantly review our policies and programmes and challenge each other to ensure that we are not inadvertently using discriminatory policies or practicing discriminatory behaviour. We will engage the CRS management in all decisions about funding and use of funds.

5. 2021/2 ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Synopsis of the year

We are extremely pleased to be able to report that we have achieved a very big step forward in three of our main objectives;

- Achieving excellence in education
- Supporting the school towards realistic sustainability
- Well-being and safety for all

Thanks to a grant from The Merck Family Foundation, (received in 2 equal instalments January 2020 and January 2021) our own supporters and a very good exchange rate we were able to help CRS move into new premises for the start of the 2021/22 academic year. A fully fitted and equipped science laboratory has been installed in the building which means that for the first-time students will be able to be instructed in practical science – a compulsory part of their final science exams – and their 2 science teachers have been able to undertaken specialist training to become fully qualified practical science teachers. Few schools in Conakry have the capacity to teach practical science.

The building provides a vastly improved educational and physical environment for its current staff and pupils away from the traffic, noise and pollution that blighted their former location and for the first time they have running water, inside flushing toilets, electricity & glazed windows.

It also provides a more attractive building with improved facilities and increased space so it can accommodate more students. CRS will be able to market the school not just on its existing excellent academic reputation of academic successes and high quality of education but also on its much - improved educational environment as well as its unique science education offer to prospective students. By increasing capacity CRS now has the opportunity to generate a significant increase in annual income from increased student fees whilst not losing its focus on educating children in most need.

In addition to these achievements, we were able to maintain all our other planned programmes so that 154 pupils received Scholarships; 13 of the most able scholarship students received exam scholarships; hot school-meals were served - although, unfortunately, had to be restricted to 8 days per month due to budgetary pressures from October 2021 and 2 teachers were able to continue their professional development programme. (See below)

All of this has been achieved in difficult times both in Africa and Europe. Covid has remained a problem still affecting and restricting fundraising opportunities. (See fundraising later in this report) and a visit to Conakry was not possible until May 2022. The world is now struggling with the consequences of the Russian Invasion of the Ukraine and the resultant cost of living rises are affecting Africa as well as Europe.

The exchange rate was high throughout 2021 which enormously helped the financing of the building and our other programmes but since the new year has started to go down which will mean that we will have to raise more money to pay for the same support, while prices in Guinea rise even more quickly.

Acquiring the new building, negotiating the lease and managing all the building works required CRS and FCRS to work very closely together and be involved in protracted planning and risk-analysis discussions over an extended period.

The task of ensuring all the building work required to make the building ready for use by the start of the new academic year in October (3 months) was a mammoth challenge. We would like to especially pay tribute to the very capable and hardworking CRS Management Team and school staff who were responsible for overseeing all the building works and ensuring all work was completed and the school successfully transferred for the new school year. They successfully achieved this huge undertaking in a period of massive global uncertainties and rising building costs as the world began to come out of Covid lockdowns.

All our sincere thanks and appreciation also go to all our loyal local supporters and donors, together with our volunteers and contributors to all our fundraising events during the year.

We would specifically like to thank our major donors; the Merck Family Foundation, the Avonbrook Foundation, and the Waterloo Foundation (via the Big Give 2021 Christmas Challenge) whose generosity and support has been instrumental in the continuing achievement of our Sustainability Plan. Special thanks to Dr Alan Farnaby who worked for Merck and was responsible for the Merck project's progress. His personal interest, knowledge, advice and help was invaluable.

The challenges ahead are still immense. Guinea remains one of the poorest countries in the world; its political and economic future remains precarious with refugee communities, several decades on,

remaining some of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in the community. Girls are particularly vulnerable with Guinea being ranked 152 out of 154 countries in terms of inequality for girls' access to education.

Although our plans aim to attract more fee-paying students, a large number will be unable to pay and ongoing financial support for those students will be needed for the foreseeable future. The school will still require considerable support while it builds up its student numbers and we acknowledge this will pose a challenge to FCRS particularly in the current post lockdown COVID climate.

The challenges for CRS must focus upon the need to build up the number of fee-paying students so that CRS can pay the increased rent when the rent-free period ends August 2023.

The challenges for FCRS will be to balance celebrating the achievement of acquiring a new building while still giving a strong message that CRS still needs a lot of support over the next few years. Fundraising is likely to be increasingly difficult in the UK over the next year especially.

The detailed sections set out below, provide information on the performance of our priority programmes.

a. The School Building and Advancement of Science

Physical changes to the external environment of the school (increasing traffic, noise and pollution) and the lack of maintenance by the landlord, had made the school building inferior to the other private schools in Conakry. It was felt that the poor physical condition and locality was not only providing a poor educational environment but would also hinder CRS's potential to attract pupils that could pay higher fees and therefore its future sustainability. Finding a solution to address these concerns became a key priority for FCRS.

Solving the problem of the lack of practical science teaching had also been a high priority for several years.

In 2020 The Merck Family Foundation awarded FCRS 75,000 Euros (two payments of 37,500 Euros over two years were made in January 2020 and January 2021) for "The Guinea science education and sustainability project"

It gave FCRS the resources to

- help CRS move to a new building to improve the physical learning environment,

- provide a science lab so that students could have practical science lessons which form an obligatory part of the science exam curriculum
- provide training to improve science teaching and ensure the new science lab was used to its best advantage.

Throughout 2020 and the first part of 2021 the CRS management team searched for an appropriate new building. FCRS worked closely with them helping them undertake risk analysis of several potential buildings and detailed discussion regarding negotiations with potential landlords, engineers and builders.

The search came to an end when a suitable building was found not far from the old school but in a quiet residential area with little traffic and no pollution. A four-year lease was signed in early June 2021.

A programme of major building work was undertaken by the landlord using the advance rent paid to adapt the building to the needs of the school so that it provided appropriately sized classrooms, a meeting hall, a room suitable for a science lab and a tiled outdoor courtyard with all the services – running water, electricity, flushing toilets on each floor. Most of the window are glazed.

CRS was responsible for procuring work for the internal decoration of all rooms and the purchase of furniture, special doors and equipment for the science lab.

Dr Alan Farnaby who worked for Merck at the time and was responsible for the Merck project gave the senior science teacher advice and support in planning and setting up the science lab. Our sincere thanks for all of his personal interest, advice and help.

Training in teaching practical science was arranged for the 2 science teachers at the Government Science Research Unit in Sierra Leone so that they could learn how to work with science apparatus, run a science laboratory and teach laboratory-based practical science

The total cost of this project was	£85,686.53
Advance Rent to pay for Landlord building work	£58,000.86
Science Lab Room, Cupboards & Equipment	£9,790.91
Teacher Training	£2,225.24
Work on building by CRS	£ 8,920.35
Fees, Relocation, Publicity	£6,749.17

This was paid for by	
Merck Family Foundation	£61,133.09

Individual donation for science equipment and science training	£2,500.24
FCRS General Fund	£22,053.20

Staff and pupils successfully moved into the building in October 2021.

- Pupils are now being taught in a modern building providing an improved, effective learning environment. Gone is the deafening noise of traffic from the highway and from the market. The classrooms are bright and glazed windows keep the weather out
- Pupils are also being taught in a healthier environment in a building with flushing toilets and running water. Gone are the traffic fumes from the highway.
- For the first time pupils are not only being taught practical science but in a fully fitted science laboratory by qualified staff.

Hopefully the new building will help CRS attract more fee - paying students so that they can become self- sustaining while continuing to provide an excellent education to marginalized and vulnerable sectors of the community.

b Student Scholarships and Examination Achievements

Scholarships are awarded annually for an academic year. The criteria for choosing which students are awarded scholarships ensures that the many marginalised and vulnerable pupils are able to continue their education. If a student's circumstances do not change for the better and they have attended school regularly they are eligible for a scholarship the following year.

In addition, each academic year if finance allows, 12 of the most able scholarship students in the external exam grades are awarded with exam scholarships. This means the students know that all their exam fees and other costs associated with taking their exams will be paid by FCRS. They are therefore able to put all their energy and effort into achieving high standards in the exams rather than being worried that they may not be able to afford to take them.

During the last school visit parents reported the positive and important impact of the scholarship programme on both pupils and their families. It meant families could afford transport costs and therefore send their children to school on a regular basis. The Exam scholars all reported that the scholarships gave them an opportunity to take exams they could not afford and extra motivation to do well.

In the past we had a much smaller programme whereby supporters sponsored an individual student and supported that student throughout his/her education at the school. This programme is being phased out and we hope that in future supporters will sponsor scholarships instead. All students in our sponsored student programme are automatically awarded a scholarship each year ensuring that they do not have to pay any school fees but in addition they are provided with additional help to keep them in education and their exam fees are paid when they are in the appropriate grades. The number of students supported on this programme will decline as these students complete their education and hopefully leave school with recognised academic qualifications.

During the 2020/21 academic year 2 students remained on our sponsored student programme. They were also provided with a small allowance to help them get to school, purchase school uniform, schoolbooks and equipment. 1 of these students was in Grade 12 and had been supported through most of her school career. Her final exam fees were covered and she passed all of her 8 chosen subjects.

That has left only one remaining student on the sponsored student programme for the 2021/22 Academic year. She will remain on the programme until she completes her education at the school. She will be taking her grade 9 exams Summer 2022.

The fees that FCRS pay for the scholarship students are used by CRS to provide members of staff with a guaranteed minimum wage each month and therefore staff receive a higher level of pay than could have delivered if CRS was reliant on fee payment by pupils alone. Those with children have also been awarded one scholarship per family thus further helping their families' well-being. Without this support many of the staff would not be able to continue working at the school. Ensuring a higher wage is important for their well-being, motivation and morale and also helps CRS retain the right people thus contributing to the quality of education.

- Throughout the 2021/22 financial year, 154 students were able to attend school and concentrate upon their education throughout the academic year with total confidence knowing that their school fees and registration costs would be paid in spite of the poverty of their family / guardian
- 13 students were able to take their external exams Summer 2021 because FCRS paid for all their exam fees.
 - 4 took their grade 6 exams
 - 4 took their grade 9 exams

- 5 took their grade 12 exams thus being able to graduate from school with recognised academic qualifications.
- All members of staff have received a higher wage than the school would otherwise have been able to afford. Since August 2019 at CRS's request, FCRS has divided the fee money by 12 so that staff can receive some money each month throughout the year. Ensuring a higher wage is important for their well-being, motivation and morale and also helps CRS retain the right people thus contributing to the quality of education.

c. School meals programme

- A hot midday meal was provided for all pupils attending school. The provision of a school meal increases the concentration and learning of all pupils but for many it is vitally important to them and for some it is their only meal. It also encourages regular attendance at school.
- Students were better nourished than they would otherwise have been and were incentivised to attend school in spite of their poverty
- Unfortunately, it has only been possible to provide 8 meals per month this year as the cost of food has increased and FCRS has not been able to raise any more money for this programme.
- The provision of school meals remains a priority for CRS and FCRS Trustees. The school reports there were noticeable differences at school on the days when school meals were not provided – poorer attendance, students are hungry. Many have to leave home as early as 6am to get to school on time.

d Breakfast Club Programme

- FCRS has supported a term-time breakfast club that produces cheap food at the start of the day by paying the rent and providing 2 catering staff with a guaranteed minimum salary.
- All pupils have been able to purchase cheap food at the start of the day after their journey to school and on the days when the free meal cannot be provided.
- A small profit is made providing both the staff and CRS with a small amount of extra income.

e. PHSE and Sanitation materials

During the pandemic, water and hygiene has been, and still is, highly important. The Guinean Government set out stringent hygiene measures that schools had to undertake before they were allowed to

reopen and once open schools had to abide by further strict measures. There were regular visits from Ministry of Education officials to check that these measures were in place and were being implemented. Throughout FCRS has helped achieve and maintain these measures.

The teaching of good hygiene is of paramount importance.

- Whereas the old school had no running water and very poor toilet facilities the new school has running water and proper toilets on each floor of the building. The new school itself is therefore a major step forward for hygiene and sanitation. However, resources are still required to maintain and keep these facilities clean and in good working order and ensure pupils know how to use them properly.
- PHSE classes are provided for all students
- A school nurse is employed to support hygiene good practice
- Water, soap, towels are provided
- Students have increased their understanding of the importance of hygiene and diet
- Students have been able to practice good hygiene at school reducing the potential occurrence of disease

f. Female Hygiene Kits

This project has suffered as a consequence of the cancelled visit in April 2020 and the inability to visit for two years. Over 80 sustainable sanitary kits made by volunteers of the Penrith Chapter of Days for Girls and Dunstable Inner Wheel were all packed ready to go. The volunteers have prepared many more kits since then. Over 200 were taken out when it was eventually possible for the Director and two other supporters to visit May 2022.

Sanitary pads are expensive in Guinea, in some cases costing up to 25% of female staff's monthly salaries and in many cases leading to absence from school because they are too expensive. Reusable sanitary wear saves money for both them and the PHSE budget and should decrease female student absenteeism.

g. Health Club

Many of the activities were curtailed because of COVID restrictions but the club has been able to meet and flourish thanks to the extra resources previously made available. Their meetings continue to provide a safe place and space where girls can be educated about their rights, inspired to stay in school and supported in avoiding FGM

and Early Marriage. During the year they also developed a play about Covid and made their own traditional dancing and drumming costumes.

h Professional Development

With the help of the Avonbrook Foundation, members of staff have been able to attend a three-year training course that leads to a professional teacher certificate thus increasing the quality of education at the school. The training comprises of three residential courses in Sierra Leone per year normally held during the Christmas, Spring and Summer holidays and one period of teaching practice also in Sierra Leone either during the Autumn or Spring terms of their second and third years. Three members of staff have successfully completed their training under this programme.

In 2021/2:-

- An FCRS scholarship student who had just graduated from CRS and is working as a classroom assistant, began her training Sept 2019 and successfully completed her second year. She started her 3rd and final year Autumn 2021 and undertook her final period of teaching practice February 2022, two months teaching 26 primary students in Kambia and scored 89% with her assessed lesson described as good.
- The fifth member of staff was accepted for training October 2020 and successfully completed his first year and progressed onto his second year. He successfully completed his first period of teaching practice in February 2022.
- The increased skills of all those trained are benefitting not only their pupils but also other members of staff as they share their new knowledge and ideas.

In addition, with the help of a £2,500 donation the 2 science teachers at CRS are attending courses during the school vacations to train to be teachers of practical science so that they can make full use of the new science lab. By the end of the course, summer 2022, they will have obtained the highest qualification in teaching practical science.

- o By September 2022 students will have both the facilities and qualified teachers in practical science which is a compulsory part of the Grade 12 science exams. Few other schools in Conakry have any facilities for practical science nor teachers qualified to teach practical science.

i. To maintain that support and raise awareness and knowledge of life in Guinea

This programme was badly affected by the pandemic in the UK and the links with local UK schools and talks to community organisations could not be maintained. All activity had to be undertaken on-line. Some talks to community organisations restarted towards the end of the year.

- Raised awareness through Zoom fundraising activities, talks, the website and Facebook
- Emailed regular newsletters to supporters.

6. FINANCIAL REVIEW

i. Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

FCRS has no overheads, does not have paid staff and therefore has no ongoing commitments in terms of its day to day running costs in the UK. It therefore does not need to ensure a level of reserves to be retained to meet legal or contractual liabilities within the UK.

FCRS's income is used to support programmes at Conakry Refugee School that will advance the education and life chances of marginalized children and young people, many of whom were originally from the refugee community.

To give CRS more security and help them better manage their finances, Trustees have decided that they will annually determine the programmes FCRS can realistically provide for CRS for the whole of the following academic year. That support will be based upon CRS's needs and the amount of money FCRS has at the end of July.

Once the annual amount has been agreed FCRS will support other requests from CRS only if extra funding / grants are obtained over and above those needed to provide the agreed support for the year and build up a fund for the following year's support.

This means that although the amount of money held during the year will fluctuate Trustees will ensure that there is sufficient income held to honour the agreed support and any other agreed projects.

For 2021/22 Trustees were working towards ensuring that by the end of July 2022 (the end of CRS's academic year) there would be at least £30,000 in the bank that could be committed for the 2022/23 academic year.

At the end of this financial year we had £18,144.44 unrestricted funds and £18,398.87 in restricted funds. Total £36,543.31

Restricted funds

Big Give 2021 for 2022/23 scholarships	£	13,187.53
Professional Development (Avonbrook)	£	4,816.03
Health Club	£	395.31

This was sufficient to fulfil all our commitments for the academic year ending July 2022 but required fundraising by the end of July to be able to commit £30,000 for the 2022/3 academic year.

Trustees would like to thank all our generous supporters who ensured that, despite Covid 19 and the growing cost of living crisis, we reached that target by the end of July 2022.

ii) Principal sources of funds

Donations

General (unrestricted) fund	- £27,104.70
Student sponsors	- £ 3,328.00
Big Give 2021 donations	- £ 8,883.78
Science Equipment & training-	£ 2,500.00
School Meals	- £ 1,346.11

Raised by

- 66 supporters who gave monthly donations to the general fund (1 of whom donate via the Charities Trust (pay as you earn scheme) and another via Just Giving)
- 15 supporters who made regular monthly standing orders to support students.
- 60 one-off donations from individuals mainly as a result of the newsletters and “fundraising events” outlined below but also birthday presents, community group collections etc
- 1 person donated £2,500 to provide science lab equipment and support the 2 science teachers at CRS become trained teachers of practical science.
- 35 people who donated or held events and donated the proceeds for 2022/3 science scholarships via the 2021 Big Give Challenge
- donations from 7 individuals and a singing group plus an unknown amount of people who donated via the school meals Just Giving appeals
- a further unknown amount of people who donated via PayPal Giving
- donations have also been received from Easy Fundraising, Recycle4charity and Amazon Smile.

Gift Aid has been claimed on all eligible donations raising a further £6,880.

Grants

Big Give 2021

- The Big Give is a mixture of donations and grant. The 2021 Big Give appeal for 2022/23 Science Scholarships raised a total of £13,187.53. Our champion, once more, was the Waterloo Foundation provided £3,000 of that total.

Professional Development

- The Avonbrook Foundation paid £4,642 towards the Professional Development of two members of staff.

Fundraising

Pre-Covid. fundraising events were a major source of income (£4,587.50 in 2019/20) and also an important way of raising awareness, support and donations. The pandemic meant that live fundraising events were not possible.

The Fundraising Group quickly adapted to producing more regular newsletters and organising on-line “events” to raise awareness, support and donations. Our heartfelt thanks to all those who donated their time and expertise to support CRS and lightened the effect of lockdown for many of our supporters who were able to join these events free of charge and the supporters who remained amazingly supportive and generous.

However, by summer 2021 on-line events became less popular and it was felt that real-life events should be resumed. Unfortunately, Covid once more intervened and the National Polish Folklore Choir of Great Britain Concert first planned for May 2020 and rearranged for September 2021 had to be cancelled once more and the ticket money returned. Our apologies to the choir but many thanks for their understanding and their generous intentions. Thank you also to those people who donated their ticket money rather than receive the rebate offered

It was, however, possible to successfully run two smaller events after Christmas – a workshop on Stone Age living by Dan and Naomi Walmsley and a talk by Jo Jukes on Hill Forts in Shropshire. Both were successfully run and thoroughly enjoyed by the smaller audiences

These events plus sales of Christmas cards, yoga bags and other items made by volunteers from material bought in Conakry before the pandemic raised £1,173.50.

Refund

We eventually received a refund of £1,578.27 from Air France for the tickets bought for the planned 2020 trip to Conakry that had to be cancelled at the beginning of the first lockdown.

Trustees and all the staff and pupils of CRS would like to thank everyone who has supported the school with their money and their time during this very difficult year.

iii How expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity

Most of FCRS's income goes straight to CRS for the identified programmes detailed above. This year we sent £127,891.22. A large increase on previous years because we spent £85,686.53 securing and improving new premises and relocating CRS.

CRS gives FCRS detailed estimates and sends scanned receipts and we pay for an annual external audit of CRS's accounts.

Bank Transfer fees are charged each time we send money to Guinea. This year we spent £130 in bank fees compared to £120 last year. 14 separate payments were made compared to 12 payments the previous year.

Visit to school. FCRS believes that visits to the school are an essential way of ensuring its programmes are still relevant and fulfilling their objectives. They provide up to date understanding of the problems and issues the school faces and a reminder of the considerable positives of CRS and FCRS's work. Visits also allow items such as solar lamps, hygiene kits, secondhand text books, refurbished laptops to be taken to Conakry from the UK. The cost of posting such items would be prohibitively high and undependable.

Following each visit an action plan is developed covering actions both CRS and FCRS will undertake the following year. This ensures FCRS's work is relevant and focused. Trustees monitor the action plan at each board meeting.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to visit during the 2021/22 financial year but one was planned and made mid-May 2022, after the end of this reporting year.

As well as annual visits, FCRS is in regular email contact with CRS. The current level of 2- way communication is high. As visits were not possible, we also had a number of conference calls with the school's management team especially during the summer and early autumn months when there was a lot of joint planning and discussion re the new school building.

The experience of the last two years has reinforced our belief that an annual visit is essential and should be taken so long as those going feel comfortable doing so.

Revenue generating costs were £520.10 compared to £412.05 last year.

They paid for:-

- £216 Monthly fees to Just Giving
- £ 31.87 PayPal fees
- £ 158.29 Zoom subscription
- £42 Hire of rooms for Jo Jukes talk and the Stone Age workshop
- £71.94 Website domain name renewal

We received £771.93 in donations via Just Giving and £1,547.25 was received via PayPal.

Zoom provided the platform for Trustee meetings, conference calls with CRS and the many free events arranged for supporters.

iv. Other information

On the 31st March 2021 there was £18,398.87 restricted money;

Big Give 2021 for 2022/23 scholarships	£ 13,187.53
Professional Development (Avonbrook)	£ 4,816.03
Health Club	£ 395.31

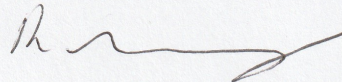
DECLARATION

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees report above

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustee

ROLF LEVESLEY, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Signed



Date

14th June 2022

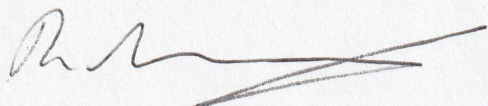
Friends of Conakry Refugee School

Receipts and Payment Accounts for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Last year £
Receipts				
Student sponsors		3,328.00	3,328.00	3,666.00
Fundraising events	1,173.50		1,173.50	40.00
Donations	27,104.70	12,729.89	39,834.59	32,558.04
Grants		7,642.00	7,642.00	48,511.10
Gift Aid	4,704.70	2,176.25	6,880.95	9,699.91
Refund	1,578.27		1,578.27	
Interest	3.48		3.48	23.53
Total receipts	34,564.65	25,876.14	60,440.79	94,498.58
Payments				
Scholarships / Sponsored students	7,432.83	10,188.52	17,621.35	17,932.25
Other School programmes	40,931.01	69,338.86	110,269.87	30,971.89
Visit to school			0.00	1,578.27
Bank Transfer fees	130.00		130.00	120.00
Revenue raising costs	520.10		520.10	412.05
Governance costs	0.00		0.00	0.00
Total payments	49,013.94	79,527.38	128,541.32	51,014.46
Net of receipts / (payments)	-14,449.29	-53,651.24	-68,100.53	43,484.12
Transfer between funds				
Cash funds last year end	32,593.73	72,050.11	104,643.84	61,159.72
Cash funds this year end	18,144.44	18,398.87	36,543.31	104,643.84
Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period				
	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £		
Cash funds: In bank	18,144.44	18,398.87		
Gift aid claimed but not received	0.00	0.00		
Investment assets	0.00	0.00		
Assets retained for the charity's use	0.00	0.00		
Liabilities	0.00	0.00		

Signed by Rolf Levesley, Chair of the Trustees on behalf of all the Trustees

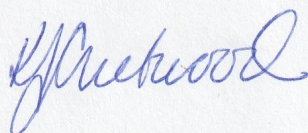
Date of approval



14th. Dec 2022

Signed by Kate Chetwood, External Examiner

Date of approval



28/10/22



Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees of Friends of Conakry Refugee School

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 March 2022

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 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 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 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 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.

Name: Kate Chetwood

Signed:

Relevant professional qualification or body: AAT

Address: 'Spring Cottage' 207A Hadley Park Road, Leegomery, Telford, Shropshire, TF1 6QG

Date: 28 October 2022

Accounts

Trustees Annual Report for the period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

1. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Charity Name	Friends of Conakry Refugee School
Other name charity is known by	FCRS
Registered charity number	1124736
Charity's principal address	The Coach House 4 Church View Baschurch Shropshire SY4 2CD

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity:

Rolf Levesley	Chair	Reappointed 23 rd June 2018
Mark Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2019
Tanya Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2019
Rachel Roland	Trustee	Reappointed 12 th October 2020
Angela Saganowska	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2019
Ruth Walmsley	Trustee	Reappointed 23 rd June 2020
Jacqueline Watkins	Trustee	Appointed 18 th July 2018
Jeanette Whitford	Trustee	Appointed 11 th February 2020

Name of the volunteer Director

Angela Saganowska

Name of the volunteer Treasurer

Pauline Levesley

Name of the Independent examiner

Kate Chetwood.

2. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

<i>Type of governing document</i>	Trust deed signed 23 rd June 2008
<i>How the charity is constituted</i>	Trust
<i>Trustee selection methods</i>	New Trustees will be selected for appointment by the Trustees with regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the Charity

Because of the pandemic all meetings were held on Zoom. There were 4 Trustee Board meetings during the 2020/21 financial year. There were also regular Strategy Sub group and Fundraising group meetings.

Additional governance issues

Relationship with any related party. There were no payments to related parties.

3. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Summary of objects of the charity set out in its governing document:

To advance the education and relieve the financial hardship of those refugee children and children of refugees who require schooling and attend Conakry Refugee School, Guinea, which is currently not supported by the Government of Guinea or any other agency.

Our vision and objectives

FCRS believes that every child and young person should be educated, protected, respected and valued regardless of their faith, gender, ethnic background or financial circumstance.

We believe that:-

- Good quality education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential, improving their life chances, equipping them to gain employment and enabling them to play an active role in advancing their community
- Refugees and children of refugees are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged and should be enabled to access school and other services regardless of their status
- Sustainable, good quality education requires good teaching staff who are appropriately trained and remunerated for their work
- A greater understanding of other people's lives and cultures is important for everyone and leads to a more tolerant society

FCRS supports Conakry Refugee School (CRS) in Guinea, West Africa, to advance the education and life chances of vulnerable and marginalised children and young people, many of whom were originally from the refugee community.

We are one of the few UK charities involved in enhancing the education and wellbeing of English-speaking children in Guinea. As a value-driven organisation we are passionate about ensuring access to good education, promoting gender equality and tolerance. All our programmes are aimed at bringing about change to achieve our mission and objectives. Our successes are based on fostering a direct and honest working relationship with the school based on mutual respect and collaboration. We do not underestimate the challenges of working in a country which features in the bottom ten in terms of literacy, girls' access to school and life expectancy.

Conakry is the capital of Guinea, which is one of the poorest African countries.

CRS is an English-speaking school and a remarkable establishment; its ethos and values of equality, tolerance and compassion, and its quest for excellence in education sets it apart from other schools in Guinea. Its promotion of access and education for girls as well as its stance on supporting them on controversial issues like FGM and early marriage makes it unique. Over 50% of students at the school are female. It is a large school of nearly 600 students providing both primary school and secondary school education, with an excellent reputation in external exam performance. The vast majority of its pupils come from very disadvantaged refugee backgrounds and are often living

with single parents or extended family members. It functions as more than just a school.... It provides a safe haven for vulnerable and at-risk young people as well as serving as a community resource.

CRS receives no government support and without the support of FCRS the school would have to rely totally upon the fees of the students. The fees must be very low because the students are very poor, yet many are still unable to afford them.

4. PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

Trustees have had regard to the guidance provided by the Charity Commission relating to public benefit. In deciding upon the objectives listed below they recognise the activities undertaken in pursuance of those objectives are for the public benefit.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects in 2020/21

FCRS has 7 objectives listed below which are not mutually exclusive and are aligned with our vision and mission. We deliver our objectives through a series of programmes. We actively engage, provide resources and programme-manage developments, aligned with our vision on education, in support of CRS, to improve the life chances and advance the education of marginalised and vulnerable children and young people.

Objective - Focusing on Marginalised and Vulnerable Children and Young People

- Scholarship and Student support programme
- Hardship Fund

Objective – Achieving excellence in education

- Exam scholarship programme
- Professional Development programme
- Relocation of the school building and improved facilities
- Advancement of science education

Objective – Supporting the school towards realistic sustainability

- Relocation of the school building and increasing students and/or fee levels
- Provision of resources and mentorship in setting up a science lab
- Governance and budget management advice for a more self-sustaining management team
- Assisting the school in their marketing plans
- Solar Power programme

Objective – Well-being and safety for all

- School meals programme and Breakfast Club
- Health Club / Girls and Young Women's programme
- Female hygiene and sexual health in collaboration with other organisations
- Support and mentorship to introduce / implement safeguarding child protection policy and procedures

- Relocation of the school building and a better and healthier school environment
- Water Tower and provision of water
- PHSE programme

Objective – Building equality

- Scholarship programme
- Female hygiene programme
- Health Club

Objective – Building professional development and leadership training

- Professional training programme
- Management team leadership programme

Objective – Promoting a more tolerant society by raising awareness and knowledge of life in Guinea

- FCRS newsletter and website
- Presentations on the work of FCRS to schools and other charitable groups

Our UK schools programme and talks to other organisations were not possible because of the Covid pandemic

Our approach

Our aim has always been to work in true and equal partnership with the school and we will continue to strive and challenge our actions, language, and behaviour to ensure this approach.

FCRS acknowledges we have considerable privilege and power, and we must pay attention to issues of race and avoid a paternalistic approach. FCRS will continue to focus on our belief that good quality education is the cornerstone to developing a child or young person's potential and improving their life chances. We will create a narrative that emphasises self-determination and constantly review our policies and programmes and challenge each other to ensure that we are not inadvertently using discriminatory policies or practicing discriminatory behaviour. We will engage the CRS management in all decisions about funding and use of funds.

5. 2020/21 ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Synopsis of the year

The beginning of the financial year was marked by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic outbreak – lockdown in the UK and closure of all schools in Guinea. As with other charities, our plans and fundraising strategies came under immediate threat. Work started immediately, trying to risk-assess the pandemic's impact and on how we could best mitigate its worst risks to our organization, the school, and our plans for 2020/21.

Closure of the school in Conakry meant not only that the students' education stopped but also that they couldn't receive the school meals FCRS provide. With no pupils attending school there were no fees coming in to pay the wages of the staff.

Plans to implement our three-year strategy to enhance the long-term sustainability of the school, underpinned by a major two-year grant from the Merck Family Foundation, were placed under serious threat.

As a small charity supporting an overseas educational programme, we were not eligible for the government's special COVID-19 grants and many charitable funding bodies gave priority to programmes operating within the UK.

The activities and plans for the rest of the year for both FCRS and the school were inevitably dominated by the COVID-19 virus.

Impact on CRS

Reported cases of the virus remained comparatively low in Guinea, but the country's economy suffered considerably with spiralling inflation. The impact for the school being;

- Landlords' plans for a massive threefold rise in school-building rental costs, coupled with a general shortage of suitable buildings
- Sharp increase in cost of basic food items, disproportionally impacting on the poorest, most vulnerable families, making school fees unaffordable for many
- Extra-curricular activities and Health club programmes seriously curtailed
- Delivery of the hygiene kits for girls, solar lamps and refurbished laptops had to be put on hold for this year due to the cancellation of our visit

Impact on FCRS

- We had to cancel the annual visit to the school, booked early in April 2020, which is crucial to enabling our joint planning and review discussions with CRS and our opportunity to meet with staff, students, and families.
- All our live fundraising events planned for the spring and early summer were cancelled, including arrangements for a large concert

HOWEVER

- New methods of remote communication between Trustees, supporters and the CRS management team have been developed, including the use of meetings with the school's management team via Zoom
- A programme of on-line fundraising events was rapidly developed
- We were able to use monies from the Merck Family Fund Foundation as well as specific donations from our supporters to put into place the stringent hygiene and safety measures set out by the Guinean Government. This enabled the school to reopen within three months and resume educating their pupils and providing them with school meals

- Lessons continued not only for the remaining term but throughout the summer so that pupils could catch up on the time they lost, and the exams programme proceeded without major disruption
- Our charity's budget/planning process enabled us to provide all staff with a guaranteed minimum wage for the duration of the school closure which provided a vital safety-net during a time of unprecedented crisis
- We were able to provide guaranteed funding to support all the planned programmes for the 2020/21 academic year which included; funding for 154 school Scholarships for those students meeting the criteria; exam Scholarships for 12 of the most able scholarship students; hot school-meals- although, unfortunately restricted to 10 days per month due to budgetary pressures; PHSE and sanitation materials; the teachers' Professional development programme; and continuation of the Health Club programme
- Our three-year strategy to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the school remained intact and also on target. Plans for the expenditure of the 2-year grant of 75,000 euros received in January 2020 from the Merck Family Foundation, an important element within that strategy were also progressed as detailed below (a. The School Building and Achievement of Science).

This has been a difficult year for everyone, with a series of major highs and lows. It has required CRS and FCRS to work very closely together and be involved in protracted planning and risk-analysis discussions over an extended period.

We would like to pay tribute to the very capable and hardworking CRS Management Team and school staff who have made this possible. They have successfully achieved a mammoth undertaking in a period of massive global uncertainties.

All our sincere thanks and appreciation also go to all our loyal local supporters and donors, together with our volunteers and contributors to all our on-line fundraising events during the year.

We would specifically like to thank our major donors; the Merck Family Foundation, Avonbrook and the Waterloo Foundation (via the Big Give 2020 Christmas Challenge) whose generosity and support has been instrumental in the continuing achievement of our three- year Sustainability Plan.

The challenges ahead are still immense. Guinea remains one of the poorest countries in the world; its political and economic future remains precarious with refugee communities, several decades on, remaining some of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in the community. Girls particularly are particularly vulnerable with Guinea being ranked 152 out 154 countries in terms of inequality for girls' access to education.

Although our plans aim to attract more fee-paying students, a large number will be unable to pay and ongoing financial support for those students will be needed for the foreseeable future and until the new school establishes itself. The school will still

require considerable support for several years to come and we acknowledge this will pose a challenge to FCRS particularly in the current post lockdown COVID climate.

The detailed sections set out below, provide information on the performance of our priority programmes.

a. The School Building and Advancement of Science

In 2019 CRS and FCRS developed a 3-year Strategy to enhance CRS's long term sustainability

It identified

- the need to find solutions to address increasing concerns about the major limitations of the existing school building and its suitability in both providing an adequate learning environment and attracting additional students.

It hoped to build

- on the school's considerable academic successes and quality of education and support to vulnerable students to increase the student roll and support sustainability

and identified that

- the advancement of science education should be an early priority.

In January 2020, we received a grant from The Merck Family Foundation 75,000 Euros over 2 years for:

"The provision of a well-resourced learning environment and well-motivated and trained staff to support the long-term sustainability of the school, attracting fee paying students while continuing to provide an excellent education to marginalized and vulnerable sectors of the community and further the advancement of teaching of science in Guinea."

The grant therefore is pivotal in helping us achieve the priorities of the 3-year Strategy,

The money is to

- help CRS move to a new building or renovate the current building to improve the physical learning environment,
- provide a science lab so that students are able to take part in practical science lessons which form part of the science exam curriculum
- provide training to improve science teaching.

The provision of a well-resourced learning environment and well-motivated and trained staff will help the long-term sustainability of the school, attracting fee paying students while continuing to provide an excellent education to marginalized and vulnerable sectors of the community. Few schools in Guinea have practical science facilities.

The 2019 visit had confirmed that because of the physical changes to the external environment of the school (increasing traffic, noise and pollution) and the lack of maintenance by the landlord, the school building was inferior to the other schools visited and the poor physical condition and locality would hinder CRS's potential to attract pupils that could pay higher fees and therefore its future sustainability. However, the option of renovating the current building had to be seriously considered, priced and evaluated, to identify the most cost-effective option but also in case no other option was viable.

Initially it had been hoped that Angela Saganowska and Jackie Watkins would be able to look at potential buildings and discuss face to face with CRS how to implement this programme during their planned visit. This has not been possible, and all the planning and execution of the programme has been undertaken via conference calls, emails, plentiful photos and WhatsApp.

Throughout 2020 and the first part of 2021 we have worked very closely with CRS to determine whether they should move to a new building or renovate the current building, undertaking considerable risk analysis of several potential buildings, and detailed discussion regarding negotiations undertaken by the CRS management with potential landlords, engineers and builders.

The journey was a rollercoaster of highs and lows when it was feared that the current lease might end on 31st December 2021 with the school having nowhere to go.

By the end of the financial year this deep low looked like being a possibility as there was no new building on the horizon and the landlord of the current building had at the last minute decided he wanted 3 years rent in advance so that he could undertake the necessary works to the building.

We are pleased to report that after the end of this reporting year another suitable building was found and a four-year lease was signed in early June 2021.

The challenges for CRS for 2021/22 and the next two years will be immense

- to ensure all the building works and the creation of the science lab are finished by the start of the new school year
- To move to the new school in time to start the new academic year
- Start to building up the number of fee-paying students so that CRS can pay the increased rent when the rent-free period ends.

The challenges for FCRS will be to

- balance celebrating the achievement of acquiring a new building while still giving a strong message that CRS still needs a lot of support over the next few years
- rethink our fundraising strategy so we can raise the required funding in the post lockdown COVID climate

CRS will be only English-speaking school offering practical science lessons allowing them to market the school not just based on its existing excellent academic reputation but

also now on its much-improved educational environment and its unique science education offer to prospective students

By increasing capacity by over a third CRS now has an opportunity to generate a significant increase in annual income from student fees whilst not losing its focus on educating children in most need

b. Student Scholarships and Examination Achievements

Scholarships are awarded annually for an academic year. The criteria for choosing which students are awarded scholarships ensures that the many marginalised and vulnerable pupils continue their education. If a student's circumstances do not change for the better and they have attended school regularly they are eligible for a scholarship the following year.

In addition, each academic year, if finance allows, 12 of the most able scholarship students in the external exam grades are awarded with exam scholarships. This means the students know that all of their exam fees and the cost of going to Sierra Leone to take the exams will be paid by FCRS. They are therefore able to put all their energy and effort into achieving high standards in the exams rather than being worried that they may not be able to afford to take them.

During the last school visit parents reported the positive and important impact of the scholarship programme on both pupils and their families. It meant families could afford transport costs and therefore send their children to school on a regular basis. The Exam scholars all reported that the scholarships gave them an opportunity to take exams they could not afford and extra motivation to do well.

In the past we had a much smaller programme, whereby supporters sponsored an individual student and supported that student throughout his/her education at the school. This programme is being phased out and we hope that in future supporters will sponsor scholarships instead. All students in our sponsored student programme are automatically awarded a scholarship each year ensuring that they do not have to pay any school fees but in addition their sponsors provide them with additional help to keep them in education and pay for their exam fees. The number of students supported on this programme will decline as these students complete their education and hopefully leave school with recognised academic qualifications.

During the 2019/20 academic year 3 students were part of our sponsored student programme. They were also provided with a small allowance to help them get to school, purchase school uniform, school books and equipment. 1 of these students was in Grade 12 and therefore his sponsors paid all his exam fees and covered the costs of him going to Sierra Leone to take his final exams when he passed 6 of the 8 chosen subjects.

There are therefore 2 students left on the sponsored student programme for the 2020/21 Academic year. They will remain on the programme until they complete their education at the school. One will be taking her grade 12 exams Summer 2021.

The fees that FCRS pay for the scholarship students are used by CRS to provide members of staff with a guaranteed amount of money each month and therefore pay staff a higher level of pay than could have delivered if CRS was reliant on fee payment by pupils alone. Those with children have also been awarded one scholarship per family thus further helping their families' well-being. Without this support many of the staff would not be able to continue working at the school. Ensuring a higher wage is important for their well-being, motivation and morale and helps CRS retain the right people thus contributing to the quality of education.

- Throughout the 2020/21 financial year, 154 students were able to attend school and concentrate upon their education each academic year with total confidence knowing that their school fees and registration costs would be paid in spite of the poverty of their family / guardian
- 13 students were able to take their external exams Summer 2020 because FCRS paid for all their exam fees and the cost of going to Sierra Leone to take those exams.
 - 4 took their grade 6 exams
 - 4 took their grade 9 exams
 - 5 took their grade 12 exams thus being able to graduate from school with recognised academic qualifications.
- A further 12 of the most able of the scholarship students and 1 sponsored student have been awarded exam scholarships for the 2020/21 academic year. Thus 13 students are able to put all their energy and effort into achieving high standards in the exams rather than being worried that they may not be able to afford to take them as all of their exam fees and exam classes have already been paid by FCRS. Come summer 2021, they will not have to travel to Sierra Leone because they will be able to take their exams in Conakry.
- All members staff have received a higher wage than the school would otherwise have been able to afford. Since August 2019 at CRS's request, FCRS has divided the fee money by 12 so that staff can receive some money each month throughout the year. This meant that when the school was closed and they taught during the summer months, they still received a small amount of money. Ensuring a higher wage is important for their well-being, motivation and morale and helps CRS retain the right people thus contributing to the quality of education.

c. School meals programme

- A hot midday meal was provided for all pupils attending school. The provision of a school meal increases the concentration and learning of all pupils but for many it is vitally important to them and for some it is their only meal. It also encourages regular attendance at school.
- Students were better nourished than they would otherwise have been and were incentivised to attend school despite their poverty
- Unfortunately, it has only been possible to provide 10 meals per month this year
- The 2019 visit confirmed that the provision of school meals remains a priority for CRS and there were noticeable differences at school on the days when school

meals were not provided – poorer attendance, students are hungry. Many had to leave home as early as 6am to get to school on time.

d. Breakfast Club Programme

- FCRS has supported a term-time breakfast club that produces cheap food at the start of the day by paying the rent and providing 2 catering staff with a guaranteed minimum salary.
- All pupils have been able to purchase cheap food at the start of the day after their journey to school and on the days when the free meal cannot be provided.
- A small profit is made providing both the staff and CRS with a small amount of extra income.

e. PHSE and Sanitation materials

During the pandemic water and hygiene has been highly important.

The Guinean Government set out stringent hygiene measures that schools had to undertake before they were allowed to reopen

- spraying the whole building,
- having a dedicated waiting room in case of emergencies,
- chlorinated water containers at each classroom door,

and once open schools had to abide by further strict measures

- checking temperatures before pupils were allowed into the classrooms
- regular temperature checks throughout the day,
- social distancing
- compulsory wearing of masks,
- regular washing of hands,
- staggered attendance times.

There were regular visits from Ministry of Education officials to check that these measures were in place and were being implemented.

These regulations required additional costs that CRS had not budgeted for and could not afford – flash thermometers, water kits for each classroom door, soap, hand sanitiser, face masks, water sacs for drinking, adaptation of the sick room into the required waiting room and spraying the school.

We were allowed to use the Merck grant as well as specific donations from our supporters to pay for these initial costs and increase the PHSE programme's budget to cover the extra water and sanitation costs. Previous years' support that had established a designated sick room and the provision of a water tower so that the school could have a constant, good supply of clean water also helped them meet the requirements and meant that the school was able to open as quickly as allowed.

- PHSE classes were provided for all students
- A school nurse was employed to support hygiene good practice

- Water, soap, towels were provided
- Students have increased their understanding of the importance of hygiene and diet
- Students have been able to practice good hygiene at school reducing the potential occurrence of disease

f. Female Hygiene Kits

This project has suffered as a consequence of the cancelled visit. Over 80 sustainable sanitary kits made by volunteers of the Penrith Chapter of Days for Girls and Dunstable Inner Wheel were all packed ready to go. The volunteers have prepared many more since. They will all be taken out as soon as we can make a visit.

Sanitary pads are expensive in Guinea, in some cases costing up to 25% of female staff's monthly salaries and in many cases leading to absence from school because they are too expensive. Reusable sanitary wear saves money for both them and the PHSE budget and should decrease female student absenteeism. Our aim is to eventually provide them for all female students.

g. Health Club

Many of the activities were curtailed because of COVID restrictions but the club has been able to meet and flourish thanks to the extra resources made available last year. The attractive, safe, and well-resourced room for their meetings, with additional equipment to enhance their excellent work, provides space where girls can be educated about their rights, inspired to stay in school, and supported in avoiding FGM and Early Marriage.

h. Professional Development

With the help of the Avonbrook Foundation, members of staff have been able to attend a three-year training course that leads to a professional teacher certificate thus increasing the quality of education at the school. The training comprises of three residential courses in Sierra Leone per year normally held during the Christmas, Spring and Summer holidays and one period of teaching practice also in Sierra Leone either during the Autumn or Spring terms of their second and third years.

The Easter 2020 course was cancelled online because of the pandemic. On-line study was set up through May, June and July and a WhatsApp group set up for tutorials. Some of the savings on accommodation and travelling were used to help them with the data costs. Normal courses resumed in the summer 2020 with some catch up in the Autumn. All other courses have been back to normal.

- Despite all the interruptions 1 teacher successfully completed his final year of study and took his final exams in November 2020 which he passed.
- Having only started her training in October 2019, an FCRS scholarship student who had just graduated from CRS and working as a classroom assistant, also coped with the online training and successfully completed her first year. She entered her 2nd year Autumn 2020. She undertook her first period of teaching practice February 2021 teaching 50 students in Kambia and scored 88% with her assessed lesson described as excellent.

- The fifth member of staff was accepted for training October 2020 and has started his first year of training.
- Their increased skills are benefitting not only their pupils but also other members of staff as they share their new knowledge and ideas.

i. Solar Power

Unfortunately, this programme also suffered because the school visit was cancelled. New solar lights would have been taken out April 2020 if the visit have not been cancelled. They will be taken out when it is possible to visit.

The lamps are kept in school and lent to students and staff as required.

- Grades 6, 9 and 12 pupils were able to take them when they went to Sierra Leone to take their exams. They found them very useful as there was no electricity in the area. They were able to have classes in the evenings and do private revision by their light
- They have helped the members of staff undertaking professional development courses continue their studies in the evenings in Sierra Leone, despite the lack of electric lighting at their lodgings.

j. To maintain support and raise awareness and knowledge of life in Guinea

This programme was badly affected by the pandemic in the UK and the links with local UK schools and talks to community organisations could not be maintained. All activity had to be undertaken on-line.

- Raised awareness through Zoom fundraising activities, the website and Facebook
- Emailed regular newsletters to supporters.

6. FINANCIAL REVIEW

i. *Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves*

FCRS has no overheads, does not have paid staff, and therefore has no ongoing commitments in terms of its day to day running costs in the UK. It therefore does not need to ensure a level of reserves to be retained to meet legal or contractual liabilities within the UK.

FCRS's income is used to support programmes at Conakry Refugee School that will advance the education and life chances of marginalized children and young people, many of whom were originally from the refugee community.

To give CRS more security and help them better manage their finances, Trustees have decided that they will annually determine the programmes FCRS can realistically provide for CRS for the whole of the following academic year. That support will be based upon CRS's needs and the amount of money FCRS has at the end of July.

Once the annual amount has been agreed FCRS will support other requests from CRS only if extra funding / grants are obtained over and above those needed to provide the agreed support for the year and build up a fund for the following year's support.

This means that although the amount of money held during the year will fluctuate Trustees will ensure that there is sufficient income held to honour the agreed support and any other agreed projects.

For 2020/21 Trustees were working towards ensuring that by the end of July 2021 (the end of CRS's academic year) there would be at least £30,000 in the bank that could be committed for the 2021/22 academic year.

At the end of this financial year, we had £32,593.73 unrestricted funds and £72,050.11 in restricted funds. Total £104,643.84

Restricted funds

Big Give 2020 for 2020/21 scholarships	£ 6,860.52
School Meals	£ 737.20
Professional Development (Avonbrook)	£ 2,923.99
Health Club	£ 395.31
Merck Family Foundation	£ 61,133.09

This was sufficient to fulfil all our commitments for the academic year ending July 2020 but required fundraising by the end of July to be able to commit £30,000 for the 2020/21 academic year.

Trustees would like to thank all our generous supporters who ensured that, despite Covid 19, we reached that target by the end of July 2021.

ii) *Principal sources of funds*

Fundraising

In previous years fundraising events have been a major source of income (£4,587.50 in 2019/20) but also an important way of raising awareness, support, and donations. The pandemic has meant that live fundraising events have not been possible and those planned for the early part of the year were cancelled, including a big concert with The National Polish Folklore Choir of Great Britain and dancers plus The Mere Singers, a local choir.

The Fundraising Group quickly adapted to producing more regular newsletters and organising on-line "events" such as quizzes, online yoga classes, an online concert, an illustrated talk on how to prune roses, Shropshire wildlife photography, Stone Age living and many more to raise awareness, support and donations. Our heartfelt thanks to all those who donated their time and expertise to support CRS and lightened the effect of lockdown for many of our supporters who were able to join these events free of charge

but invited to give a donations. As you can see below, they were amazingly supportive and generous.

Donations

General (unrestricted) fund £28,877.08
Restricted funds £ 7,346.96

Raised by

- 71 supporters who gave monthly donations to support the school (1 of whom donates via the Charities Trust (pay as you earn scheme) and another via Just Giving)
- 16 supporters who made regular monthly standing orders to support students.
- 179 one-off donations from individuals mainly as a result of the newsletters and “on-line events” outlined above but also by one supporter’s “walk around the garden” and a singing group who met socially on-line
- an unknown amount of people donated via Just Giving to a sponsored marathon run and an appeal by a supporter who asked for donations rather than birthday presents
- a further unknown amount of people who donated via PayPal Giving for another supporter’s birthday and a golden wedding
- donations have also been received from Easyfundraising, Recycle4Charity and Amazon Smile.

Gift Aid has been claimed on all eligible donations

Grants

Big Give 2020

- The Big Give is a mixture of donations and grant. The 2020 Big Give appeal for 2020/21 Scholarships raised a total of £12,492.24. Our champion, once more, was the Waterloo Foundation provided £3,000 of that total. 82 individuals donated or held events and donated the proceeds.

Professional Development

- The Avonbrook Foundation paid £3,568 towards the Professional Development of two members of staff.

The Merck Family Foundation – Guinea science education and sustainability project

- January 2021 FCRS received £32,450.86 (37,500 Euros), the second and final instalment from the Foundation of a two-year grant of 75,000 Euros. This grant has to be spent by the end of December 2021.

Trustees and all the staff and pupils of CRS would like to thank everyone who has supported the school with their money and their time during this very difficult year.

iii How expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity

Most of FCRS's income goes straight to CRS for the identified programmes detailed above. This year we sent £48,904. CRS gives FCRS detailed estimates and sends scanned receipts and we pay for an annual external audit of CRS's accounts.

Bank Transfer fees are charged each time we send money to Guinea. This year we spent £120 in bank fees compared to £162.70 last year. 12 separate payments were made compared to 17 payments the previous year.

Visit to school. FCRS believes that visits to the school are an essential way of ensuring its programmes are still relevant and fulfilling their objectives. They provide up to date understanding of the problems and issues the school faces and a reminder of the considerable positives of CRS and FCRS's work. Visits also allow items such as solar lamps, hygiene kits, second-hand textbooks, refurbished laptops to be taken to Conakry from the UK. The cost of posting such items would be prohibitively high and unreliable.

Following each visit an action plan is developed, covering actions both CRS and FCRS will undertake the following year. This ensures FCRS's work is relevant and focused. Trustees monitor the action plan at each board meeting.

As stated above, the visit to Conakry planned for April 2020 had to be cancelled at the last moment. The tickets cost £1,578.27. Rather than refund the money immediately, Air France gave vouchers that could be redeemed if not used after 12 months. At the time everyone hoped that travel would be possible later in the year. Unfortunately, this was not the case. FCRS received the refund May 2021, after the end of this reporting year.

As well as annual visits, FCRS is in regular email contact with CRS. The current level of 2-way communication is high. As the 2020 visit had to be cancelled, we also had a number of conference calls with the school's management team.

The experience of this year has reinforced our belief that an annual visit is essential and should be taken as soon as those going feel comfortable doing so.

Revenue generating costs were £412 compared to £1,245.64 last year. The reduction in costs being due to all fundraising events having to be cancelled and therefore no venues etc being required.

They paid for:-

- | | | |
|---|-------|-----------------------------|
| - | £216 | Monthly fees to Just Giving |
| - | £ 81 | Paypal fees |
| - | £ 115 | Zoom subscription |

We received £13,305.82 (£1,693.04 last year) in donations via Just Giving and £5,940 (£1,229.19 last year) was received via PayPal.

Zoom provided the platform for all Trustee meetings, conference calls with CRS and the many free events arranged for supporters.

iv. Other information

On the 31st March 2021 there was £72,050.11 restricted money:-

Big Give 2020 for 2020/21 scholarships	£ 6,860.52
School Meals	£ 737.20
Professional Development (Avonbrook)	£ 2,923.99
Health Club	£ 395.31
Merck Family Foundation	£ 61,133.09

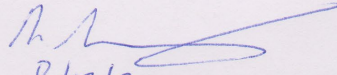
DECLARATION

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees report above

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustee

ROLF LEVESLEY, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Signed



Date

8/12/21

Friends of Conakry Refugee School

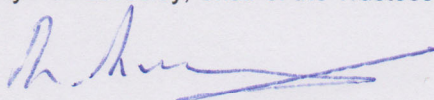
Receipts and Payment Accounts for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2021 Total funds £	2020 Last year £
Receipts				
Student sponsors		3,666.00	3,666.00	3,701.00
Fundraising events	40.00		40.00	4,587.50
Donations	28,877.08	3,680.96	32,558.04	24,141.89
Grants		48,511.10	48,511.10	46,616.14
Gift Aid	8,842.41	857.50	9,699.91	7,292.61
Interest	23.53		23.53	54.12
Total receipts	37,783.02	56,715.56	94,498.58	86,393.26
Payments				
Scholarships / Sponsored students	5,503.74	12,428.51	17,932.25	24,872.37
Other School programmes	15,102.21	15,869.68	30,971.89	33,385.45
Visit to school	1,578.27		1,578.27	2,718.59
Bank Transfer fees	120.00		120.00	162.70
Revenue raising costs	412.05		412.05	1,245.64
Governance costs	0.00		0.00	0.00
Total payments	22,716.27	28,298.19	51,014.46	62,384.75
Net of receipts / (payments)	15,066.75	28,417.37	43,484.12	24,008.51
Transfer between funds	-0.32	0.32		
Cash funds last year end	17,527.30	43,632.42	61,159.72	37,151.21
Cash funds this year end	32,593.73	72,050.11	104,643.84	61,159.72

Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £
Cash funds: In bank	32,593.73	72,050.11
Gift aid claimed but not received	0.00	0.00
Investment assets	0.00	0.00
Assets retained for the charity's use	0.00	0.00
Liabilities	0.00	0.00

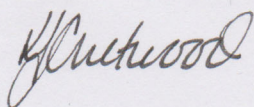
Signed by Rolf Levesley, Chair of the Trustees on behalf of all the Trustees



Date of approval

8/12/21

Signed by Kate Chetwood, External Examiner



Date of approval

25.10.21



Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees of Friends of Conakry Refugee School

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 March 2021

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 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 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 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 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.

Name: Kate Chetwood

Signed:

K Chetwood 25.10.21

Relevant professional qualification or body: AAT

Address: 'Spring Cottage' 207A Hadley Park Road, Leegomery, Telford, Shropshire, TF1 6QG

Date: 22 October 2021