

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

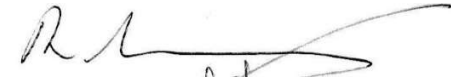
The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees report above

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

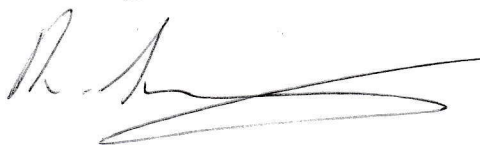
Date: 10 September 2024

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