

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



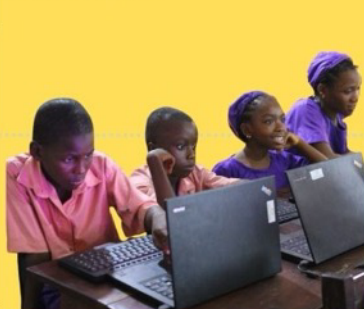
Academic excellence

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.

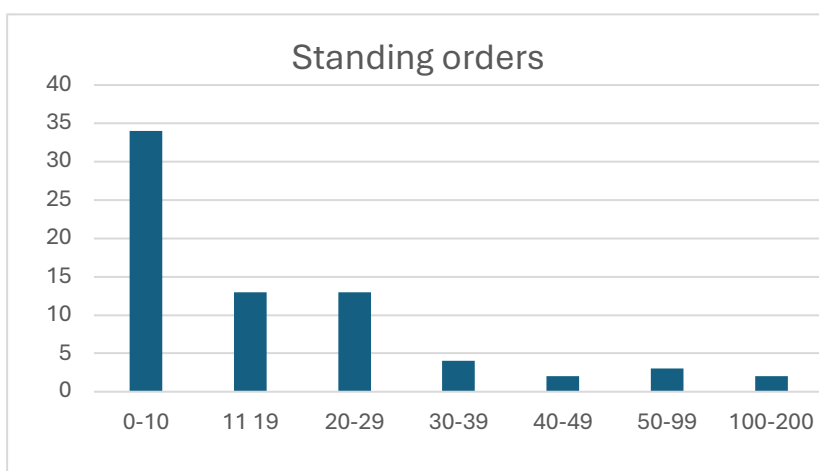
C. Fundraising

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