

Darjeeling Children's Trust

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



A brighter future for children and young people in Darjeeling



Registered charity in England and Wales
Charity number 1143109

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TRUSTEES' REPORT

The Trustees present their annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Brief history

Darjeeling Children's Trust (DCT) is a UK charity governed by UK law. It was originally constituted by Trust Deed in early 2008. This document was amended in June 2011 to comply with a suggested amendment from the Charity Commission to allow full registration to proceed. The current Trust Deed is dated 15 July 2011 and registration by the Charity Commission was confirmed on 27 July 2011.

Registered charity

The registered number is 1143109.

Registered address

151 Abbey Road, Westbury-On-Trym, Bristol BS9 3QH

Charitable Objectives and Activities

The objectives of the charity are to advance the education and preserve and protect the good health of the children and young people of Darjeeling through the provision and improvement of education facilities, through improvements to their living conditions and through sponsorship.

How the Trust works

The Trust has built close relationships with partners in Darjeeling over the years of its operation. Trustees based in the UK, Switzerland and India meet quarterly to take decisions about the operation of the Trust and its projects. In 2023 these meetings alternated between video conference and hybrid formats, with some Trustees attending meetings in London in person in January and July while others joined remotely.

Funding our first project manager in India (Aashwin Pradhan) in late 2021 had allowed us to expand the scope and management of our projects during 2022. As the work grew, Aashwin's employment grew from part-time to full-time, and in 2023 the Trust agreed to fund a part-time assistant for Aashwin to take on some of his duties. Alok Rai took up post in July 2023. A sub-group of the Board, chaired by Marilyn Adams, continued to meet regularly with Aashwin throughout 2023 in order to support him in the development and delivery of projects in India.

During 2023 we also continued to benefit hugely from our UK employee, Kirstie Davidson. Her skills and capacity allowed us to further develop the Trust's IT systems, made our communications and engagement more effective, and placed our digital record-keeping on a more secure footing.

The Trust maintains effective relationships with a number of educational and welfare organisations in Darjeeling, including in particular the head-teachers of the schools attended by sponsored children, the Food and Craft Institute, the Head Monk at the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission Children's Home, and the building and design team responsible for delivery of the Children's Home project.

Funds are transferred to Darjeeling through use of the Trinity Foundation, an organisation based in Siliguri, India which is able to receive funds from the UK through an FCRA account; and by direct transfers to the FCRA account held by the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission, where funds are to be spent on that project. Although we fund their posts, both Aashwin Pradhan and Alok Rai continued in 2023 to be employed on behalf of DCT by the Trinity Foundation.

Europe-based Trustees visited Darjeeling a number of times during 2023. Tshering Huber visited in May and December, Matthew Houghton visited in October; and Matthew Morpurgo and Jen Owen visited in November.

Trustees

The following were trustees throughout 2023:

- Katherine Carr (Chairperson), Marilyn Adams, Hugh Heron, and Sharan Patel, all of whom are resident in the UK.
- Tshering Huber, who is resident in Switzerland.
- Pasang Wangdi, who is resident in India.

The following individuals stepped down from the Board during 2023:

- Clare Blakeway-Phillips (Trustee) on 19th January
- Monica Sood (Trustee and Treasurer) on 23rd April
- Lisa Glydon (Trustee) on 2nd July

The following individuals, all of whom are resident in the UK, joined the Board as Trustees during 2023:

- Matthew Houghton (Trustee and Treasurer) on 23rd April
- Matthew Morpurgo (Trustee) on 23rd April
- Jennifer Owen (Trustee) on 23rd April
- Akasa Pradhan (Trustee) on 1st October

The minimum number of trustees is three. Trustees are appointed for three years by a resolution of trustees passed at a Special Meeting. New trustees are invited to join the Trust when either a vacancy arises due to the resignation of a current trustee or when a gap is identified in the skills available to trustees and which needs to be filled, while ensuring that the overall number of Trustees on the Board is appropriate in order to facilitate management of the charity.

The procedure followed is in accordance with advice published by the Charity Commission. Prospective Trustees usually join initially as Associate Trustees for six months before becoming full Trustees.

Achievements and Performance in 2023

2023 was a year of consolidation and growth for DCT. With a full-time project manager in post in India, and a support officer in the UK, the Trust was able to expand rapidly the projects it delivered and set itself on a more sustainable organisational footing. With a degree of ongoing financial cushion from previous years, when the opportunities to spend funds had been reduced due to Covid, the Trust's outgoings increased notably to support an expanded programme of activity. Trustee turnover was also relatively high during this year, and new Trustees brought fresh energy and ideas to the Board. As well as agreeing a greater programme of spend for 2023, Trustees were conscious of the need to maintain this activity in 2024 and beyond, when the 'covid dividend' would no longer be available, and our new Treasurer helped the Board to apply financial rigour to future forecasting and fundraising plans to ensure new commitments can be sustained going forward.

Activity was undertaken in 2023 under the following projects:

a) Re-construction of the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission (KBM) Children's Home

Construction work continued throughout 2023, and by the end of the year this significant project, the funding of which has been a focus of effort for DCT for over a decade, was very nearly complete. 2023 saw the completion of important communal areas, including the kitchen; the recreation room; external fencing, railings and decoration; and the living quarters and office for Pema Bhante, the head monk. Grills were added to the windows to protect the children and provide security for the building. In September, water filters were installed to provide very welcome hot water for the winter. A vegetable garden was added in November, as well as some additional fittings, such as mirrors, clocks and drying lines.

In November, urgent repair work took place to the boys' bathrooms, as problems with the plumbing meant that the upstairs facilities had no water. Work was quickly commissioned and the toilets were replaced and pipes repaired.

b) Ongoing support for the Kripasaran Children's Home

The near-completion of the construction work at KBM enabled an expanded programme of activity for the children, and additional facilities have provided living conditions which allow them to thrive physically and mentally and thereby make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. A male supervisor (Sangam Dewan) took up post in January to work alongside Jigten (the female supervisor who had been appointed at the end of 2022), and our funding of these appointments has also enabled a step-change in how the children are entertained and cared for. We have worked with both supervisors to put in place robust record keeping and reporting mechanisms, so that any problems can be identified and responded to quickly. Both Sangam and Jigten have been instrumental in 2023 in spotting improvements which can be made at KBM, and finding opportunities to expand the experiences and opportunities of the children.

During the year, activities at KBM included:

- Knitting and sewing classes which continued throughout the year for the girls – machines were serviced in August;
- Tuition in Maths and English, including additional tuition over the winter for children in classes 10 and 12 preparing for school exams.
- A trip for the boys in March to play football at the Government High School, arranged by Sangam;
- A drawing competition in May, organised by the supervisors;
- A day-trip for 20 of the junior children to Darjeeling Zoo and the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute;
- A visit for the children in November to the Japanese temple;
- Participation by some of the children in a sports competition hosted by GDNS in November, at which they were successful as the runners-up.

New equipment was also provided to the Home, including:

- New computers for use by the supervisors and Pema Bhante;
- 10 new computers for use by the children to complete school work and develop their IT skills. These were purchased with a grant donated by the United Nations Women's Guild. A further PC was kindly donated through the G20, when that event was held in Darjeeling in April. Protective covers were carefully sewn for the new PCs by the children.
- Sports kit and equipment, also donated through the G20;
- The installation of WiFi in May;
- The provision of umbrellas to children at KBM (as well as sponsored children, vocational training students and staff) in July, to make the monsoon season more enjoyable;
- New bed sheets, donated in October;
- Donations of books in December to create a KBM library, along with two guitars and keyboards for the children's use.

Visits by a number of DCT supporters throughout the year also enriched the lives of the children, through activities they arranged and donations they made. These varied contributions included additional English practice, training on using the new computers, boxing lessons, education on consent, and provision of celebration meals to mark special events or occasions. As always, we are hugely grateful to all our supporters who donate their time, effort and funds to enrich the children's lives.

c) Health and Welfare

Our partnership with Dr Shreya Chettri, a Resident Medical Officer at the Planters Hospital in Darjeeling, continued throughout 2023. With the support of her nursing team, she oversaw the physical and mental wellbeing of the children at the KBM Home, of our sponsored children who live with their parents/guardians, of the young people we support through vocational training, and even of the staff whose salaries we fund. Activity in 2023 included:

- Yoga classes, which continued at weekends and remained very popular as a means to keep physically fit and mentally relaxed;
- Delivery of the second annual 'dental camp' in March by a team of dental surgeons from West Sikkim, which provided dental checks and treatments to the children who live at KBM and to all children whose education is being sponsored through DCT;
- Provision by the local police force of an education session at KBM on safety and the risks of human trafficking, including engagement with parents and carers about risks;
- The delivery of a health and hygiene class educating the girls at KBM about menstruation, by DLR Prerna and Darjeeling Rotary, NGOs with whom we have worked closely in the past;
- The second annual visit from the local fire station in October, to run a fire and earthquake drill for children and staff and provide training on the use of fire extinguishers;
- A visit to KBM in October from a mental health team, including a psychologist and psychiatrist, who delivered an awareness presentation about mental health and ran a series of 1:1 consultations;
- Delivery of the second annual 'eye camp' in December by a team from Eden Hospital in Darjeeling, which resulted in 32 of the 123 children and adults who had their eyes tested being provided with glasses;
- Regular haircuts during the year, sometimes provided by the young people whose training as beauticians was being funded through DCT;
- Continued provision of basic health supplies, including toothpaste, soap and sanitary items.

Many of these interventions were provided for free by local healthcare professionals, NGOs and organisations, and we are hugely grateful for their support. Dental camps, eye camps and education sessions are a hugely beneficial addition to the welfare of the children supported by DCT, and we are indebted to those who provide these services for the care and kindness they demonstrate.

Some of our Trustees held discussions about nutrition with Dr Shreya during their visit to Darjeeling in November. As a result, a plan was developed at the end of the year setting out proposals for an expanded diet for the children, with more variety and a careful balance of foods to meet their nutritional needs. This plan will be considered by Trustees in early 2024 and, if it is affordable, should make a significant contribution to the ability of the children to grow and thrive.

d) Child Sponsorship

10 new children who had been selected for sponsorship at the end of 2022 were inducted into the scheme in January and February, receiving their new uniform and equipment. This included the adoption of a new approach to engagement with the children's parents, carers and wider families, based around a formal mutual agreement setting out expectations for support and communication on both sides. We hope that this approach will allow families – who have often not experienced a good-quality education themselves – to feel more a part of their children's education, to recognise the importance of supporting them to study and progress, and to understand the long-term commitment of support they can expect from DCT in return.

For the start of the new school year, sponsored children who had been studying at Chaitanya School moved (with the agreement of their families) to Assembly of God School after concerns were raised by some of the young people about the quality of teaching they were receiving. We are always pleased to be able to respond to issues like this flexibly, and make adjustments for individual children where the need arises.

Some of our current and past sponsored children achieved fantastic individual successes throughout the year, winning prizes in extra-curricular competitions in badminton, taekwondo and even the Darjeeling Beauty Pageant. It is wonderful to see them succeed in this way and rise to the opportunities they have been given.

Our sponsorship programme has now been running for 16 years and some of the tiny three- and four-year olds we took on in the early years are now graduating from school and going on to further education. In 2023 we supported 7 of these children to take up courses at Southfield College and North Point (St Josephs), some of them to pursue undergraduate degrees. These are options which could never have been dreamt of when the children were first sponsored, and we are hugely grateful to our supporters for their generosity over the years and very proud of the children.

10 new children were selected in November to join the sponsorship scheme, and will take up their school places in early 2024. On top of the children already being supported to attend good-quality schools, this will bring the total number of children sponsored to 51.

Our child sponsorship scheme continues to make a huge difference to the children it supports, but significant price rises in India meant that in 2023 the costs of the scheme were not wholly met by sponsorship donations, and had to be augmented from wider Trust funds. Trustees noted that the quality and cost of schools to which children could be sent vary greatly; good quality state schools are very good value but tend to be highly competitive, whereas private schools are significantly more expensive. In 2024 trustees will need to decide whether to continue accepting new children into the scheme, which schools to send children to, and whether to increase the cost of sponsorship.

e) Vocational Training and Careers Support

We continued to fund places on vocational courses for young people (a total of 24 at the end of 2023), with great success in terms of their ability to obtain secure and fulfilling jobs after graduation. We were also pleased to see a number of students giving back to DCT and to the Darjeeling community during the year, using the skills they have learned. Specifically:

- In January, two students whose hotel management placement at Don Bosco college was supported by DCT in 2022 secured good jobs in hospitality in Bangalore;
- In April, three students completed beautician training and celebrated by giving the girls at the KBM Home a haircut. Three new candidates were selected for and joined the next course. There are usually six students in two intakes a year.
- In June, the ten young people studying hotel management at the Food Craft Institute (FCI) in Darjeeling left to take up their industrial placements in Bangalore.
- In August, we funded a placement in automobile repair at Don Bosco for a student who did not pass his Class 10 exams. The next batch of hotel management students started their course at FCI. And the beautician students visited a local charity mission to help the residents with their hygiene and care.
- In September, we provided some extra English lessons for the FCI students to help them make the most of their studies and future placements.
- We funded nursing training for 4 young people during this year.

The Darjeeling Institute of Computer Education (DICE) offered to provide IT training for FCI students over a three-month course, using the new PCs at KBM. We are very grateful for this offer, which will be implemented in early 2024.

In 2023 we expanded the initial pilot on career counselling which we put in place the year before, responding to a gap in provision identified by our previous Strategic Needs Assessment. In May, a career counselling session was provided for all the Class 12 students we support, to help them recognise their skills and preferences and identify realistic and appropriate options for them post-18. However our ambition was to provide this intervention earlier in a child's schooling; in August, these sessions were expanded to the next cohort of Class 11 and 12 students and took place earlier in the school year.

In November, a group careers session was organised at KBM for all children supported by DCT in Classes 9-12, to raise awareness and understanding of different career options; this event will be repeated every Autumn going forward, and our aim is to augment it with an annual careers evening in the Spring with visiting guest speakers. At the November event we noted the wide variation in understanding about future employment options amongst the children, and also the variation in English ability within the cohort. As a result, in future we are likely to deliver this intervention in two groups, once to our sponsored children (who tend to have better English and are more realistic understanding of their options) and separately to the children at KBM who would benefit from support delivered in Nepali and who tend to have had less support for thinking about future choices from their schools.

In December, DCT once again arranged for five young people to attend a 15-day adventure course at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, using funds kindly provided by the Rotary Club of Pontefract. This is the second year we have funded this course, and the young people who took part gained truly unique experiences. They successfully climbed to the summit of Sandakphu, the highest point in West Bengal, as well as experiencing rock-climbing, kayaking and wild swimming, sleeping in hammocks in the wild, and learning valuable leadership and resilience skills. We intend to give another cohort of our older children access to this experience next year.

Fundraising

The annual Darjeeling Golf Cup took place again in Yorkshire in June, and with a day of good weather the ever-popular event raised over £3,400. Over the summer, Trustees and supporters raised over £8,000 through individual challenges.

We received some generous donations during 2023. In January, a group of 44 child choral singers from Arlesheim in Switzerland travelled from house to house singing to celebrate the Visit of the Magi, and donated their collection to DCT – an extremely impressive £12,000. We also received a generous £2000 donation in memory of Louise Lister.

We were also delighted to partner with some adventurers this year:

- In September, long-time supporter Mike Havard set off with two friends in a tuktuk to drive from Rajasthan to Kashmir, not an easy journey but the team raised more than £4,000 for DCT in the process.
- In December, Adam Green and Mitchell Dickens (otherwise known as The Goras) took part in the Rickshaw Run, travelling 3,500km in a rickshaw through India, calling in to visit Darjeeling en route, and raised over £3,000 for DCT.
- The London to Singapore Expedition recreated the original 1955 overland route in two Land Rover Defender 110s, travelling 14,500 miles through 21 countries. The team set off from London in August, managed to fit in a visit to Darjeeling on the way, and reached Singapore as planned just before Christmas. Thanks to extremely generous sponsors and supporters they raised over £50,000 for DCT which will arrive with us next year.

We are so grateful to all these adventurers for their support and efforts on our behalf.

Financial Review

Total receipts for 2023 were £98,895 with payments of £167,486. The balance held in the UK at the end of the year was £72,774. As the 'covid dividend' comes to an end, Trustees will need to focus in 2024 on ensuring a long-term fundraising plan is in place to allow sustainment of current activities over the coming years.

Statements of the Receipts and Payments, and Assets and Liabilities, come with this Report and are part of the formal statement for 2023.

Policy on reserves

The Trust's policy on reserves is to maintain a minimum balance of £7,500 for general activities. Reserves were well above this level throughout 2023. This figure will be reviewed in 2024, in recognition of the expanded programme of activity the Trust now delivers.

None of the funds held by the Trust are in deficit. The Trust does not act as the Custodian Trustee for any assets.

The report was approved by trustees as a fair and true account of the Trust's activities at their meeting on 17 March 2024.

Signed

Name

Katherine Carr

Position

Chair of Trustees

Date

17 March 2024

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Darjeeling Children's Trust

1143109

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period
from

01/01/2023

To

31/12/2023

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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestrict ed funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowmen t funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Regular donations	9,420	1,608	-	11,028	14,692
Ad hoc donations	37,742	915	-	38,657	40,633
Child sponsorship and vocational training	17,390	600	-	17,990	17,955
Gift aid	18,019	-	-	18,019	5,030
Fund raising events	5,393	-	-	5,393	64,737
Grants	-	4,679	-	4,679	3,477
Trustee expenses (donated back to the Trust)	3,129	-	-	3,129	-
Legacy donation	-	-	-	-	37,822
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	91,093	7,802	-	98,895	184,346
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	91,093	7,802	-	98,895	184,346
A3 Payments					
Kripasaran Children's Home	75,083	17,869	-	92,952	66,166
Child sponsorship	31,020	-	-	31,020	28,373
Vocational training	11,186	492	-	11,678	20,873
Costs of major fundraising	1,352	-	-	1,352	15,632
Commissions, fees, and bank charges	5,579	-	-	5,579	4,514
Trust running costs	21,776	-	-	21,776	8,765
Strategy consultancy report	-	-	-	-	4,167
School improvements and equipment	-	-	-	-	370
Trustee expenses (donated back to the Trust)	3,129	-	-	3,129	-
Sub total	149,125	18,361	-	167,486	148,860
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	149,125	18,361	-	167,486	148,860
Net of receipts/(payments)	(58,032)	(10,559)	-	(68,591)	35,486
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	144,142	10,559	-	154,701	119,215
Cash funds this year end	86,110	-	-	86,110	154,701

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash at Co-operative bank	72,744	-	-
	Cash in Darjeeling	13,366	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	86,110	-	-
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))		OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Matthew Houghton (Treasurer)	17 March 2024	

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Basis of preparation

The accounting year covers the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

The Charities Act 2011 allows charities that are not companies to use the receipts and payments format provided they have not recorded more than £250,000 in the year.

The trust has two restricted funds:

- (a) for the redevelopment of the Kripasaran Children's Home - this is a project that has been part-funded by the trust since 2013;
- (b) some vocational courses at accredited institutes

Gift Aid

The HMRC gift aid claim for the tax years 2021/22 and 2022/23 were settled during the year.

Fundraising events

During 2023 there were some notable fundraising events which are mentioned in the Annual Report.

The funds that were received in the year were:

	2023
	£
10k for 10k Trustee fundraising	8,770
The MAD MAD Rickshaw Ride Adventure across India	4,309
Louise Lister Memorial	2,209
The Goras Rickshaw Run (a further £1,362 has been received in 2024)	2,152

Trust running costs

The following costs have been classified as Trust running costs:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Administrative support costs	18,573	6,702
Independent examination fees	1,428	1,320
Recruitment costs	951	365
IT and software costs	528	396
Insurance	278	-
Other	18	(18)
	<hr/> 21,776 <hr/>	<hr/> 8,765 <hr/>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(CONTINUED)

Staff costs

In Darjeeling, the Project Lead became full time from the beginning of the year and an assistant was taken on in July 2023. In the UK, the Administrative Officer has continued on a part-time basis and increased their hours from the beginning of the year.

In 2023 the total cost of these roles was £16,989 (2022: £6,359).

Commissions, fees, and bank charges

The following costs have been classified as Trust running costs:

	2023 £	2022 £
Trinity Foundation administrative fees	3,826	3,427
Just Giving fees	665	297
Bank fees	729	790
Other	359	-
	<u>5,579</u>	<u>4,514</u>

Trustees and other related party transactions

No Trustees received any remuneration in respect of their responsibilities as Trustees.

Three new Trustees travelled to Darjeeling in October and November 2023 and claimed a total of £3,129 travel expenses which they donated back to the Trust.

Fees for examination of the accounts

These financial statements include fees for independent examination of £1,428 relating to the 2022 annual report (2022: £1,320 relating to the 2021 annual report).

Commitments and Guarantees

The Trust did not have any material commitments, nor has it provided any guarantees to third parties at 31 December 2023.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF DARJEELING CHILDREN'S TRUST

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

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

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.

Kausor Amin-Ali FCCT FRSA
15 St Marys Paddock
Wellingborough
Northamptonshire
NN8 1HJ

Date: 10 May 2024