

St. Nicholas Foundation

Draft Annual Report

2021/2022



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Chair Message

The financial year 2021/22 has been exceptionally busy with many positive developments. This is very encouraging after the obstacles we faced during the Covid pandemic when the school had to close and our fundraising efforts were severely hampered.

In November 2021 we were greatly honoured to receive an official visit from the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Nikos Dendias. The Minister showed a keen interest in the school and has pledged to continue his association with St Nicholas. His visit generated much interest in Greece and Ghana and the Ministry has subsequently agreed to fund a basketball court for the school.

Another key milestone was the formal opening of our new classroom block in June 2022 by our generous benefactor Mytilineous. This industrial conglomerate has not only funded the construction work but has also agreed to finance a new school bus. Our other Greek benefactor, Tsakos Shipping, continues to support us with funding and food donations.

In December 2022 we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the founding of St Nicholas. This is a significant landmark of which we are extremely proud. From an initial class of 25 children we now have over 180 pupils. The school site has expanded from a single building housing our first nursery intake to a new block with purpose built classrooms and learning resources. We also have a large multipurpose dining hall and modern kitchen.

During 2021/22 our first cohort of pupils completed the primary syllabus and sat their final exams which, if successful, will enable them to transfer to senior secondary school. In order to prepare them for these exams pupils were given extra tuition during pre-school hours. This was supervised by our dedicated headmaster Mr. Evans and we look forward to announcing positive outcomes in next year's report. We also pay tribute to all our staff whose work in often challenging conditions we greatly value.

Another welcome development during the year has been the appointment of Barry Hedges to the board of our charity. An airline pilot whose work has brought him regularly to Ghana, Barry has been a friend of St Nicholas School for many years. He brings valuable IT and fundraising skills and is spearheading our new 500 Champions sponsorship initiative

Despite our achievements during 2021/22 there is no room for complacency. Global economic uncertainty and rising food prices mean that we must be constantly thinking ahead and planning for the future. Many challenges remain including the potential for flooding from extreme weather conditions and inadequate drainage in the municipality. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the staff and trustees of St Nicholas remain firmly dedicated to the education and welfare of our pupils to ensure they have a better future.

Our vision, objectives and values

Our vision

At St. Nicholas, we believe that 'Every child deserves an education'

Our objectives are to:

- Educate children well and ensure their well-being
- Provide excellent teachers and staff
- Provide and maintain excellent buildings and facilities
- Provide engaging co-curricular activities
- Recruit excellent volunteers, young ambassadors and supporters
- Ensure strong sufficient charity management

Our values

At Nicholas, we have five simple values that we apply to everything we do and believe they are fundamental to helping our children LEARN:

Listen: When we listen, we learn; when we learn, we grow

Enthusiasm: Children learn better when they are surrounded by positivity and enthusiasm

Achieve: We have high aspirations for St. Nicholas children to achieve their goals

Resourceful: We encourage our children to always be resourceful

Nurture: We nurture our children to help them grow with confidence and resilience

In the sections which follow, we highlight some of the achievements and developments which have accorded with our vision, objectives and values.

Our People

Our pupils

During the current financial year our intake at St Nicholas reached more than 180 pupils. From January 2023 we will re-open our nursery class which was closed for admission during the pandemic.

Since the school was founded ten years ago, our priority has been to recruit the most disadvantaged children from the local area and to add a new class each year in order to offer the full curriculum for the Ghanaian Primary Certificate of Education.

The average class size is only 15 to ensure that every child gets as much attention as she or he needs. As well as a quality education, our pupils receive free meals (breakfast and lunch), uniforms, learning materials, health checks and access to medical care.

Our staff

In 2021/22 we had 31 staff on the payroll of which 19 are teachers. We employ a head teacher and deputy head to oversee the management of the school and the delivery of our learning programme. Our sizeable teaching team enables us to provide a high teacher to pupil ratio unheard of in most Ghanaian primary schools. The remaining employees provide catering, security and cleaning services. We also employ a driver for our school bus.

Corporate management of the school is overseen by our two founders, Deborah Eleazar and Captain Alkiviadis Kappas, who make frequent visits to Ghana to liaise with staff, oversee building work and meet with distinguished visitors. Local management is provided by Patrick Mensa and Roberta Mensah Amo.

Our trustees

The St Nicholas Foundation Trust was set up as a UK charity in 2015 to oversee the running of the school and to ensure good governance. Based in London, the board of eight trustees meets regularly and is largely responsible for raising the funds to develop and run the school.

Our Learning and Support Programmes

Early Learning

Providing a good education for our children is the top priority at St Nicholas so they are encouraged to start as early as possible. Children enter Nursery as young as three where the emphasis is on learning through play, creative activities and acquiring pre-literacy and numeracy skills. At Kindergarten level, which covers two years, the children go on to develop writing skills.

Primary School

Our Primary School Classes (1 to 7) follow the syllabus set by the Ghana Education Service (GES). Core subjects cover:

- Mathematics
- Science
- English Language
- Social Studies
- Religious and Moral Education,
- French
- Ga (a widely spoken Ghanaian language)
- Information and Computer Technology

Extracurricular Learning

Greek language and culture

Because of the school's close ties to Greece our pupils have the opportunity to study Modern Greek. They are also taught Greek songs and dancing and regularly give displays to visitors and at the annual St Nicholas Day celebrations in December.

Music and dance

With Ghana's rich heritage in music and dance, these feature prominently in the curriculum. We are fortunate in having some talented staff to tutor our pupils on a range of instruments donated to the school and oversee our brass band and drumming groups. Traditional music and dance are regularly showcased at school events.

Naval Cadets

The school has a thriving cadet corps made up of both boys and girls who receive training from a professional naval officer. Our cadets put on impressive displays for visiting dignitaries and on ceremonial occasions.

Sport

Friday afternoons are devoted to sporting and recreational activities at St. Nicholas. Our sports programme covers football, athletics, high jump, handball and volleyball. We are particularly pleased to be associated with the Ghana Athletics Association who are helping to make athletics an established part of the curriculum.

Environmental activities

We are committed to fostering environmental awareness amongst pupils and are proud to have instigated a programme to clear-up rubbish on the nearby beach. On these occasions, children team up with staff, parents, local residents and other voluntary organisations to clear the beach of plastic and other rubbish.

Learning Support

We recognise that some of our children struggle with their studies, often because of their home circumstances. Our policy is for teachers to identify pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties in particular subjects and for these pupils to be given extra support after school hours.

Pastoral Care

St. Nicholas is particularly concerned with the welfare of its pupils, many of whom are wholly dependent on the meals they receive at schools. Where there are concerns about homework, health, absenteeism or behaviour our teachers visit parents or guardians to discuss these problems. Children who are identified as vulnerable are closely monitored and second-hand clothes and shoes are made available to them and their families.

Medical Support

Many of our children are predisposed to a number of acute medical conditions. Priority is given to ensuring they receive a healthy diet by giving them breakfast and lunch during school hours.

We arrange for all the children to be issued with a National Health Insurance card which gives them free and fast access to medical centres in Ghana. We also pay for any medication. The Ghana Health Service visits the school twice a year to administer

vaccinations for polio, rubella and measles. During the year the children also had dental and eye checks.

Parent involvement

The school has an active Parent Teachers Association (PTA) which holds meeting twice a term at the school. The meetings keep parents and guardians informed of the school policy and pupils' progress. PTA meetings are also used to distribute donated clothes and shoes.

Governance

Governance of the school charity is overseen by the St Nicholas Foundation board of trustees who set and review policies in number of areas including pupil behaviour, health and safety, risk assessment and equal opportunities. These policies are implemented and monitored by the headmaster and his senior staff. Locally, the Ghana Education Service conducts inspections to ensure that the school meets its operating standards.

Our Property

As our intake of pupils has grown so too has the need for classroom accommodation. During 2021/22 further work was undertaken to complete the upper level of our learning block and the building is now roofed and weather proofed.

Alongside our new build project, maintenance work continues to put pressure on our resources. Heavy rainfall and flooding has caused damage to external walls and improvements are needed to the drainage system. With the help of local construction company GHS Engineering we are hopeful that more robust building techniques will solve these problems.

With the rise in the cost of food staples and a fall in the supply of food donations the focus is now on using some of our vacant land for crop cultivation. Clearance of bush and crop planting is in the early stages although we have already harvested our first crop of okra.

Our Families

At St Nicholas, we have come to recognize that in order to have an impact on our pupils' learning we need to work closely with their parents and caregivers. Engagement with families has been facilitated through our thriving Parent Teacher Association. We also employ a dedicated social worker to monitor the children's wellbeing and liaise with their caregivers. At the same time, our teachers are trained to identify children who are struggling with their learning and for whom issues at home may be a cause of anxiety or tension.

Our Supporters

Underpinning our work, we are fortunate in having a network of friends and supporters in Ghana, Greece, the UK and other parts of the world who have provided funding, food, clothing, learning resources, teaching support, advice and other contributions to help ensure the viability and success of the school.

Donors

During 2021/22 the school has been fortunate in receiving donations in funding or in-kind from a number of organisations and individuals. Below we have listed key donors and their contributions:

Maria Tsakos Foundation	Annual Grant
Tsakos Hellas visiting ships	Bulk food supplies
Mytilineos SA	Funding for building work and a new school bus
Leon & Lotus Shipping	Funding donations
Sea and Shore Services	Management support and transport
New Beginnings (airline crews)	Clothing, shoes, learning resources
UK schools	Uniforms, sports equipment, learning resources
St Nicholas Pupil Sponsorship Scheme	Regular donations for individual pupils
Pelagos	Funding donation

Fundraising initiatives

UK based fund raising initiatives have been undertaken by two of our regular supporters: **Ethel Addo**, who has spent time volunteering at St Nicholas, has once again raised money through her church and **Manish Ghandi** used his sponsorship for a half-marathon to help St Nicholas.

Volunteers/visitors

We are particularly grateful for the help and support received from **Maria Asmarianaki** during the year. One of our most dedicated volunteers, Maria is a Greek national working in Accra who has tirelessly championed St. Nicholas and has helped organise events at the school. She also teaches Greek to our children on Saturday mornings

Our Finances

Income

In 2021/2022 our **total income** was £177,372 which represents an increase of nearly 43% over the previous year.

The school is funded exclusively by donations from a range sources in Ghana, the UK and Greece. These sources include donations from individuals and companies, fundraising activities, legacy giving and pupil sponsorship.

In the current year approximately 81% of our income came from UK and Greek sources with the remainder being raised in Ghana.

Expenditure

Total spending in 2021/2022 was £90,246 which represents a fall of 22% over the previous year.

Much of our spending over the past few years has gone on the construction of school buildings. As our capital programme nears an end, our building costs have started to fall which is reflected in lower expenditure during the current financial year.

On the other hand our staffing costs have risen by 27% with necessary pay rises awarded to counteract the cost of living crisis.

As a charity we are proud to have a policy of keeping our administration costs to a minimum which accounted for less than one percent of spending.

Commentary

In the current financial year we made a net gain of £87,126 which compares favourably with a net loss of £14,638 in the previous year. Our improved performance is largely attributed to some generous donations from our corporate benefactors and a fall in our capital expenditure. This puts the charity in a healthy position to face the challenges ahead particularly the inflationary pressures on our running costs.

Our Charity

Registered name: The name of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (the "CIO") is St Nicholas Foundation

Registered charity number: 1164193

Registered Address: The principal office of the CIO is:
First Floor
10 Lower Grosvenor Place
London SW1W 0EN
United Kingdom

St. Nicholas Trustees:

During 2019/20 the charity trustees were as follows:

Elizabeth Dutton – Acting Chairperson (appointed 2.11.15)

Jacqueline Amin – Treasurer (appointed 2.11.15)

Deborah Eleazar (appointed 2.11.15)

Alkiviadis A Kappas (appointed 2.11.15)

Vivienne King (appointed 2.11.15)

Andreas G Bisbas (appointed 2.11.15)

Ivan Quashigah (appointed 1.4.21)

Barry Hedges (appointed 28.9.22)

Bankers: NatWest, Victoria, PO Box 1357, 169 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 5NA

Independent Examiner: Douglas Wadkin, 11 Amwell St, London EC1R 1UL

Governing Document: The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes an unincorporated charity.

Charitable Objectives

Through the St Nicholas School in Tema, Ghana (the "School") which was established in 2012, the CIO aims to advance the education, health and community development of students of the School by providing the funds, facilities, staff and/or materials to:

- (i) provide high quality education for infant and primary up to school leaving age children at minimal cost to families and ensuring that the students acquire the necessary learning skills to progress to higher levels in the education system, including competencies in English and mathematics;
- (ii) provide financial support to students and their family members as deemed appropriate by the Executive Committee and according to a defined set of criteria;
- (iii) Improve the students' health and well-being by providing nutritious meals, drinks and snacks whilst the students are at school and access to medical care where necessary;
- (iv) ensure that the students acquire social and life skills and foster the development of the local community; and
- (v) develop links with local people and organizations including parents, community activists, local dignitaries and food suppliers, in order to improve both the living conditions and levels of education of the students.

Risks and Reserves/Financial Health

The trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error. During the first year of operation as a registered charity, a Reserves Policy was implemented with the aim of holding at least three months of operating costs in reserves. This policy was achieved during the financial year October 2021/2022.

Activities, developments and achievements

A detailed account of the charity's activities, developments and achievements is set out in the earlier sections of this report.

Charity management

Trustees

- Four meetings of the trustees were held during 2021/2022
- Three trustees, Deborah Eleazar, Ivan Quashigah and Vivienne King visited the school during the same period.

Policies

The following policies/documents are in place:

- Code of Behaviour
- Health and Safety
- Risk Management
- Safeguarding
- Financial Reserves
- Trustee Conflicts of Interest
- Equal Opportunities

Annual Accounts

- Annual accounts were produced, audited and submitted to the Charity Commission in June 2023

Newsletter

- Four newsletters were produced circulated by the school during the academic year 2021/2022

Signed on behalf of the charity trustees

Elizabeth Dutton

Elizabeth Dutton (Acting Chairperson)

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 1 June 2023