

2020 Trustees' Report

"Porridge and Pens is a small charity that punches well above its weight"

The FORE (COVID -19 RAFT RAFT FUND APPEAL 2020)

Our vision and mission

Our vision is for every child in Ghana to have an equal chance to achieve their potential and be free from poverty.

Our mission is to provide children and young adults in Ghana with a free education, access to two meals each day and safe shelter, so that young people can create their own bright futures, free from poverty.

About Porridge and Pens

Porridge and Pens is a small charity working from Essex to help Ghana's most vulnerable young people live a life free from poverty. We create an environment of empowerment with three simple tools: Education, Food and Safety. With these three things children graduate from our projects with independence and financial sustainability. Our beneficiaries don't want to rely on charity forever; we provide a steppingstone.

Our founder, Jemma, started Porridge and Pens from her bedroom in Brightlingsea, Essex. After spending a year in Ghana living and teaching, she met an orphan girl called Ama, back in 2009. Ama was a 14-year-old girl who was desperately unhappy and trapped working in a form of modern-day slavery, suffering from daily abuse. Because Ama wasn't paid for her work, she couldn't afford to go to school which isn't free in Ghana. Gender inequality is also prevalent in the area we work so girls get left behind too easily and are often tasked with the chores of the house. Jemma supported Ama through her education with her own money. Ama is now a chef for an international tour company.

Jemma and Ama remain best friends today.

Porridge and Pens is based on a simple model – giving children the chance to go to school, giving them food at school and surrounding them with professionals who care about them. To date we have worked with 650 children to do just that.

Ama remains the inspiration behind Porridge and Pens.

Porridge and Pens - Girl Power

The situation for disadvantaged girls in Kumasi:

Most girls who do not complete their basic school education in Ghana go on to become unskilled workers in the area of petty trade. For example, they might sell canned drinks or basic food items on the streets of Kumasi. According to the most recent Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) the average female petty trader earns no more than £1.50 a day, working ten hours each day. With the cost of rent in Kumasi around £25 each month for a single room, this does not leave an adequate amount for essentials. If a girl can complete their basic school education and a vocational qualification afterwards, it provides opportunities to earn far more than this and live financially independent lives. For example, a Junior Seamstress can earn a starting wage of £100 a month. Our Girl Power project supports girls by encouraging them to work towards a higher level of education. Girl Power knocks down the barriers preventing girls from getting into school and staying there.

“Breaking the cycle of disadvantage is simple if we are able to engage girls from a young age with their education and help them understand why it's so important. This is what Girl Power does and why it's such an effective, life changing project.” Jemma Williams - Founder.

What is the Girl Power Project?

Girl Power is a holistic educational and wellbeing program for the most vulnerable young girls and women in Kumasi, Ghana. We work in partnership with local orphanages, NGOs, schools and families to identify girls and young women between ages 5-30, who live without their basic needs being met. Often, they find themselves living in danger in their current situations. We help them make a future free from poverty. Lots of the girls and young women we work with are homeless, orphans, teenage mothers or at risk of dropping out of school because of poverty and gender inequality. We provide everything they need to succeed and become independent in their futures.

Our 'Girl Power' project is about transforming the lives of the most marginalised girls who have suffered horrifically in their lives. In Ghana only 30% of students enrolled within higher levels of education are female. Our Girl Power project challenges this by providing a holistic education and care program, giving girls an education and aiming to increase the percentage of girls enrolled in higher education in Kumasi, one of Ghana's largest cities.

We focus our support on orphan and street children who are pre-teen and adolescents. We provide essential resources and remove barriers to ensure they are safe, happy and in education.

The Girl Power project currently supports 50 girls (aged 5 to 30) and their family members with the services we provide. The girls live on the streets of Kumasi or have come from backgrounds of absolute poverty prior to joining Girl Power. We offer safe shelter and accommodation for girls at our project base known as 'The Girl Power Centre'. The centre provides accommodation and a place to call home to girls who need it. Most girls come to us traumatised and withdrawn. Over time this changes with care, kindness and support given by our project staff and the stability and security the project and full-time education gives them.

Attendance at the Girl Power Centre makes a real, measurable impact on the lives of the girls we support. We know this because:

- **When older girls enrol on the Girl Power project, their average wage is between £0 and £2.50 per week. After a girl has graduated with us their average salary increases to £35 per week.**
- **82% of Girl Power students went hungry during the day before being enrolled.**

Ophelia is one of the girls who lives at our centre. After losing both her parents and her grandmother in a short space of time, Ophelia ended up living on the streets of Kumasi selling smoked fish. She didn't earn enough to pay for her school fees, and she had no relatives in a position to help her. She was living underneath a plastic sheet by an abandoned railway station. Three years later, Ophelia is happy and vibrant, she's confident and optimistic about her future. Claudia, our Girl Power Centre Manager says, "Ophelia really sits up and learns". "I call her 'Possible' because her story gives me hope that all things are possible."



How we help young women and girls live without fear:

We are so proud of everything the Girl Power project has achieved so far and we have ambitious plans for the project's future. Here is what we do for our beneficiaries to break the often-generational cycle of disadvantage:

- 1) Emergency short term and long-term accommodation for the girls and their families when they are in immediate danger.
- 2) Formal and vocational weekday education for 50 girls - Books, uniforms, equipment and all learning resources.
- 3) Weekly mental health and wellbeing nurture sessions.
- 4) School and weekend feeding for girls and their families - two meals each day of the week.
- 5) Personal, social, health education through weekend classes - Business grants and mentoring for Girl Power families.
- 6) Family business mentoring.
- 7) Access to our 24/7 manned Girl Power Centre which is a 'home from home' for the girls with our amazing Girl Power Social Worker - Claudia.
- 8) Small grants and support to help with medical costs and family emergencies.



COVID-19 and Girl Power

The emergence of COVID-19 impacted our Girl Power students and their families enormously.

Felix Danso, our Girl Power Project Manager, discusses how Girl Power supported our students and their families through the worst of the pandemic:

“About 15 months ago, the world was hit with the deadly disease called COVID-19. The mode of spread and its death rate was particularly scary for us in Ghana. This virus, in so many ways, has distorted everything the human race was about, from mass gatherings like sports activities, religious activities, schools and most of our businesses were forced to shut down. This all made life so difficult. And as it became a global pandemic Ghana was not exempted, we had our very own ups and downs with the virus.

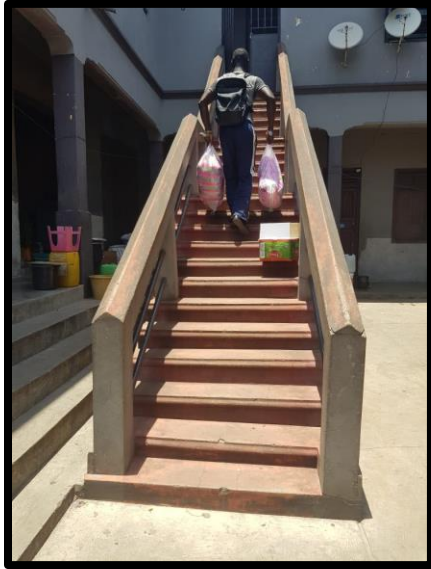
As schools were shut down and with reopening dates not known, our girls on the Girl Power project were not able to go to school. In turn, this meant they would miss their breakfast and lunch from school. This was so horrifying for us, as some of their parents had just lost their jobs from the pandemic and could barely find the funds to feed their families. So, our teams (Team Ghana and Team UK) decided to act. Staff at our Girl Power project dropped off food supplies and emergency items to all our Girl Power students and their families over the course of many months during the height of the pandemic. We needed to make the deliveries for the period when the virus was very intense in Ghana and almost every country was in lockdown, including Ghana.

From April 2020 to August 2020, we shared food deliveries to 35 households from the Girl Power project, without these emergency food supplies, life would have been completely unbearable for the families. We were supporting around 175 people every single day with food supplies. The feedback we received from the short term project was really positive

and we received numerous calls from the parents showing gratitude regarding the kind gestures we made to them, with some even telling us they didn't even know what the future held for them as we entered into lockdown, not having any savings and some suddenly finding themselves with no work as a result of Ghana's lockdown and the pandemic. So, I can gladly and proudly say that during the lockdown periods of 2020 we made a vital impact on our Girl Power students' lives and their families lives through the distribution of vital provisions."

Felix Danso - Girl Power Project Manager - Porridge and Pens.





Girl Power 2020 Stories of Impact by Claudia - The Girl Power Centre Manager:

Girl Power Student - Blessing's Story

"I met Blessing around the neighborhood, close to the Girl Power Centre. I noticed it was a very odd time to see a girl wandering around the streets alone. I asked her why she was not in school, and she told me she had been out of school for some time. Her mother was sick, and she was taking care of her. I was curious about her situation. I decided to meet with her family to see if we could help. I went to her house for a visit with her mother the next day. The mother was so sick when I met her. Blessing was taking care of her mother. Her father had died, and her grandmother was not around so it was all dependent on Blessing. I knew we needed to enroll her on our Girl Power project to get her back into school. Her father had died a year before her mother fell sick, so Blessing had faced this situation alone for a long time. She also has younger siblings she had to take care of. The mother had a small store in front of their house. Because the mother was so sick there was almost nothing in the shop. They used all their money to take care of their mother."

When Blessing was enrolled on Girl Power, we also gave the mother some funds to restore her shop and build up her business again. She got very sick after that, and it wasn't easy at all. She was bed ridden and every time I went to visit her, she was getting worse and worse.

Actually, just today, I have received the news that Blessing's Mother has died. So, as I speak now, Blessing is an orphan. Blessing's grandmother will be the one to take care of them all now.

Blessing is such an intelligent girl, she is very, very smart. She has to battle what a girl her age should not go through. She has already battled lots of it. She has been going to school since she's been part of the Girl Power project and coming home to take care of her mother. It has been very tough for the girl.

The Girl Power centre has always been there for her. She used to call me and tell me about how her mother is doing. When she called me this morning, I was expecting it to just be another update. I was even about to ask her why she wasn't in school. She just hit me with the news that her mother had died. It's been a very sad ride for Blessing. I've seen her, she is very optimistic about the future. That is such a good thing. In time, her reliance on the centre is the only hope she has.

She has been calling me to be by her side and I have been helping with the medical situation. I will now be rushing to Blessing's house to see how they are doing. The centre has been a blessing for her and now more than ever Blessing needs the centre. Now more than ever she needs our help and our support. No one else will be there for her. I pray she pulls through this strong."

Girl Power Student - Benedicta's Story

"I would like to talk about Benedicta. I was introduced to her, through her teacher. She is from a family with seven siblings. Sadly, her father died. The father fell so sick, so they used all the family money on his health. They used up all her mother's pension fund to pay for treatment for her father. They were left without anything when he died.

Benedicta had to live with her grandmother alongside her seven siblings, once her father died. It is a place in deep poverty. Her mother is still not working because she has no one to help look after the other children.

When I met Benedicta I realised how much of a good girl she is but how she would easily fall victim to teenage pregnancy or get into gangs because she has so very little. She is an extremely humble and respectful girl. Academically she has it. I made a move and went to the house. I took some food items because I saw they didn't have much. There are many in the house so no amount of food you give them is enough. I went there and I saw the situation and it was really disheartening and so we enrolled her to our Porridge and Pens Girl Power project.

By God's Grace, through the Girl Power Centre Benedicta was enrolled into school. She is in senior high school now. She has all the books she needs to do well. She is so talkative and friendly since being enrolled on the Girl Power project.

She goes to school as a free girl now. Previously she was given very little money to eat at school and any money she was given by her mother, around 18 pence a day, she would give it to her younger siblings so they could eat some lunch. She felt, being the eldest, she needed to make sure her younger siblings ate a proper lunch before her. So she gave it up for them, being the oldest. She was starving every day. Some days she asked a teacher for money to eat. When Benedicta was admitted to

the Girl Power project her mother called me and I could hear the relief in her voice.

The books we have purchased for her are being reused by her brother now she's gone up a year at school. Benedicta's life has changed now.

She's such a young girl, she should not have had to think about how to feed herself. Now that burden has been lifted. She goes to school with a free mind, with her provisions and with everything she needs for school.

One thing that has been amazing, is seeing that Benedicta has realised she doesn't need to be timid and shy. She can be confident and herself, especially around the other Girl Power students. She has a beautiful relationship with the other girls on the project, and she sees them as all her sisters now. She laughs a lot and a really funny side of her has come out.”

Girl Power quotes from 2020:

CELESTINA writes:

“Porridge and Pens built all the hopes a fifteen year old girl had lost. I am Celestina Ahemadu and I am that fifteen year old girl. I love the Girl Power Centre because my worries disappear whenever I’m there. The centre has literally changed my life. The centre is my peace and I look forward to always visiting the place. I feel safe in the presence of Sis Claudia and Bro Kofi. I love that the centre is a nice place for studies and I also love the sessions about lifestyle and education. Sleepovers are my favourite time at the centre. God richly bless you all for your contributions in a little girl’s life. I love you all.”

DOROTHY writes:

“Porridge and Pens had no centre when I joined but now we have a beautiful place at Patasi and I totally love the place. The centre has given us a place we can have fun, cook together, eat together and enjoy each other's company. Sis Claudia thank you so much.”

YIDA writes:

“Getting help from total strangers. These strangers turned out to be caring. I can’t even express these feelings. I am Yida Richeal Thompson and I have been with Porridge and Pens for about two years. I love the centre. It has a very big hall, a separate bathroom and a bedroom for all the girls. Auntie Claudia makes us feel at home. The centre is my second home and I am most grateful. Thank you.”

ANSAH writes:

“Big family, I love my sisters and I love Girl Power Centre”

ABABIO writes:

“I love this my home, Girl Power Centre.”

PATIENCE writes:

“ Sis Claudia, you are kind. Thank you.”

SERWAAH writes:

“Serwaah is my name. A girl of sixteen years old. I joined this organization about three years ago. At first the group was not having a centre so we were not able to socialize and communicate with each other. Now with the help of our leaders, we now have a centre which is located at Patasi.

I love this centre because the place is very comfortable and has a cool and conducive environment. Sleepovers are the most important to me and I look forward to them. I am very happy to be staying at the centre at the moment. There are provision of things such as books, food and drinks and many more. I love end of year parties as well.

Ever since I became a recipient of this project, all my basic needs are being provided. I feel blessed and honoured. Thank you.”

OPHELIA writes:

“I am very grateful for what Porridge and Pens has done for me and are still doing for me. Porridge and Pens built all the hope that I lost during my crisis. It really excites me to be a part of Porridge and Pens. Porridge and Pens changed my dreams and I have also learnt a lot from it. The Girl Power Centre has a calm vicinity for studies. It’s also a place to cast all burdens, the centre is lovely that, the moment you step inside, you begin to forget all your problems. For me, I feel like the world is mine whenever I find myself in that centre. Nothing bothers me when I am in the centre. I am really praying hard that God will one day give me the heart like Porridge and Pens so that I can also do much more of what Porridge and Pens is doing for me to others. I love you.

Sis Claudia is the kindest person I have met, she takes very good care of me and the other girls and has a caring family who treat us like their own. Staying at the centre is a dream come true for me.”



The Brightlingsea Academy



The Brightlingsea Academy is a small school in a very rural part of Ghana which is totally off the beaten track. The Brightlingsea Academy is named after the small town in Essex where the Porridge and Pens' founder and several trustees live.

It is the only free and disability-friendly school in the region. We have over 200 children who attend the school every day, who live in extreme poverty and deprivation at home. Without the Brightlingsea Academy the children would not be able to go to school because of their remote location and because of the cost of education in Ghana. Things like school meals, uniforms, equipment, PTA fees, schoolbooks and even the transportation to school, all add up. Considering the average wage for most of our families is under £1 a day, sending their children to school is sadly a real luxury.

The Brightlingsea Academy was built by Porridge and Pens in partnership with the local community in 2016. Initially it was a school for 30 children aged 0-5 years with four classrooms. Now, with growing support and

awareness, we have 12 classrooms, 18 members of staff and over 200 children aged 0-11 from nursery to primary school. What started as a small nursery is now a fully-fledged, bustling school which safeguards the poorest children and gives them an opportunity to complete their primary school education.

70% of children join the Brightlingsea Academy underweight or suffering from more serious cases of malnutrition. We provide free feeding at the Brightlingsea Academy, so every child has access to a free breakfast, lunch and a snack during the daytime. We provide the funds for the school to employ three full time school cooks, to plan, buy and cook school meals.

Before the pandemic hit Ghana, the Brightlingsea Academy was going from strength to strength. The school was a super busy bustling primary school. It was exactly what you would want to see when you put 200+ children together! Laughing, chattering and general happiness all around.

Since the school's establishment, 65% of students' parents have found employment.

Before the school's existence, children as young as one were left at home all day with siblings while their parents worked or looked for work. Childcare was a real issue in the village as it was mostly private, expensive and hard to come by. We have helped solve this issue by offering nursery and school places at the school. Spaces are always in constant demand. Since most parents are now able to work, knowing their children are cared for, many now choose to give back to the school and make small weekly donations to the school feeding program. This helps us make sure we can provide generous portion sizes and nutritious meals for all children. We feel it's a major step forward where the school and community work in partnership.

Porridge and Pens and the Brightlingsea Academy, the early days:

In 2009, before Porridge and Pens became a registered charity, our founder (Jemma) went to Ghana for the first time to volunteer as a secondary school teacher. While living and teaching in Ghana she met a local English schoolteacher, Ben, who was passionate about education in Ghana and its development, especially in rural parts of Kumasi where he grew up. Jemma spent lots of time in poor and rural parts of Kumasi where she witnessed low rates of food production, poor terrain, slum living, no electricity and poor access to toilets, waste disposal services, transport or even water sources.

Jemma and Ben spent the next seven years fundraising and working together to build the Brightlingsea Academy within the Assenua community in Kumasi. This area was chosen because it was a new community of people who had moved from the city of Kumasi, or more rural parts of Ghana, to start a better life with the hope of employment. There was no school in the area other than an expensive fee-paying private school. Jemma and Ben opened the Brightlingsea Academy in 2016, registering 30 children on the first day. In 2016, Porridge and Pens was officially recognised as a registered charity!

Why we decided to build the Brightlingsea Academy in the Assenua Village:

- Rural community in Kumasi
- Lots of children live with their Grandparents or come from a single parent family
- The average wage for a single parent family is 10 Ghana Cedi a day, a little over £1.50
- A new settlement of people hoping to make a better life
- Extremely poor terrain and without roads and infrastructure
- High rates of unskilled workers, particularly amongst the female

community

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Low rates of food production
- Extreme flooding during the rainy season
- Waste disposal services are absent
- Brightlingsea Academy is the only free school within the area
- Life is tough and hand to mouth living is the norm.

Education at the Brightlingsea Academy:

- The Brightlingsea Academy follows the Ghanaian education curriculum from nursery to primary school level.
- All resources, uniforms and equipment are provided for children so no child is left behind because of low family income.
- Enhanced learning opportunities with the new school ICT centre began development in 2020 when 13 computers were funded to the school.
- Weekly whole school sports activities
- Termly school trips to support children's learning opportunities.



Brightlingsea Academy student supported school feeding:

Families eat between one and two meals each day; this usually consists of breakfast and dinner. Lunch is not recognised amongst lots of the student's families because parents do not have the resources to offer it. This means 70% of children join the Brightlingsea Academy underweight or suffering from malnutrition. We fund free feeding at the Brightlingsea Academy so every child has access to a free breakfast, lunch and a snack during the daytime. We provide the funds for the school to employ three full time school cooks, to plan, buy and cook school meals. In a normal school year, we help provide over 100,000 school meals!

Since the school's establishment 65% of students' parents have found employment. This is a great success. It means some parents want to give back to the school and do this by making weekly donations to the school feeding program. This helps us make sure we can provide generous portion sizes and nutritious meals for all children. We feel it's a major step forward and shows the impact the school is having on the community. For most parents, they are not able to do this. We hope as time goes on and the school continues to make a difference to the livelihoods of parents, the school can continue taking small steps to support future sustainability.



Teachers' wages

Funding teachers' monthly salaries is a significant part of the work we do. The teachers and staff are dedicated and passionate about the work they do with vulnerable children. They are committed to making changes that will steer the path and shape a future. Teachers are trained and mentored carefully by the school's headteacher, Ben.



Teachers share their ideas and thoughts on school improvement and the future of the school regularly through monthly meetings and feedback reports to Porridge and Pens. Porridge and Pens regularly provides international teacher training opportunities for Ghanaian teachers to receive training from UK skilled and experienced teachers in areas such as teaching and learning and behaviour management.

Health

At the Brightlingsea Academy, we provide health insurance for every child. This means treatment for common illnesses is cheaper and seeing a doctor is free for every child.

Monthly nurse visit

A community nurse provides each child with a health check and recommends further treatments or doctor referrals. The headteacher works carefully with parents and careers to find the right treatment. In 2019 the school nurse detected two serious eye conditions and two cases of malnutrition. Since then, the school has been able to provide interventions and follow-up treatments following the diagnosis. We have also revised the

school feeding program and social welfare interventions to accommodate the most severe cases of malnutrition.

Social welfare support for families

We fund a social welfare officer to help resolve some of the following issues:

Issue	Intervention and resolution
Some children from the poorest families were not coming to school during the last few days of the week because their uniform would become dirty by then and the cost of regular bars of soap was too expensive for these households.	The school social welfare officer now provides these families with a regular soap supply.
A minority of children were walking long distances to school without shoes and came to school with injured feet.	Comfortable shoes are purchased for children who live far away from the school.
Some parents could not afford the transportation costs or the treatment for their child's illness despite using their child's health insurance.	Any medical costs that are very costly are paid by the school. We want to make sure children all have access to the treatment they need.
A minority of children were walking long distances to school alone and some are under the age of four.	The social welfare officer has arranged for a teacher who lives nearby to the children's home to escort the child to school safely.
The children from the poorest families were going hungry during	The Social Welfare Officer makes regular visits to homes after-school,

the weekends and school holidays when they did not have access to school meals	weekends and during the holidays. Basic supplies of food and hygiene products are provided for those who cannot afford them.
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How Porridge and Pens supported The Brightlingsea Academy through the emergence of Covid-19 in Ghana 2020:

Before the pandemic hit Ghana, the Brightlingsea Academy was going from strength to strength. Children were happy, healthy and enjoying school. The school had a real buzz and children, staff and parents all took great pride in their school. Parents knew their children were safe and cared for so many were able to find work to help support their families. The whole community was thriving and industry in the village was building.

What the school offers the children at the Brightlingsea Academy is unique. It focuses on every aspect of the child and their general wellbeing through various measures we have in place to ensure every child is considered and cared for.

Most of the children are from extremely poor families and live on very little. 90% of families don't have basic things like electricity, running water or even a comfy place to sleep. None of the children's parents or guardians own their own homes and this puts families in vulnerable positions with their landlords, who often come back to their properties without any warning. Families can be forced to leave with as little as a few days' notice.

Even before the pandemic, children's parents were earning very little, often as unskilled petty traders. This would provide enough cash for families to put food on the table each night. Families live hand to mouth each day, with little or no savings for rainy days.

With the emergency of Covid-19 in Ghana during 2020 the Brightlingsea Academy was forced to close on 22nd March 2020 and the country was placed into a lockdown. This meant our students and their families were, instantly and overnight, out of work. People in the village became scared and worried. Without a job to go to, this literally meant there would be no money to buy the evening meal. Within a week of the lockdown in Ghana, children and families from the remote village where the Brightlingsea Academy is based; were going hungry. Without the support from Porridge and Pens our students, who usually received two meals a day from the Brightlingsea Academy, were almost certainly going to suffer.

Working together with our truly amazing staff at the Brightlingsea Academy and our influential headteacher, Ben Antwi, we put together a plan to start feeding those who needed help.



Ben worked with the children's class teachers and kitchen staff to identify the children and families who needed emergency food support. Nearly 60 families were seriously struggling to feed their children and families after a week of Ghana's lockdown.

Almost overnight and with no prior planning or training, 18 staff members from the Brightlingsea Academy became dedicated food distributors and walked many miles each day in the hot sun to deliver crucial food items to our most vulnerable families.

This often involved walking through remote bushland for long periods of time with heavy loads, in order to reach their students' homes. The dedication demonstrated by staff was quite simply - incredible. It was not always possible for cars to reach some of the most

remote parts of the village and so walking was the only option.

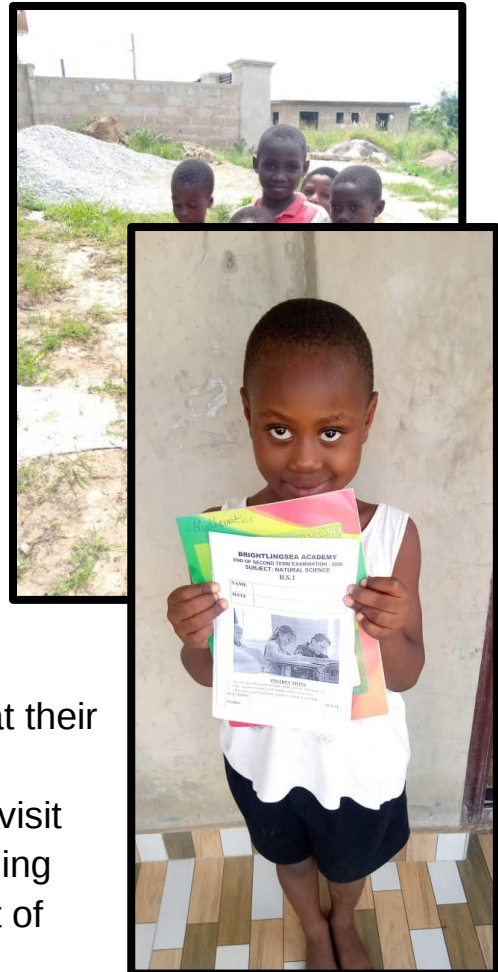
After nearly three months of means assessing and food distribution, teachers and other staff from the Brightlingsea Academy knew they needed to do more for students who had no access to learning materials, reading books or the internet. It was also unknown when the school was going to reopen.

Most of the students come from extremely rural parts of the village and are cut off from others. The teachers wanted to give their students something to do each day and prevent students from falling further behind. A change of tactic was needed as the pandemic continued to keep the school doors firmly closed.

Students' class teachers decided to visit every student from their class twice a week at their homes. They took any food supplies and emergency items requested on their second visit of the week. Teachers also spent time teaching and setting students up with work for the rest of the week. This meant all children had some access to learning and teachers could still assess who needed food and medical support. This strategy worked extremely well until November 2020.

Parents from the village needed to return to work as things slowly started to resume back to normal in Ghana but schools were still forced to close. The lack of childcare facilities was preventing the poorest families from returning to work.

Ben, our school's headteacher, decided to act in order to help parents get back to work. Together, alongside the school PTA, the Brightlingsea



Academy opened seven school outdoor outreach centres around the village. The outreach centres were in central large and open space locations within easy reach for most parents.

We provided one hot meal each day for all the children and childcare for students from the village. This enabled parents to get back to work and start living normally again.

The Brightlingsea Academy managed seven educational centres with nearly 230 children attending in total each day, until the reopening of the school in early 2021.



We are so incredibly proud of our staff at the Brightlingsea Academy. They acted with complete commitment to their students and the dedication and willingness to go over and above for their students every day, in extremely harsh conditions.

The success of the Covid-19 operation at the Brightlingsea Academy during its closure was largely due to the leadership of the schools headteacher, Ben.

Ben understood the needs of local villagers, students and their families. Without his deep level of awareness, influence and commitment, Porridge and Pens would not have been able to run such a complex,

sensitive and thorough operation which kept children and their families safe and well during the height of the pandemic in Ghana.



We are so pleased to have fully reopened the doors to the children of the Brightlingsea Academy and the usual scenes at our small rural school have very much returned. - **By Jemma Williams - Porridge and Pens Founder**

Reference and Administrative Information:

Porridge and Pens Ghana

Registered Charity Number: 1166497

Principal Address: 1 Chapman Close, Brightlingsea, Essex, CO70FS,

Trustees: G Weaver (Chair of Trustees), C Tibbs, J Meak, E Smith, P Tibbs

CEO: J Williams

UK Project Manager: L Smith

Bankers: Barclays Bank, 9 High Street, Colchester, CO1 1DA Accountants: Edmund Carr LLP, 146 New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 0AW

Charity Objectives (as stated in the constitution)

“To relieve poverty of orphaned, abandoned and vulnerable children, young adults and families, by provision of such grants and donations as shall be thought fit to orphanages, schools, individuals and families in Kumasi, Ghana, to improve their conditions of life”

Strategic plan 2016 - 2021

The impact we aim to achieve through our five-year strategy is a reduction in extreme poverty, gender inequality and injustice in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Our projects focus on the following three priority areas: Girls Education, Equality and Safety – Girls and young women are equal and respected members of society who are safe at home, in school and in their community. Food security: Children have improved food security with access to two free school meals each day Early childhood and primary education – Children from rural Kumasi in the Ashanti region of Ghana have access to good, free early childhood education. The trustees confirm that they have paid due regard to the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit when determining the activities of the charity.

With the effects of Covid-19 still working its way through Ghana and causing vulnerabilities within society and the communities we work in, we need to focus on rebuilding and strengthening our projects to ensure we can continue to keep children and their families healthy and safe and this shall be our focus over 2021 and 2022.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

How we work

Because our resources are so limited, we work hard to make sure our structure and management enables us to always benefit the poorest young people in Ghana. Since Porridge and Pens was established in 2016, the number of beneficiaries seeking support from one of our projects in Ghana has increased by 67%. Most of this growth has been in the past two years and only possible because trustees have invested in our charity's organisational capacity in the UK by employing two members of staff. In 2020 the Chief Executive Officer was joined by a UK Project Manager to support the charity's efforts in Ghana. Investment in our organisational capacity has continued to support the management of charity and projects and contributed to our most successful year to date, despite the difficult circumstances of the pandemic. We have seen our income increase by £63,946 which has allowed trustees to invest more into our projects in Ghana and support those most vulnerable throughout the Covid -19 pandemic. During the height of the pandemic, Porridge and Pens supported 1,000 people per day with food supplies.

We believe this important organisational investment will continue to support growth and sustainability in line with our charity's objectives and ensure we can be there for all our beneficiaries in emergency situations like we saw in 2020.

Our entire board of trustees and key volunteers continue to make an invaluable contribution to day-to-day management of our organisation. We have some very dedicated volunteers who offer their services to the organisation on a part time, voluntary basis. Our trustees and staff continue to work hard to ensure the smooth running of the organisation. Trustees are appointed by invitation from the existing board of Trustees. A Trustee will be appointed if there is a unanimous agreement of all existing Trustees. New Trustees will be given a copy of the Charity Commission's guidance for Trustees "The Essential Trustee" (CC3) and a copy of latest accounts.

Risk Management

Potential risk to the charity is considered and discussed by the trustees at the start of every year and regularly kept updated on any project risks by the CEO. We use our risk management policy and seek guidance from the necessary bodies to ensure compliance and limit risk to the organisation, staff, trustee and beneficiaries.

Sending money to Ghana

Porridge and Pens transfers funds to Ghana in two ways. SendWave allows the recipient to receive the funds instantly by using their mobile money account. This is a very common, safe and accepted way of collecting money in Ghana. We currently use SendWave as it has very low transaction fees and has always been reliable and fast. We send money this way when there is an unexpected cost or a project needs the funds urgently and unexpectedly, in some cases. As soon as the money is sent from the UK Porridge and Pens account it is with the recipient in a matter of minutes. This is one of the ways we rely on getting funds for our projects. The second way is via Transferwise. It is cheaper to send funds using Transferwise than through our bank, Barclays. It can take a lot longer to send funds this way, however the exchange rate is usually a little better on this platform. We try to send larger amounts of money using Transferwise so we benefit from a higher exchange rate. We plan in order to use this platform as sometimes funds can take up to a week to arrive in Ghana.

Partners in Ghana

Porridge and Pens works carefully with selected partners to fulfil the aims of our Girl Power Project. Through 2020 we have worked with Pen to Paper Ghana and the Shirl and Don Foundation.

Fundraising In 2020

In 2020, Covid-19 meant that we had to look at new, inventive and remote methods of fundraising. Having identified an immediate need for support for families who were unable to work, we launched an appeal online. Our supporters generously made 202 donations totaling £11,403.14. Online quiz nights raised £1,113 in voluntary donations. Each year we hold a local Fun Run. In 2020 our volunteers successfully adapted this to a virtual fun run which raised £900. We held a Christmas Big Give appeal



with matched donations for the second year running from the Coles-Medlock Foundation and pledgers from our very own supporters. They generously matched all the donations received during the appeal. One of our supporters was sponsored by friends and family to climb Mount Snowdon whilst two others climbed their stairs at home to match the height of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Porridge and Pens and 2020 donor support

Our main source of income continues to be donations by our generous supporters. They keep us going and respond in a crisis and to appeals for projects. They are the lifeblood of the charity, and we could not do what we do without them. We have many regular donors who donate each month in amounts from £7.50 up to £200. During 2020 monthly standing orders to our bank, from regular donors, totaled £19,558 and our regular website donations totaled £14,085.42. In addition, we also received lots of one off donations to our bank and our website. We can't thank them enough for stepping up every time we need them.

The Childrensalon chose us for their charity of the year after fundraising for us the previous year. They began with a donation of £500 per month but, following our COVID-19 appeal, they increased their monthly donation to £750. This was absolutely crucial to our COVID-19 plan. It enabled us to get learning packs to children at home, paid for meals at our seven centres and now funds enrichment to our free school meals and provides an afternoon snack to keep the children fuller for longer. In October they organised a Halloween cake decorating contest which saw creative entries.

We were excited to hear they had chosen to donate a percentage of their profits from Black Friday sales to two charities and that we had been selected as one of them. We were absolutely blown away when we were informed, we would be receiving a donation of £50,000! Once we got over the initial shock, it quickly became apparent just what we could achieve with this donation. The security it offered us at the end of the worst year was extremely emotional and the possibilities of what we could do in 2021 started coming to us. We will forever be grateful for what these unrestricted funds have done.

Rotaries and Clubs

We are always extremely grateful for the support and donations made by local Rotary Clubs. In 2020 Rotary Clubs also had their fundraising streams cut so we were very pleased that Chelmsford Phoenix, Mayflower and Hadleigh Castle still donated to us in a difficult year for all of us. Several Rotary Clubs made plans to help us with fundraising for the roof for our new classrooms and were able to work remotely with us to start to plan.

We were able to attend a few clubs and societies before the pandemic hit and we were happy to be able to give talks to several groups. Many of those clubs also made donations to us. These include: U3A, International Women's Day at the Brightlingsea Yacht Club, Inner Wheel, Chelmsford Mother's Union, Maccersfield Mother's Union.

Braintree Lions Club continued to support us with donations to pay for four places at the Brightlingsea Academy.

The Brightlingsea Junior School here in Essex, UK, held several fun events throughout the year that raised funds. They made a lovely donation to support the Brightlingsea Academy in Ghana.

Reserves policy

Porridge and Pens aims to hold general unrestricted reserves of £45,000. This amount is reviewed every 3 months by trustees. This amount is deemed sufficient to support projects, 2 staff in the UK and 20 Ghanaian staff, and all our activities supporting beneficiaries, for six months should no other source of funding be available.

Trustees feel it is especially important at this uncertain time to have the funds to safeguard our projects for six months at a time where covid risks are still uncertain in the UK and Ghana.

In 2020, Porridge and Pens needed to support nearly 600 people a day for 3 months with basic food and essential supplies during the emergency state of lockdown in Ghana. Sadly, many of our direct beneficiaries and their families lost all their income overnight as they were unable to work. The cost of basic food provisions rose by nearly 40%. Considering our direct beneficiaries and their families are extremely vulnerable, without savings and living hand to mouth each day, the trustees feel it is of upmost importance to hold enough in reserves to ensure we can deliver our projects and support with basic emergency provisions, should this situation arise again.

Trustees review the reserves policy every 3 months considering the changing situation.

Due to the unrestricted donation of £50,000 mentioned above, the charity ended the year with general unrestricted reserves of £55,928. In addition, the charity held funds of £10,000 designated by the Trustees to set up a catering enterprise in Ghana in 2021 as part of the Girl Power Project. Restricted funds of £30,774 were also held to be spent on the Girl Power Project and Brightlingsea School in 2021.

The annual report was approved by the Trustees of the charity on 16 September 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

Gregg Weaver

G Weaver – Chair of Trustees

PORRIDGE AND PENS GHANA
RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2020

Registered Charity Number 1166497



EDMUND CARR LLP
Chartered Accountants
146 New London Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 0AW

PORRIDGE AND PENS GHANA
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

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PORRIDGE AND PENS GHANA
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2020, which are set out on pages 2 and 3.

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.

Colin Barker

Colin Barker FCA

Edmund Carr LLP
146 New London Road
Chelmsford
CM2 0AW

16 September 2021

PORRIDGE AND PENS GHANA**RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS****YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2020	Total Funds 2019
	£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS				
Donations and gift aid	54,349	50,643	104,992	45,468
Fundraising	-	13,774	13,774	13,294
Grants	-	15,740	15,740	12,420
Sundry income	993	-	993	371
TOTAL RECEIPTS	55,342	80,157	135,499	71,553
PAYMENTS				
Grants - Brightlingsea School	2,295	29,251	31,546	28,083
Grants - Girl Power	1,927	20,132	22,059	16,701
Other grants	-	-	-	60
	4,222	49,383	53,605	44,844
Equipment sent to Ghana	-	-	-	1,326
Staff wages	9,230	-	9,230	13,692
Computer equipment	1,254	-	1,254	-
Fundraising costs (marathon entry)	1,400	-	1,400	1,183
Just giving commission	180	-	180	229
Trustees expenses:				
Travel and subsistence costs	-	-	-	549
Indemnity insurance	434	-	434	464
General and administration expenses	82	-	82	581
Printing, postage & stationery	144	-	144	-
IT software and consumables	316	-	316	-
Staff training	325	-	325	-
Travel	41	-	41	-
Bank/Paypal fees	682	-	682	-
Volunteer expenses	-	-	-	507
Marketing costs	259	-	259	445
Accountancy and payroll costs	1,479	-	1,479	600
TOTAL PAYMENTS	20,048	49,383	69,431	64,420
NET RECEIPTS	35,294	30,774	66,068	7,133
Cash funds brought forward	30,634	-	30,634	23,501
Cash funds carried forward	65,928	30,774	96,702	30,634

PORRIDGE AND PENS GHANA
STATEMENT OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES

At 31st December 2020

		2020	2019
		£	£
Unrestricted cash funds		55,928	30,634
Designated cash funds	Note 1	10,000	-
Restricted cash funds	Note 2	30,774	-
Total assets		<u>96,702</u>	<u>30,634</u>
Creditors and accruals		1,248	630
Total liabilities		<u>1,248</u>	<u>630</u>

Approved by the trustees on 16 September 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

Gregg Weaver

.....

G Weaver

Chair of Trustees

Note 1

The Trustees designated £10,000 in 2020 towards setting up a catering enterprise in Ghana during 2021 as part of the Girl Power Project.

Note 2

Restricted funds relate to money raised in 2020 to be spent in 2021 on the Girl Power Project and Brightlingsea School.

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Registered Charity Number 1166497



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PORRIDGE AND PENS GHANA
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