



Trustees' Annual Report for the period

		Period start date			Period end date		
From	01	08	2019	To	31	07	2020

Section A Reference and administration details

Charity name

Other names charity is known by

Registered charity number (if any)

Charity's principal address

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Mark Lickess	Chairperson		
2	Chloe Carrington	Secretary		
3	Cathie Watkins	Treasurer		
4	Alison Blackery	Manager		
5	Vicki Stoddart	Fundraising Co-ordinator		
6	John Watkins			
7	Beth Binns		to 14 th October 2019	
8	Gemma Kendrick		to 14 th October 2019	
9	Ashleigh Chapman		from 14 th October 2019	

Names of the trustees for the charity, if any, (for example, any custodian trustees)

Name	Dates acted if not for whole year

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information)

Type of adviser	Name	Address
Business Development Adviser	Praksha Bathia	Leicestershire County Council

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

Alison Blackery, Manager

Section B

Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document (eg. trust deed, constitution)	Constitution
How the charity is constituted (eg. trust, association, company)	Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Trustee selection methods (eg. appointed by, elected by)	Trustees are appointed or reappointed annually at the Annual General Meeting held in October through election of members present. Up to 3 trustees can be co-opted during the year, again through election by members.

Additional governance issues (Optional information)

You may choose to include additional information, where relevant, about:

- policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees;
- the charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works;
- relationship with any related parties;
- Trustees' consideration of major risks and the system and procedures to manage them.

Safeguarding, financial and operating procedures are in place to address and mitigate all significant perceived risks. Where new risks arise or are highlighted, procedures are strengthened accordingly and other remedial action (e.g. training) considered as appropriate. A comprehensive insurance policy, including employer and trustee liability insurance, is in place with the Early Years Alliance.

DBS and local authority checks are performed for all trustees and members of staff prior to commencement of trusteeship or employment. These are repeated as required by the relevant regulations.

Employees receive regular training updates on health and safety, safeguarding and EYFS requirements in line with the relevant regulations.

First Steps Playgroup is a member of the Early Years Alliance, which provides helpful advice, guidance, resources and training support. It is also in regular contact with the Leicestershire County Council Business Development support team.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or other benefits for carrying out their role. If a member of staff is also a trustee, the constitution is worded and followed to ensure that potential conflicts of interest and / or trustee benefits do not arise.

Section C

Objectives and activities

Summary of the objects of the charity set out in its governing document

The charity works for the public benefit, having as its objects the development and education of children primarily under statutory school age by:

- (1) promoting their care and safety;
- (2) promoting their education and promoting parental involvement;
- (3) promoting their health and wellbeing;
- (4) providing services to support them and their families and carers;

- (5) providing services to individuals holding membership of the CIO;
- (6) following the Early Years Foundation Stage (or equivalent) guidelines; and
- (7) furthering the aims of the Early Years Alliance.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects (include within this section the statutory declaration that trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit)

In planning our activities throughout the year, our charitable aims and the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit are at the core of all decisions made by the trustees. These, along with the safeguarding, EYFS and other regulatory obligations on us as a childcare setting, are factored into everything we do.

Our main activity is the provision of an early years pre-school setting, which is open every weekday during school term time. Four days a week it was open for morning and afternoon sessions, and one day a week (Tuesdays) for the morning session only. In addition, during this year we visited the local church on a number of occasions, took the children to sing songs at a day centre for older residents in the community, and held a Valentines disco for the children and their families to enjoy.

We welcome all children from the locality, regardless of family circumstances, age, disability, gender, race, nationality, religion or belief. Where a child's attendance is not paid for by the government's Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) scheme, we set fees as low as possible, whilst ensuring sufficient funds are maintained, to make the setting as affordable as possible.

Additional details of objectives and activities (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include further statements, where relevant, about:

- policy on grantmaking;
- policy programme related investment;
- contribution made by volunteers.

No grant-making or investment activities.

A written policy is in place to handle volunteers. Apart from staff contributing unpaid time towards fundraising activities and Committee members carrying out their trustee and fundraising duties, we received support this year from a student volunteering for two days per week as work experience towards her college course.

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year

This was a very unusual year which saw First Steps, like so many charities and businesses, significantly impacted by the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

COVID-19 – From 23 March 2020, early years settings were closed with the introduction of national lockdown. However, under government guidelines we were able to remain open for key worker families and vulnerable children only. We operated with a minimum level of staffing and the rest of the staff were placed on furlough.

On 1 June 2020, we re-opened for all children, but at only half our usual capacity, having a maximum of 16 children at any one time. We used a bubble system, with the staff and children separated into two rooms and no mixing between the two groups. This system continued until the end of the academic year in July 2020.

Staffing and Training – We had an eventful and busy year, with one staff member on maternity leave, two leavers and two new recruits, plus another new starter who was only with us for a month before sadly having to leave again for personal reasons.

In addition, we also welcomed two new apprentices to the team, one of them studying for a Level 3 in Childcare and the other for Level 2.

Prior to lockdown in March, we had a student undertaking her college placement with us for two days a week, working towards her Level 3 in Childcare.

A total of 7 staff members were furloughed between March and May 2020. We welcomed 5 of these staff back to the workplace in June 2020, with the other 2 remaining on furlough.

We were unable to undertake as much training as we would have liked this year due to staff shortages, together with our forced closure during lockdown. Nevertheless, we kept core training up-to-date and used our weekly staff meetings to provide in-house training as appropriate. Any areas of weakness identified were followed up through additional sharing of information from the management team, arranging external training, or supervision meetings.

Outings – We started off the year well, visiting St Giles Day Centre and the local churches at Christmas time to sing some festive songs. These were greatly appreciated by all involved and provided valuable learning opportunities for the children, who were able to identify sights and sounds in the local environment as we walked there.

Unfortunately we did not manage any further outings due to lockdown and Covid-19 restrictions. We look forward to a time when we can get back to making visits and taking the children out into the local community, which we believe really enhances their learning experience.

The Setting – We had 30 children transfer to local schools in July 2020 and began the Autumn Term 2020 with 41 children on roll.

We held parents evenings in November and February to keep families informed of their children's progress, which generated positive feedback.

Over the past year, the children have made good progress in their learning through play opportunities and adult-led activities. Those children with an additional need have also shown steady progress, thanks to a key person working closely with the children and families using strategies from their targeted plan.

Learning Journeys – We continue to use online learning journeys to make the children's experiences with us more accessible to parents. There is also the facility for families to give feedback and share achievements that the children have made outside of the setting – for example, uploading photographs of holidays or trips the children have enjoyed, and of drawings or crafts the children have made.

All of this can aid the staff to tailor each child's learning to their particular likes and dislikes, thereby enriching their experience within the setting. The process is running smoothly and is well received by parents. We do also continue with the traditional paper learning journeys as well.

The Finances – Our main source of income is session fees received via the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) scheme from Leicestershire County Council (for funded sessions) and from parents / carers (for unfunded sessions). In addition, we carry out a number of fundraising activities throughout the year to boost our income.

This year's fundraising was curtailed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and we also saw a significant reduction in our parent-paid fees during lockdown, when we were closed to all except key worker and vulnerable children. Fortunately, our government funding was unaffected, which has helped to keep our overall financial position stable.

Staff salaries form the majority of our outgoings, as might be expected for a childcare setting, and this expenditure continues to rise each year with statutory increases to minimum wage rates.

We had to furlough a number of staff when we were forced to close for lockdown in March. We were able to benefit from the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to recover some of this money, although specific government guidelines for early years providers meant that we could only claim for a certain percentage of our wage bill. In spite of this, we were pleased to be able to continue paying 100% of normal salaries to all our staff.

The uncertainty surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic and its potential impact on cash flow meant that we had to cut back on non-essential purchases, apart from items which could be financed from our designated Garden Project Fund. We were very grateful that one of our charity trustees kindly volunteered his time and expertise to undertake tasks such as painting and repairing the sheds.

During this financial year, we completed the transition of our bank accounts from HSBC to Yorkshire Bank. We now have three accounts with Yorkshire Bank: a main current account, plus two savings accounts – one for our reserves and one for our Garden Project restricted funds.

Fundraising – We have been unable to carry out many of our normal fundraising activities this year due to the Covid-19 situation. However, the events that were held prior to this were very profitable, particularly the Christmas Fayre in November.

We are grateful to all the staff and Committee members who helped with the organisation and manning of these events, and to the parents and local community who supported them.

Our event income was supplemented by other fundraising initiatives, particularly the sale of uniform items embroidered with our First Steps logo, as well as commission generated from children's DVD sessions held at the setting.

During the year we also received donations from a number of local organisations, including Market Bosworth Rotary Club and Mind, Body & Soles, which were greatly appreciated.

Moving forward – Looking ahead to the next year, we hope to continue to build our charity.

We aim to keep enhancing the setting by implementing new ideas and activities, to include some stay and play sessions which have been requested by parents, when we are able to do this safely.

We intend to evaluate how we can improve our service in line with Ofsted requirements and set up a revised improvement plan.

We will continue to support staff in their professional development by using more peer and paired observations. We hope this will further enhance the quality of provision at First Steps so that we can offer the best possible learning environment for all the children.

Future fundraising methods may require some imagination as we seek to work within ongoing restrictions. We hope to raise some additional funds by applying for grants.

We will continue to publicise First Steps in the immediate and surrounding areas and focus on keeping staffing levels as low as possible, without compromising the quality of care, to help minimise our outgoings.

Section E**Financial review****Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves**

Our policy is to hold a minimum of £10,000 reserve to ensure sufficient funds are available at any time to pay for costs in arrears, namely wages, payroll taxes and rent.

Our aim is to increase our level of reserves to between £15,000 and £20,000 as our financial position improves.

At the end of this financial year, we also held £1,163 of restricted funds that are to be used specifically for improving the outdoor space.

Details of any funds materially in deficit

Not applicable

Further financial review details (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include additional information, where relevant about:

- the charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising);
- how expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity;
- investment policy and objectives including any ethical investment policy adopted.

Our main source of income is session fees received via the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) scheme from Leicestershire County Council (for funded sessions). Where children are not eligible for this funding, the session fees are funded by parents / carers.

We do not have any investments.

Any surplus funds at the end of the year are used in part to continue building our reserves to a more robust level and in part carried forward to pay towards costs in the following year, including essential staff training and wage increases to ensure that the overall staff package remains sufficiently competitive to retain employees.

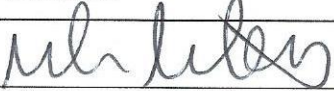

Section F**Other optional information**

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Section G**Declaration**

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	Mark Lickess	Cathie Watkins
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	Chairperson	Treasurer
Date	25/03/2021	29/3/2021



First Steps Playgroup

1167009

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01/08/2019



To

31/07/2020

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £	Total funds to nearest £	Last year to nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	733	-	-	733	480
Parents / Carers' Fees	18,671	-	-	18,671	33,652
Government Funded Fees	91,522	-	-	91,522	58,400
Fundraising	1,420	-	-	1,420	2,655
Grants	4,436	-	-	4,436	500
Event income	227	-	-	227	731
Other receipts	19	3	-	22	23
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub(Gross income for AR)	117,028	3	-	117,031	96,441
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	117,028	3	-	117,031	96,441
A3 Payments					
Fundraising Costs	314	-	-	314	595
Salaries & NIC	98,565	-	-	98,565	106,723
Premises Costs	7,176	516	-	7,692	8,713
Consumables & Equipment	1,108	308	-	1,416	1,774
Catering	878	-	-	878	1,129
Office Expenses	2,965	11	-	2,976	2,997
Event Costs	95	-	-	95	955
Staff Training etc	644	25	-	669	1,987
Insurance	717	-	-	717	710
Other Expenses	1,175	-	-	1,175	447
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub	113,637	860	-	114,497	126,030
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	113,637	860	-	114,497	126,030
Net of receipts/(payments)	3,391	- 857	-	2,534	- 29,589
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	41,760	2,020	-	43,780	73,369
Cash funds this year end	45,151	1,163	-	46,314	43,780

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	<div>Bank</div> <div>Cash</div> <div>Miscellaneous debtors / creditors</div> <div>Total cash funds</div>	<div>45,051</div> <div>100</div> <div>-</div> <div>45,151</div>	<div>1,163</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div> <div>1,163</div>	<div>-</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div>
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))		OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	<div>Details</div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>-</div> <div>-</div>	<div>-</div> <div>-</div>	<div>-</div> <div>-</div>
B3 Investment assets	<div>Details</div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>Fund to which asset belongs</div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>Cost (optional)</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div>	<div>Current value (optional)</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div>
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	<div>Details</div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>Fund to which asset belongs</div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>Cost (optional)</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div>	<div>Current value (optional)</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div>
B5 Liabilities	<div>Details</div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>Fund to which liability relates</div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>Amount due (optional)</div> <div>-</div> <div>-</div>	<div>When due (optional)</div> <div></div> <div></div>
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees		Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
Treasurer		C A Watkins		29/3/2021
Chair		M S Lickess		26/03/2021



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

First Step Playgroup

On accounts for the year
ended

31 July 2020

Charity no
(if any)

1167009

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2020.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

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

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed 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 (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Marzena Wright

Date: 26/05/2021

Name:

Marzena Wright

Working Week Ltd

Address:

2 West End

Barlestone

CV13 0EJ

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

**Give here brief details of
any items that the
examiner wishes to
disclose.**