

Trustees' annual report for period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023
Charity name: St Peter's Playgroup Charity registration number: 1167833



Names of trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office	Report agreed
Mrs Vivien Farrell	Trustee / Treasurer	
Mrs Brenda Harris	Trustee	
Mrs Anne Herbert	Trustee	
Mrs Gillian Keene	Trustee	
Mr Richard Harris	Trustee	

Summary of the purposes of the charity

Regarding the purpose of St Peter's Playgroup, the Trustees fully endorse the following as stated in the governing document:

“For the public benefit to enhance the development and education of children primarily under statutory school age by encouraging parents / carers to understand and provide for the needs of their children through community groups and by:

(a) offering appropriate play, education and care facilities, family learning and extended hours groups, together with the right of parents to take responsibility for and to become involved in the activities of such groups, ensuring that such groups offer opportunities for all children irrespective of their race, culture, religion, means or ability

(b) encouraging the study of the needs of such children and their families and promoting public interest in and recognition of such needs in the local area.”

Principles, objectives and ethos of St Peter's Playgroup

St Peter's Playgroup is a preschool originally established in 1983 by parishioners of the Church of the Sacred Heart Sittingbourne and was in fact a parish group before becoming independent then taking charitable status. The main objective of playgroup is that children from the local community should come and enjoy themselves whilst learning irrespective of background or financial means. The trustees are proud of the fact that playgroup always meets this objective. St Peter's Playgroup has always endeavoured to have the lowest fees (for those not eligible for government funding) in the local area.

Access has always been offered to any child in the local community irrespective of race, culture, religion, means or ability. The playgroup management, trustees, staff and volunteers are proud of playgroup's record of helping parents / carers to successfully prepare their children for transfer to primary school reception class.

St Peter's Playgroup delivers education and support as specified by the National Foundation Stage Curriculum. Playgroup is fortunate to have highly qualified and experienced staff who enable this commitment to be met.

Parents / Carers are supported throughout the process by being kept up to date with the achievements / progress of their child. If necessary, any area of concern regarding progress or welfare is reviewed with them and when appropriate, guidance is given regarding where and how further support can be provided.

The trustees are pleased to report that all feedback received from parents / carers has been positive and that there is frequent repeat business with siblings coming to playgroup. There is a good relationship with primary schools who have also made positive comments regarding the readiness of children for reception class.

All staff, volunteers and trustees have had appropriate data barring service (DBS) checks that are kept up to date. The staff that look after the children receive appropriate training as required. There is also appropriate safeguarding, data protection and management policies in place.

The trustees are proud of the fact that no child has ever been refused enrolment to St Peter's Playgroup on any grounds including special needs or financial difficulties. A concession that playgroup makes to parents / carers with children that are two years old, is that, unlike many preschool settings no fee is charged if the child cannot attend their usual session. The manager also has the discretion to take a flexible approach where a family is in obvious financial difficulty. Such circumstances are reported verbally to the trustees however the identity of those involved is never disclosed.

Summary of the main activities and achievements

Overview of service delivered

There has been a full programme of activities for the children. The staff have worked hard and the records show that every child has made progress towards achieving their potential. The aims of playgroup are to help children develop in a number of areas as set out in the national foundation stage curriculum. We are pleased to report that every child has made progress with what they can do whilst developing from an individual to being able to take part in group activities. Most importantly they all do this whilst playing and having fun. We have qualified, experienced and professional staff who are good at both putting individual childcare plans into operation and identifying areas where help may be needed. The staff and the parents / carers are to be thanked for their commitment to ensuring all is done to support the development of the children in their care.

We are pleased to report that playgroup has still been able to accommodate children with Special Educational needs (SEN) despite the fact that "One to One" funding is no longer available. The staff are to be congratulated and thanked for their work in supporting those most in need.

One interesting aspect of our work was meeting the challenge of having a number of children whose first language is not English. It is pleasing to report that they have all progressed well and enjoyed playing and learning as part of the group. It is noted however that the numbers on the role have reduced since the period of Covid and the leaving of the European Union.

Parents / Carers are supported throughout the process by being kept up to date with the achievements / progress of their child. Records are kept of each child's progress that are the property of the parent / carer, this allows them to see how their child is progressing in terms of both ability and maturity. When necessary, any area of concern regarding progress or welfare is reviewed with the parent(s) / carer(s) and when appropriate, guidance is given regarding whether or not further support is needed and how it will be provided.

Parents and Carers wishing their child to enrol with playgroup are invited to visit with the child first to ensure that the setting meets their needs. When first enrolled the child's parent(s) / carer(s) are invited to stay until the child has settled, this usually is a very short time as we find that children settle in quickly.

In September 2022, 14 children transferred successfully to primary school and we have had good feedback that they settled in quickly and happily to school life.

We are fortunate that our landlord, the parish of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Sittingbourne has created an outdoor area for playgroup use that has improved our facilities considerably. All at playgroup (especially the children) thank the parish for their generosity.

Issues that have arisen during the year under review

Our staffing levels over the past year have been good although our deputy manager left to take up a new position to support children with special needs. We wish her well and thank her for her work at playgroup. Another member of staff has taken up the deputy's position and has performed well. This reflects the high quality of our staff albeit we are fewer in number than we would like to be. Staffing is a major issue in the childcare sector. Fortunately, we have been able to keep staffing at a suitable level throughout the year. On the occasions when due to unexpected circumstances there has been a staff shortage, we have been able to call in suitable staff to assist on a part time basis, this includes appropriately qualified / experienced trustees who often give up their time free of charge.

The crisis in the childcare sector has been brought about by the government promising free childcare to parents / carers then only paying a proportion of the cost to childcare settings. This results in a shortfall of income therefore staff are underpaid for the responsible work that they do. We are fortunate to have dedicated staff who effectively subsidise the setting. It is therefore unsurprising that the childcare sector is losing staff to better paid positions in other sectors. Whilst we are lucky to have such dedicated staff, we cannot expect this situation to remain long term.

Finally, the trustees would like to thank the manager Mrs Willson for her tireless work to keep playgroup working to such a high standard, maintaining a good relationship with parents and carers and in particular making playgroup a happy and safe place for the children in our care.

Thank you to the staff and our community

St Peter's Playgroup is fortunate to have reliable and conscientious staff and volunteers all of whom give a significant amount of unpaid time to ensure successful outcomes for playgroup activities. These include staff getting in early to prepare the hall, staying after sessions to pack away and in their own time preparing activities for the children. The staff are to be congratulated for their conscientious approach, commitment and their innovative ideas which help to provide a rich and stimulating programme of activities for the children.

The trustees would also like to thank the parents and carers for their positive contribution to group activities without this it would not be possible for playgroup to function effectively. The feedback from parents / carers and their involvement in activities helps playgroup to achieve one of its primary goals of contributing to the local community.

Challenges

The challenges faced by trustees, management and staff of playgroup have been many over the period under review, the need to support those children with special educational needs (SEN) despite the withdrawal of funding for "one to one" assistance and the inadequate government funding rate (for qualifying children) are a major concern as both these issues present long-term risks to the charity's viability. The government claims to be providing free childcare, however this is not the case as staff are underpaid for the work that they do and playgroup relies on unpaid volunteers to carry out many back-office tasks. Additionally, the increasing bureaucratic demands placed on childcare settings to manage the SEN process and the demands of the regulatory systems has added significantly to the effort required to meet commitments. As a result of the above there is a shortage of experienced qualified staff in the childcare industry that may impact significantly on playgroup in the future.

Latest OFSTED inspection

The results of the OFSTED inspections carried out during the calendar year 2022.

An OFSTED inspection was carried out on 7 December 2022 and this identified improvements that had been made since the previous inspection. This reflected the excellent work carried out by the new manager and her team with all areas found to be good.

The trustees congratulate all involved.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspection

Inspection of St Peter's Playgroup
The O'Sullivan Centre Sacred Heart Church,
63 West Street, Sittingbourne,
Kent ME10 1AN

Inspection date: 7 December 2022
Overall effectiveness Good
The quality of education Good
Behaviour and attitudes Good
Personal development Good
Leadership and management Good

St Peter's Playgroup Financial Review

The Playgroup account ended the accounting year with a balance of £1,856 compared to an end balance of £16,579 in the previous accounting year. It is noted that fees have remained at a similar level to the previous year.

Inflation continues to be a major concern along with inadequate government funding however the playgroup manager and staff are to be congratulated for reducing wages costs by £2,402.

The largest increase in cost has been to the hall rent that increased from £10,450 to £11,400.

A summary of the audited accounts with the independent examiners report (completed by Lyndens Accountants [Kent] Ltd) is provided in Appendix 1.

Summary of income and expenditure 2022 / 2023

	Income		Expenditure	
	Government funding, Fees and Special Needs Support	£69,514	Wages	68,249
	Sponsorship and donations	£1,242	Rent	11,400
	Sundries, teas, raffles	0	Supplies	3,682
	interest	31	Renewables, Course Fees, Equipment, Insurance, Professional Fees, Marketing etc.	2,179
	Total Receipts*	£70,787	Total Expenditure*	£85,510

***Note: Totals rounded to nearest pound.**

The financial year 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 was another difficult year due to the after effects of the lack of enrolment of two-year-old children in previous two years. This appears to be the result of the previous manager making a decision (without reference to the trustees) of increasing the daily rate to be charged for two-year old children. It should be noted that two-year old enrolment is essential in the September term to replace the income lost when the older children move on to primary school. However, trustees and staff have worked hard to mitigate this issue.

The current manager has welcomed two-year old children and created a friendly and welcoming setting that has resulted in an improvement in the rate of enrolment. Additionally, she has developed an effective invoice system for fee payers

The manager and staff have developed an excellent Facebook page that is supported by a website and google account entry which combined results in considerable interest from potential customers.

At a time of high inflation, the manager and staff are to be congratulated in controlling both the cost of wages and supplies by taking care to avoid unnecessary activity and purchases. The manager and team are thanked by the trustees for their efforts.

Report summary and conclusions

1. Delivery of childcare

The manager Mrs Willson and her deputy working with the team and the trustees has improved the marketing of playgroup significantly. Additionally, a more effective and cost- conscious regime has been implemented. This is demonstrated by the reduction in the cost of wages by over £2,400 despite the increase in the living wage. Mrs Willson and the staff are to be thanked and congratulated.

A major issue is the increasing weight of bureaucracy when applying for funding, dealing with the autocratic demands of OFSTED and applying for special education needs (SEN) support. This can involve dealing with multiple agencies who all seem to want the same information on different forms.

Another concern is the removal of storage used by playgroup by the landlord. This has added considerably to the work required to set up and put away equipment each day. It will be necessary to employ someone to assist the manager each morning. It is also noted that the state of the hall is less than that expected, discussions with the landlord are continuing regarding these issues.

The delivery of childcare by Mrs Willson and her team has been to the highest standards and it is clear that the team has an ethos that puts the children first and there is a clear determination to ensure that they provide a safe environment where children learn through play.

2. Finances

A number of issues are being monitored by treasurer Mrs Farrell including the increasing cost of wages / staff training as well as the inadequate government funding that has not kept pace with inflation. The government expects childcare settings to make up the difference between the funded rate and a viable rate by charging parents / carers for other services (for example, provision of snacks, nappy changing etc.). There is of course a limit to how much income you can raise this way. For example, the increasing rate of inflation impacts on parents / carers ability to pay and playgroup's ability to charge a realistic rate for these services. The loss of "one to one" funding for children with special needs is a major problem as staff costs are so high.

The coming financial year will be challenging with increasing costs due to inflation, the inadequate government funding and the many issues impacting on all aspects of childcare could result in playgroup ceasing to be able to continue to provide the service to the community that has been available for over 40 years.

However, with the current team of committed professionals it is possible that we may overcome these challenges and build again for the future. Much will depend on the number of children who enrol at the start of the academic year (September) as the new joiners are needed to replace those who move on to primary school.

3. Acknowledgements

The trustees would like to thank Mrs Farrell for an interest free loan of £1,500 to enable wages to be paid in October 2022.

The trustees wish to thank the staff and volunteers who did all they could to reduce the financial burden by volunteering their services free of charge for session preparation and back-office activities. Without this support playgroup would not be viable.

Appendix 1

St Peter's Playgroup Financial Summary and

Independent Examiners report

Financial Year

1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
St. Peter's Playgroup

No (if any)
1167833

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

Period start date
01/09/2022

To

Period end date
31/08/2023

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Fees	69,177	-	-	69,177	72,739
HMS Milk	337	-	-	337	-
Special Needs Support	-	-	-	-	-
Sponsorship and Donations	1,242	-	-	1,242	2,244
Teas and Raffles	-	-	-	-	-
Sundries	-	-	-	-	2,116
Interest	31	-	-	31	1
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	70,787	-	-	70,787	77,100
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	70,787	-	-	70,787	77,100
A3 Payments					
Wages	68,249	-	-	68,249	70,651
Rent	11,400	-	-	11,400	10,450
Supplies	3,682	-	-	3,682	8,687
Insurance	467	-	-	467	419
Course Fees	331	-	-	331	300
Renewables	-	-	-	-	-
Sundries	316	-	-	316	1,346
PPS and Advertising	35	-	-	35	237
Legal and Professional	1,030	-	-	1,030	1,096
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	85,510	-	-	85,510	93,186
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	85,510	-	-	85,510	93,186
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 14,723	-	-	- 14,723	- 16,086
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	16,579	-	-	16,579	32,665
Cash funds this year end	1,856	-	-	1,856	16,579

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				
	Bank	3,652	-	-
CCXX R1 accounts (SS)	Petty Cash 1	58	-	-

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Debtors		-	-
Creditors	1,854	-	-
Total cash funds	1,856	-	-

(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	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

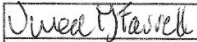
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

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)
Independent Examiners Fee Accrual		240	
Trustee Loan		1,500	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	VIVIEN M. FARRELL	27/3/24



**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**

Charity Name
St Peter's Playgroup

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31st August 2023

**Charity no
(if any)**

1167833

Set out on pages

1-2

(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 31/08/2020.

**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.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date: 26/03/2024

Name:

Jane Henning

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

LYNDENS

accountants

Address:

53 WEST STREET
SITTINGBOURNE
KENT, ME10 1AN
TEL: 01795 422565

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.