

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS

England & Wales · Charity number 1169002

Details

Other names NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2016-09-01

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address Quarrenden
Upper Red Cross Road
Goring
Reading
RG8 9BD

Phone 01491873548

Website small.schools.org.uk

Activities

Objects: THE OBJECTS OF THE CIO ARE:1. TO PROMOTE AND PUBLICISE THE BENEFITS OF SMALL SCHOOLS ACROSS THE PHASES OF EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND NORTHERN IRELAND AS PART OF A COMMON EFFORT TO ADVANCE QUALITY RURAL AND URBAN EDUCATIONAL PROVISION.2. TO ADVISE, ASSIST AND SUPPORT SMALL SCHOOLS IN PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES.3. FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS CLAUSE, SMALL SCHOOLS MEANS THOSE WITH 100 OR FEWER PUPILS.NOTHING IN THIS CONSTITUTION SHALL AUTHORISE AN APPLICATION OF THE PROPERTY OF THE CIO FOR THE PURPOSES WHICH ARE NOT CHARITABLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH [SECTION 7 OF THE CHARITIES AND TRUSTEE INVESTMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005] AND [SECTION 2 OF THE CHARITIES ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2008]

Activities: To support small schools in the United Kingdom

Classification

- **How:** Makes Grants To Individuals, Makes Grants To Organisations, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training
- **Who:** Children/young People

Geography

- Northern Ireland
- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£2,397	£2,652	-	-
2023-12-31	£3,412	£1,380	-	-
2022-12-31	£3,193	£1,551	-	-
2021-12-31	£427	£669	-	-
2020-12-31	£2,558	£1,163	-	-

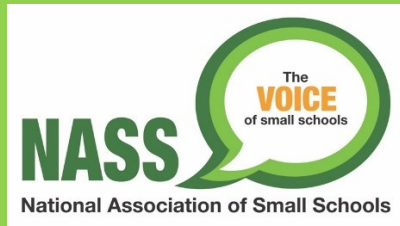
Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Julie Anne Kelly	Chair	2019-03-23
Beverley Rooney		2022-05-23
Catherine Tallis		2024-04-23
Gillian Seymour		2024-04-23
Joanna Redfern		2025-06-10
Judy Balderson		2024-04-23
NEIL SHORT		2016-09-01
Rebecca Jane Blackwood		2023-01-31
Sally Wright		2025-06-10
Sonia Innes		2022-05-23

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (Neil Short) 2024/2025

I am tempted to subtitle this report 'Building the Networks' as this has been the pattern for the time period since April 2024. It has not occurred randomly but has been part of a deliberate strategy, either as a group and through individual action, from all involved with the ongoing direction of NASS.

We have continued to involve members either as individuals or as schools through conversations, as part of our regular Zoom sessions, following requests for advice or guidance or through contributions to our regular Newsletters. Whilst still reflecting NASS thoughts on the major issues in the world of education, there have been regular inputs from schools highlighting a specific focus on life within a small school.

These have proved informative and illuminating giving colleagues across the country a glimpse into their specific context.

The development of Zoom as a communication tool has proved of great benefit allowing colleagues from across the country who might not be able meet face to face, the opportunity to share ideas, good practice or just have a good old moan!

Over the recent past we have tried to identify areas of focus for these twice termly meetings. These have involved members of the NASS team and the occasional 'outsider' giving insight into more general ideas and developments. We fully intend to continue to use these colleagues to provide a more specific focus on areas of interest and concern.

Through our links with Plymouth University and the growing interest in small schools as vehicles for Research, a special interest group was established to highlight these areas. Special thanks must go to Gillian Seymour for her efforts in making the original proposal and following through by organising the meetings and inviting contributors to the sessions.

As noted earlier we continue to work closely with individual schools but also as a more local level. Within the past year I have represented NASS at conferences in West, Sussex, Kent and Northumberland and been present online with colleagues from Nottinghamshire, Tower Hamlets and Cornwall. It has been gratifying to see

that even in the current MAT dominated landscape many Local Authorities are developing programmes of support and training for their smallest schools. NASS also continue to value their links with HfL and VNET who, although not within the LA umbrella, provide high quality training for their small schools.

An extension of the links with Local Authorities from across the country has been the development of a Zoom group involving colleagues responsible for small schools in these areas. Here they have the opportunity to share thoughts, strategies and maintain links concerning developments which might be utilised elsewhere. Organised through NASS this has already proved a valuable resource.

A more recent development has been a link with the Elevate MAT from North Yorkshire. This is one of several MATS who seek to provide specific support for their small schools. Discussions have been ongoing since 2023 and plans are now being developed to enhance this link more fully over the next twelve months.

NASS has been represented at two major conferences over the past year. In June 2024 I was invited to represent NASS at a conference organised by the Association of Education Advisers (AoEA) in York. This followed attendance at a similar meeting in London of the same year. It was of great value to meet colleagues from across the country and hear of the work being undertaken by AoEA. It is hoped that this organisation will be able to involve small school colleagues more fully in their work.

Last year, this report mentioned a link which had been established with the Foundation for Education Development (FED). In November 2024, Julie Kelly, the current Vice Chair and I attended their conference in Manchester. Again, it was valuable for NASS to appear alongside colleagues from across the country making the case for the role of the small school within the education world.

Just after that event I was invited to appear on a panel at the Schools and Academies Show at the NEC in Birmingham. The subject under discussion was 'Money Talks: prioritising Education Funding and Provision'. It was a valuable exercise extending our networks further.

A more recent contact has been with the Education Development Trust (EDT) and their work with small schools. Through their Schools Partnership Programme, they have been able to work with a range of small schools on a series of topics linked to their own contexts. We are delighted to make this link and hope this can be developed more fully.

We continue to work alongside Ofsted in our attempt to provide greater support and understanding for colleagues undergoing inspections. As part of their consultation exercise prior to the introduction of a revised inspection programme, we were able to deliver our findings to Ofsted in April 2025.

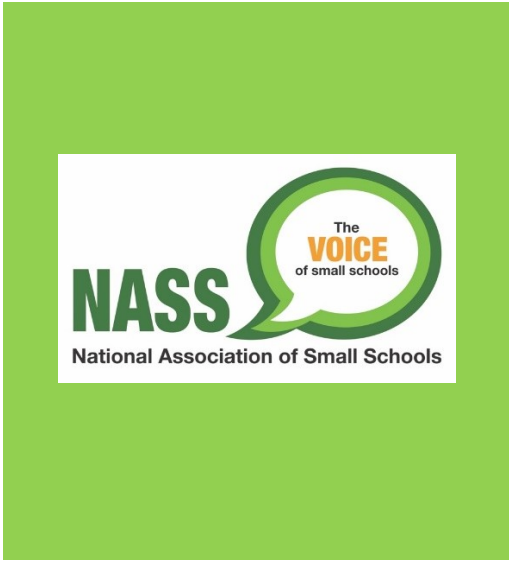
Links have been made with MPs, through a visit to Parliament, and at a local level, a constituency meeting. Here NASS material was presented, and pertinent issues

discussed. We will ensure that the new(ish) Labour Government does not forget small schools.

The online links mentioned earlier have also allowed for contact with international groups. Since Autumn 2024, there has been attendance at events organised by the Small Schools Coalition (USA) and the Micro Schools Network (world-wide). It had been interesting to hear of the range and type of small schools across the world and compare their experiences with ours in England. From these links came to invitation to make a presentation to the Micro Schools Network Annual Conference in Washington DC in May of this year – one which was accepted with great delight.

Work continues to enhance the communication links, and these now include the new NASS website. This has a range of new features to provide a broader range of information about NASS and incorporate the work being undertaken now.

Of course, all the developments made since April 2024, have relied on a dedicated and hard-working team who devote time, energy, experience, and expertise to the cause of promoting small schools and their value more widely. Along the way we have, unfortunately lost, the services of valued colleagues due to ill health. Our thanks go to Barbara Taylor and Kathryn Solly who served NASS for many years. They have been part of an evolving NASS story which still has far to go.



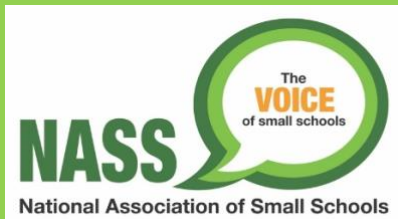
ACCOUNTS FOR 2024/5 (Andrew Taylor)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS				
Receipts and Payments account for the period				
1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024				
Registered Charity No. 1169002				
Receipts	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	2023
	Fund	Fund	Funds	
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Subscriptions	2397.00		2397.00	3087
Donations			0.00	325
Consultancy			0.00	
Conference			0.00	
HMRC			0.00	
Total Receipts	2397.00	0.00	2397.00	3412
Payments				
Newsletters	306.02		306.02	285
Conferences and Expenses	1302.45		1302.45	247
Web Site Management	130.00		130.00	120
Administration	354.14		354.14	584
Sundries			0.00	
ZOOM Renewal	155.88		155.88	144
Projects				
Other Travel	403.41		403.41	
Total payments	2651.90	0.00	2651.90	1380
Net of receipts/(payments)	-254.90	0.00	-254.90	2032.00
Cash funds last year end	10954.30		10954.30	8922.16
Cash funds this year end	10699.40	0.00	10699.40	10954.16
Represented by				
Co-op Bank	10954.30		10699.40	
	10954.30		10699.40	

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

Date and Time

and

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Meeting details

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of Annual Meeting held on
4. To receive the Annual Report
5. To receive the Accounts for the period ending 31st December 2023
6. Election of Examiner
7. Election of Trustees
8. Any notified business

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A re-reading of the report from 2022 would note that it began by indicating that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which began in 2020 was still being felt. Happily this has not been so apparent during the past year. It is to be hoped that we are able to avoid similar problems in the future.

That being said, 2023 has certainly been very busy and has seen the reach (and it is hoped the reputation of NASS) develop across a range of links both nationally and internationally. Whilst we are still very active in assisting small schools in danger of closure, we have been able to support colleagues in different settings.

We continue to maintain close links with small school colleagues across the country via our regular Zoom meetings which take place four times each term. A range of topics have been discussed either ones which arise from the participants themselves or via a presentation by an expert in a particular subject area. These links are further augmented via article in the termly Newsletter and these have become a vehicle for expanding the NASS network.

These Networks now include:

- British Educational Research Association (BERA) where the link established in 2021 has been maintained through the attendance at another online conference
- The Small Schools Manifesto, developed from the BERA conference in 2021 has been widely circulated both nationally and internationally and it always presented to members and other colleagues new to NASS
- Small school MATs – Aspire in Cornwall and Elevate in North Yorkshire are two examples where the growing move to incorporate small school more effectively into MATs has been developed
- Herts. for Learning is now a valued part of the NASS network and their specific CPD specifically directed at small schools has proved of great value
- Foundation for Education Development, an organisation covering the whole direction of future strategies for Education is now a part of NASS thinking

- Head teacher groups in Essex and Suffolk are now valued friends of NASS
- Colleagues in Cornwall and Nottinghamshire Local Authorities have made contact with NASS and close ties have been established via online meetings with head teachers
- A small schools Conference in Kent organised by The Education People in April 2023 was unable to be supported by NASS due to illness. A second similar event has been June 2024 when NASS will provide some financial support to enable a fuller timetable to be enjoyed
- A developing relationship has been established with the Association of Education Advisers. Although in the early stages this promises to become increasingly valuable due to the range of contacts offered by this organisation. Here it is a case of – watch this space.

NASS has always had close links with Ofsted and has been able to reflect the feelings of members at changes in the Inspection framework and the processes involved. Following on from adverse (and somewhat inaccurately presented) information about the quality of education on offer in small schools, Ofsted organised a working party to develop improved training for their inspectors. NASS participated in both face to face and online meetings of the working party from November 2022 until December 2023. New training was then introduced and reports and information from colleagues following their experiences of the improved inspection process will be passed on to Ofsted.

Prior to the working party meeting, NASS members were asked to provide their own comments about the experiences of the inspection process. These were simply cut and pasted, anonymised and passed on to the team. A similar process was undertaken in July when evidence about Ofsted was requested by the Education Select Committee of the House of Commons in July 2023. It was pleasing to see that this evidence was name checked in the final report of the Committee.

NASS also maintains close links with local and national radio and newspapers on a wide range of subject areas.

The links established following the BERA conference in 2021 and the great support offered by Dr Cath Gristy from Plymouth University has seen a pleasing rise in research involving small schools. Colleagues both nationally and internationally have joined Zoom meetings, individual telephone conversation and have submitted articles to the NASS Newsletters. It is hoped to organise separate Zoom meeting for these colleagues in the future.

This is one of a number of exciting developments taking place which will enable NASS to develop the links mentioned above even further. Twitter (now X for some reason) has shown a huge increase in followers and is utilised as a vehicle for many colleagues to seek support and guidance. The website too is undergoing significant improvements designed to meet the needs of both members and to provide a wider range of information to colleagues around the world.

Although 2023 has seen a number of exciting events it has not been without problems for individual colleagues. Significant issues of ill health have been seen which have caused colleagues to relinquish their roles within NASS. We thank them for all their efforts in the past as NASS could not have grown without their work.

At the same time it is important that the efforts of the committee should be applauded in providing the platform for NASS to make the progress seen in 2023. My personal thanks to all these who volunteer their time and expertise to ensure that the 'voice of small schools' continues to be heard. *Neil Short (Chairman)*

ACCOUNTS FOR 2023

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS					
2	Receipts and Payments account for the period					
3	1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023					
4	Registered Charity No. 1169002					
5	Receipts	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	2022	
6		Fund	Fund	Funds		
7		£	£	£	£	
8	Receipts					
9	Subscriptions	3087.00		3087.00	2837	
10	Donations	325.00		325.00	356	
11	Consultancy			0.00		
12	Conference			0.00		
13	HMRC			0.00		
14						
15	Total Receipts	3412.00	0.00	3412.00	3193	
16						
17	Payments					
18	Newsletters	284.89		284.89	187	
19	Travel and Expenses	247.00		247.00	415	
20	Web Site Management	120.00		120.00	120	
21	ZOOM Meeting Expenses			0.00	360	
22	Administration	584.09		584.09	349	
23	ZOOM Renewal	143.88		143.88	120	
24						
25						
26	Total payments	1379.86	0.00	1379.86	1551	
27						
28	Net of receipts/(paymen	2032.14	0.00	2032.14	1642.00	
29	Cash funds last year en	8922.16		8922.16	7280.00	
30	Cash funds this year en	10954.30	0.00	10954.30	8922.00	
31						
32	Represented by					
33	Co-op Bank	10954.30		10954.30		
34						
35		10954.30		10954.30		
36						
37						
38	D.R. Woodage					
39	Examiner			Date		
40						

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS

England & Wales - Charity number 1169002

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING
Date and Time
and
ANNUAL REPORT 2022
Meeting details

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of Annual Meeting held on**
- 4. To receive the Annual Report**
- 5. To receive the Accounts for the period ending 31st December 2022**
- 6. Election of Examiner**
- 7. Election of Trustees**
- 8. Any notified business**

Chairman's Report

It has been a quieter less frenetic year!

Whilst Covid 19 seems to have been more contained and the restrictions are fewer, there are still some concerns about the long term effects. This was mentioned in one of the latest Zoom meetings by a headteacher colleague and is something which we intend to investigate further.

These Zoom meetings have proved a very effective way of communicating with and between members across the country. It is very gratifying to hear colleagues sharing experiences and hearing how they grapple with the same problems despite the distances between them.

Zoom is just the latest addition to our methods of communication. Our termly Newsletters continue to provide detailed information about our work and have increasingly incorporated articles from all members of the school communities. In this way we try to provide a rich tapestry of life in small schools.

Elements of social media - Twitter and Facebook continue to provide additional information about our activities to a national audience and enable us to emphasise our message of the value of the small school. Our website is expanding slowly and it is hoped it can be developed further over the next twelve months.

Probably the most important aspect of the past year has been the development and publication of the Small Schools Manifesto. This document - as the name suggests - seeks to emphasise the importance of the small school within the national education landscape. Our thanks are due to Dr. Cath Gristy from the University of Plymouth for all her hard work supporting and writing the finished document.

The Manifesto was formally introduced at a BERA (British Education Research Association) Conference held in Liverpool in September 2022. Here a groups of academics with a specific interest in researching small schools provided information about

their current findings. There was also an agreement to continue meeting into the future. Since that time NASS has been pleased to learn of a number of other colleagues who are investigating aspects of small school life and many of them have either attended the Zoom meetings or written details of their research in the Newsletter.

About the same time as the BERA Conference, an article in the Times Education Supplement indicated that more small schools were deemed to be inadequate following Ofsted inspections. NASS immediately began the process of challenging these remarks and was subsequently invited by Ofsted to join a steering group to investigate ways of providing more detailed support for those inspecting small schools. The initial meeting took place in November and consultations will continue through the coming months.

At the same time NASS has continued to provide support to individual members who have been disappointed in the findings from their Ofsted inspection. This support has included personal visits, telephone conversations, e mails alongside full discussions during Zoom meetings. This support has been welcomed by all colleagues and was used to inform the Ofsted steering group.

Alongside visits to individual schools, links have been established and developed to a wide range of contacts across the country. Groups in Essex, Kent and Norfolk have added to the knowledge of what is taking place in those areas and provided valuable information to be communicated and shared. Individual colleagues at Local Authority level in Kent, Essex, West Sussex, Cornwall and Nottinghamshire have all been able to provide details of their work and share thoughts with others.

It is gratifying to note the growing interest in small schools and their work. In the past few months we have heard of three conferences - in Kent, Nottinghamshire and Essex which will take place over the next few months devoted solely to aspects of small school development. NASS has received invitations to all three and will be providing input on a range of issues.

NASS continues to work tirelessly for small schools. The past year has seen illness strike members of the Trustees and, unfortunately this has taken its toll. However, newer members have joined this

body and they should provide the energy, stimulus and knowledge to enable NASS to flourish into the future providing the support and guidance to meet the needs of all the members.

Neil Short - Chairman

NASS Early Years Report

Early childhood has sadly become a pawn in an economic argument to get parents back to work in the recent budget. The headlines were based upon the following:

- Working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year (or spread their free hours over a higher number of weeks), from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school. This will be funded by an additional £4.1 billion by 2027-28. The new entitlements will be rolled out in stages:
 - o From April 2024, all working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week
 - o From September 2024, all working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3 years old can access 15 hours per week
 - o From September 2025 all working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3 years old can access 30 hours free childcare per week

However, many early childhood organisations have called on government to prioritise fixing the funding for current entitlements before trying to add on further ones. The additional £204m for this year is not enough to address the severe funding problems in the sector - based on their own estimates, the actual figure needed is probably closer to £2bn. Therefore, it seems likely to expect provider to continue to struggle with their viability.

This will be further compounded when the additional entitlements are introduced if these are paid at a similar hourly rate to the current funded 2-year-old offer, as the more hours are paid for at government rates, the fewer parent-paid hours are available to generate cross-subsidy. Parent-paid hours are likely to cost even more, and additional charges to become higher and more widespread. Some providers may not be able to afford to offer the new funded entitlements.

The decision to make the entitlements only available to parents working at least 16 hours at a minimum wage is not well thought

through. It mirrors the current 30 hours entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds, which is premised on the universal 15 hours, and assumes that parents only need support for additional hours if working longer hours (which already overlooked that childcare is needed to cover travel times as well as working hours). In the absence of a universal 15 hour offer for under 3s, parents working fewer hours will not qualify - even though their lower incomes will increase the need for support. This may be offset by childcare support through Universal Credit. The changes to the latter are welcome, but as this will only be paid up front for new claimants or those extending their hours, many will still be left having to claim in arrears.

With a workforce recruitment and retention crisis already impacting the sector, the only workforce measure here is a bonus for new childminders, which is heavily weighted towards childminders joining agencies instead of being Ofsted registered. This seems unlikely to offset the dramatic and long-term decline in the number of child minders, or to change childminders' preferences to be Ofsted-registered rather than belonging to agencies. There is no mention of how the wider workforce will be increased and upskilled to deliver the increased number of places for babies and children under the new entitlements, which should surely be a priority.

While I welcome the ambition of this government to support working parents and put in place early childhood education and care from the end of maternity leave until the start of school (and to provide wraparound care for children in school), the detail of these policies leaves much to be desired. The current system does perpetuate the problems of underfunding, which in turn is impacting on workforce recruitment and retention, provider viability and the availability of high quality, affordable early education provision accessible to all.

Kathryn Solly - Early Years Champion

Headteacher Liaison Officer Report

I worked on the question for the review document sent out by the NAHT 'UNDER PRESSURE The Financial Squeeze on small schools

in England'.I sent this to the committee, I can send it again for inclusion or signposting in the newsletter.

Representing NASS and the NAHT I now have a place at the table with OFSTED to discuss their impact on small schools and to challenge the secondary based curriculum deep dives when so many of our members lead on so many subjects. However, all has gone quiet since the Ruth Parry suicide and OFSTED are laying low. Before the end of term, I am travelling to Reading to support the schools in the same area who knew her to show support.

At the NAHT conference at the end of April my motion is all about small schools and OFSTED. The Motion theme is '*Sustainability of small and rural school's*'. The intended outcome is the wellbeing of leaders of small and rural schools is supported by appropriate inspection procedures that take into account the distinctive context of these settings. The wording of the motion is: Last year, Conference called on National Executive to continue the campaign for sustainable funding for all small and rural schools. However, whilst small and rural schools continue to be the lifeblood of many communiti4s across all nations, the complexities of leading them remains. They are subject to the same demands as larger schools, however, both school leaders and teachers have to fulfil multiple roles. The impact of this on well-being continues to be alarming and, we feel, unsustainable. Conference calls on National Executive to campaign for recognition of the unique context of small and rural schools when considering mechanisms for school inspection, appropriate funding and the well-being of staff and communities.

Julie Kelly - Headteacher Liaison Officer

Accounts for 2022

**Receipt and Payments account for the period
1st January 2021 to 31st December 2022
Registered Charity No. 1169002**

	Unrestricted Funds	Total Funds	2021
<u>£</u>			
Receipts			
Subscriptions	2837.00	2837.00	427

Donations	355.68	355.68	
Total Receipts <u>427</u>	<u>3192.68</u>	<u>2192.68</u>	—
Payments			
Newsletters 141	186.84	186.84	
Travel and Expenses	414.65	414.65	
Web Site Management	120.00	120.00	
ZOOM Meeting Expenses	360.00	360.00	
School Visits			261
Administration	349.30	349.30	267
ZOOM Renewal	119.90	119.90	
Total Payments <u>669</u>	<u>1550.69</u>	<u>1550.69</u>	—
Net of receipts/payments -242	1641.99	1641.99	
Cash funds last year end <u>7522</u>	<u>7280.17</u>	<u>7280.17</u>	
Cash funds this year end <u>7280</u>	<u>8922.16</u>	<u>8922.16</u>	
Represented by			
Co-op Bank	<u>8922.16</u>	<u>8922.16</u>	

Signed DR Woodage - Examiner

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS

England & Wales - Charity number 1169002

Accounts



**NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING
MONDAY 23rd MAY 2022
and
ANNUAL REPORT 2021
Meeting to be held on ZOOM at
18.00**

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of Annual Meeting held on Saturday 14th March 2021**
- 4. To receive the Annual Report**
- 5. To receive the Accounts for the period ending 31st December 2021**
- 6. Election of Examiner**
- 7. Election of Trustees**

8. Any notified business

Chairman's Report

In my report last year I wrote the following -

'As I write these words children across the country are back in classrooms, eager to see friends, teaching and support staff and all involved with their school. It is to be hoped that this will be the final lockdown and all involved with small schools across the country can return to 'normal' life again.'

and I hoped that we had seen the last of Covid-19.

Unfortunately, this was not the end. The past few months have seen rising cases within schools with many more pupils, teachers and other staff absent. Indeed, we had three cases over the past month where the individual school had to be closed for periods of up to a week. The current Easter holiday, will, hopefully enable the rate of transmission to be slowed although the reduction of rules, the removal of free Lateral Flow Tests and the widespread sense of 'freedom' may not be totally beneficial in this respect. We can only hope that the summer may be a time when our small school colleagues can, finally, return to some form of normality.

That being said, it has been a very busy and productive year for NASS. The long-delayed conference, now under the auspices of BERA (British Educational Research Association), took place online on June 15 and was attended by an international audience of teachers, academics and researchers. A number of presentations were made and each served to highlight the importance of the small school. Contacts were made to made from members of the audience and these have added to the ever growing network of colleagues across the country.

The major contribution by NASS was made in partnership with Dr. Cath Gristy from Plymouth University and she has become a valued friend since that time. Since June work has been undertaken together on the production of a Small Schools Manifesto which will raise the profile within the world of education. As I write the document is being finalised and will be available for distribution in May. Thanks are due to all colleagues who have provided ideas, comments and support during the past months.

A new partner in this project has been the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT). Building on their work with small schools, meetings have taken place to use the experience and expertise of both parties. The launch, publicity and distribution of the Manifesto is likely to be the first stage in the relationship and we look forward to a long and profitable partnership into the future.

The pandemic proved the value of online learning and communication. Aside from the examples noted above, the Zoom meetings where colleagues from across the country share thoughts, ideas and experiences have continued on a regular basis. These have proved to be very popular and we intend to continue into the future. Links to other organisations have also enabled colleagues to attend webinars on OFSTED and examples of international research.

As a result of discussions at one of these meetings, we organised two sessions dealing with the issue of Assessment in Early Years. We were able to secure the services of Ruth Swailes, an expert in this area and her sessions proved to be very popular. It is our intention to hold similar events in the future.

The online meetings have, unfortunately, been the main point of contact between ourselves and schools. In the past year very few visits have taken place, others have been scheduled but have needed to be postponed or cancelled due to Covid, Ofsted or other factors. It is hoped that more visits will take place over the coming months as this is a valuable part of NASS life with positive benefits for schools and ourselves.

Online meetings have enabled NASS to remain an active member of the School Food Plan Alliance providing an insight into the problems facing colleagues in the provision of meal. This partnership will continue into the future and we are always happy to receive insights into the work in individual schools.

These insights across a wide range of areas continue to provide the bulk of our termly Newsletters. The ever changing subject matters, the mix of news, opinion and a growing range of experiences have all ensured that members are kept up to date. We thank all those who have contributed over the past year and welcome ideas which will improve this form of communication.

Just before the start of the Easter holiday, the DfE published two consultation papers about the future of Education, both of which

have implications for small schools. We will study these and then give an indication of the NASS position within the near future.

As always, I am grateful for the work of colleagues on the NASS committee who work tirelessly to support small schools. The past year has proved very demanding as illness has taken a toll on many individuals. Despite these setbacks I believe that NASS continues to fight for small schools and their rightful and valued place in the world of education.

Neil Short - Chairman

NASS Early Years Report

Another year has passed by since the pandemic created a huge impact upon our personal and professional lives. With the children and young people were seen as 'low risk' they were placed at the bottom of the pile when vaccinations were being considered. Schools have had to cope since the latest virus variant with the 'most infectious' beings dominating their environments. Staff sickness; concerns over ratios; children who have never returned to school due to family members being immunosuppressed; families taking holidays under the guise of being affected by Covid - schools have seen it all and more. These challenges were made far more challenging by changing government guidelines and U-turns being issued too last minute for leaders in schools and settings meaning that those who had already sorted out their plans had to re-sort them yet again. My huge respect goes out to you all.

The pandemic has not been the only reason for change as the impact of the new Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the revision of the non-statutory Development Matters in our schools has started to be felt. There were strong messages about reducing workload and focussing on the children, but many questions remain especially about the focus on progression. However, a narrow, imposed curriculum does not lead to effective teaching as we have known for a very long time. The EYFS reforms and new Ofsted framework ask practitioners to spend less time collecting data. The agendas of 'catch up' and filling their 'lockdown gap' continue to pressurise schools. Most schools have used a sensitive approach to children's return with an awareness that some children will need far more than 'academic support' before they are able to really learn. However, the Annual Report of 2021 Ofsted celebrated the schools who had "*refocusing the curriculum on areas where children had fallen behind, for*

example mathematics and communication". So, we need to think carefully about what we want children to know and be able to do.

There is an urgent need for current policy and guidance to be well-informed about early childhood development and neuroscience. This does not mean restricting young children to pre-determined outcomes but to remember to reflect on them holistically under the Characteristics of Effective Learning. The other danger of the emphasis on 'typical development' is that it can lead to a deficit model to children with SEND. Overall the effect is to pressurise and limit what is taught by those teaching the younger children. Alongside are the top-down pressures of 'deep dives', and curriculum leadership expectations on very small staff and the ever-present pressure of Ofsted inspection where there appears to be an agenda of downgrading schools previously rated 'outstanding'.

Since 'Bold Beginnings' (2017) the pressure to formalise learning through a variety of government sponsored phonics and numeracy schemes has increased. Young children in the Foundation Stage are not supposed to learn under the National Curriculum but sadly increasingly children as young as 4 years are experiencing it daily. Sadly, this again typifies a policy driven approach by political imperatives rather than real evidence. If you want a document created by a wide range of experts in early childhood in the Early Years Coalition, then look no further than Birth to 5 Matters. This is guidance is: 'by the sector, for the sector.'

The revised EYFS has also encouraged the hazier use of 'noticing' on a day-to-day basis rather than in-depth 'observing' as a professional skill and understanding. Much of this emphasis has come from the reduced workload agenda. Workload will reduce if we stop the unnecessary recording of observations but much will be lost if we stop observing children and their learning, whilst making professional judgements about how to support and extend it.

The Maintained Nursery Schools whose particular plight I am very aware of continue to decline in numbers. Some by being absorbed into local primary schools and MATS and some joined together under an executive Headteacher. However, the very sad death of Jack Dromey M.P. for Erdington is a loss for all MNS. For the last 6 years Jack has campaigned tirelessly and had become a real advocate for the early years and MNS. He garnered press interest, arranged rallies and supported the APPG meetings. His energy and

enthusiasm were unbridled. He is such a loss but he would want us to continue campaigning.

Kathryn Solly - Early Years Champion

Headteacher Liaison Officer Report

Now I'm on the National Executive for the NAHT I'm in a much better position to push on the promotion of the protection of small schools through the union. I picked up that they had slipped with follow up during the pandemic, so there have been several meetings including Neil to share our manifesto and to prepare another questionnaire to go out about small schools. This is in collaboration with NASS. I attended a campaign workshop in Birmingham and was included in a campaign video on funding in which I talked about small schools, (I think I've forwarded it to you). We hope to put together a parliamentary group to take our case to the government. In addition, I attended a union meeting with Wales and I'm seconding their motion on funding for small schools on 30 April at conference.

Through the union I was put in contact with Jane Hough at the DfE and put together a new section in their reviewed Workload Toolkit, based on my school, as they had no examples of small schools in it. I also attended an online webinar with OFSTED talking about inspecting small schools.

For the first time in Hampshire, we have a small school closing because it had a poor Ofsted and numbers dropped. I fear this is the beginning of a trend and the White Paper proposal that all schools are part of a MAT or Trust by 2030 will be the final nail in the coffin, as most small schools are now struggling financially and will not be seen as economically viable by large chains. I joined the Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Education, and the new Bishop Jonathan visited my school. However, I was dismayed when he spotted how many children I had on roll and asked if we were 'viable', which was very disappointing. I said yes and gave him our NASS manifesto and I'm now on a working party on the board to thrash out the implications of the White Paper on church schools.

Unfortunately, it states that the articles of any MAT they join had to be mostly Christian, which leaves in doubt the hope of a LA MAT, but at least I'm positioned to argue the case.

I continue to engage with other small school heads on Twitter as well.

Julie Kelly - Headteacher Liaison Officer

Treasurers Report

Because of Covid financially 2021 was a very quiet year. We received subscription income of £427 from new members and personal donations. As reported in the last report we decided to waive subscriptions in recognition of the pressures created by the Pandemic. Expenditure totalled £669.17 which gave a loss in the year of £242.17. Our bank balance at the end of the year stood at £7,280.17.

Andrew Taylor - Treasurer

Receipt and Payments account for the period 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2021 Registered Charity No. 1169002

	Unrestricted Funds	Total Funds	2020
£			
Receipts			
Subscriptions	427.00	427.00	2475
HMRC			83
Total Receipts	<u>427.00</u>	<u>427.00</u>	
2558			
Payments			
Meetings			149
Newsletters	140.63	140.63	
136			
Chairman's Expenses			
Information Expenses			
School Visits	261.60	261.60	312
Governor Training			
Administration	266.94	266.94	566
Conferences			
Total Payments	<u>669.17</u>	<u>669.17</u>	
1163			

Net of receipts/payments	-242.17	-242.17
1394		
Cash funds last year end	<u>7522.34</u>	<u>7522.34</u>
6128		
Cash funds this year end	<u>7504.11</u>	<u>7280.17</u>
7522		
Represented by		
Co-op Bank	<u>7280.17</u>	<u>7280.17</u>

Signed DR Woodage - Examiner

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SMALL SCHOOLS

England & Wales - Charity number 1169002

Accounts



**NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING
TUESDAY 27th APRIL 2021
and
ANNUAL REPORT 2020
Meeting to be held on ZOOM at
18.00**

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of Annual Meeting held on Saturday 14th March 2020**
- 4. To receive the Annual Report**
- 5. To receive the Accounts for the period ending 31st December 2020**
- 6. Election of Trustees**
- 7. Any notified business**

Chairman's Report

I began my report a year ago with the following - 'These words are written during turbulent times.'

This was largely in response to the weather conditions when a series of violent storms devastated large swathes of the country with torrential rain, gale force winds, flooding and loss of life. I then continued with the following -

'The latest in a series of almost biblical type events both here and across the world has come with a virus which has the potential to spread rapidly and with loss of life. Again, there has been an impact on schools with some closures and restrictions on travel. The full effects will only become clear over the coming weeks.'

Little did we know how devastating the impact of this virus would be.

Not only has there been a loss of life which would have seemed impossible at that time but the impact upon what was seen as normality one year ago has been seen across the whole strata of society.

The disruptions to 'normality' have been keenly felt in our schools. Rising rates of infection and, it has to be said, conflicting advice from Government, have resulted in three periods of school closure for varying periods of time. The term 'school closure' was misinterpreted by many in the press as the vast majority of schools did remain open to the children of key workers. The swift transition to remote, online learning created many problems but schools quickly 'stepped up to the plate' and provided pupils with a range of strategies to ensure they were able to access a high-quality educational experience.

Colleagues in schools across the country will have recognised the impact of the past twelve months on their own settings and at the support they have received from their parents, communities, Local Authorities and the DfE, amongst others during this time. Much has been written about the 'lost learning' of their pupils and all sorts of solutions have been mooted to address these perceived needs. That is for the future and it is hoped that there will be no 'knee jerk' reaction but a carefully thought-out process which will meet the needs of schools for the future.

But what of NASS during this past year.

Initial thoughts of what was going to be missed during the year in terms of school visits, conferences, Small Schools Month and the close contact with colleagues across the country were soon replaced with other considerations.

It was decided to utilise the usual NASS Newsletters as vehicles to report specifically about Covid-19. From April to February four such documents were produced based on responses to questionnaires sent to members and other colleagues. These have proved very informative and demonstrated the high degree of commitment, expertise and ingenuity from schools in meeting this crisis. The documents have been circulated to colleagues across the world of

education and have been vital in proclaiming the role played by the small school as an integral part of their local community.

NASS also made the leap into the unknown world of technology by embracing the potential of ZOOM meetings. Initially used to enable members of the committee to communicate, there had been a number of meetings where colleagues from across the country have been able to share thoughts, experiences and just 'network'. These have proved very popular, and this AGM will be another step forward.

A conference which fell foul of the Covid-19 situation was one which had been originally planned for June 2020. Later re-organised for August, this was to have been a major event in partnership with Plymouth Marjon University and BERA (British Educational Research Association) and the forced cancellations were very disappointing. Fortunately, technology has again been utilised to enable this event to take place to a wider audience. 'Small school, big issue? Exploring the future for small schools in rural and coastal England' will now take place on Tuesday June 15. Full details should now be with you and it is hoped that many colleagues will be able to participate in this important event.

Technology has also enabled NASS membership of the School Food Plan Alliance (SFPA) to continue and to establish links with schools and individuals across the country. It is clear that the ways of working both for schools and for NASS will evolve as a result of this pandemic although there will be nothing to compare with the joy of meeting colleagues and visiting their schools when we are able to do so.

NASS also joined the great world of Twitter, which has provided many opportunities for communication and support. The 'Small School Chat Group' has proved of immense value in enabling colleagues to co-operate in translating the complexities of DfE guidance into practical solutions within their own schools (and providing opportunities for a good moan!!)

As always, I am immensely grateful to my friends on the NASS committee for their remarkable efforts during the pandemic. At a time when their lives have been on hold, their capacity to be a source of guidance, advice, counsel and sheer hard work have been amazing as you will see from their individual reports to this meeting. My thanks on your behalf to them all.

As I write these words children across the country are back in classrooms, eager to see friends, teaching and support staff and all involved with their school. It is to be hoped that this will be the final lockdown, and all involved with small schools across the country can return to 'normal' life again. As ever NASS will be continuing to develop links and partnerships with individuals and groups across the country remaining as ever the 'Voice of Small Schools'.

Neil Short - Chairman

NASS Early Years Report

Another year has passed by since our last NASS AGM, and what a year it has been for everyone! It's probably been the most difficult, challenging and completely unforeseen year possible. Restrictions upon all of our lives,

alongside changing government guidelines and U turns being issued too last minute for leaders in schools and settings has meant that those who had already sorted out their plans had to re-sort them yet again. My huge respect goes out to you all.

Alongside this chaos came the release of the new Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the revision of the non-statutory Development Matters which landed in our schools. This has been picked up by some 'early adopter' schools to trial. However, no formal training has been provided by the Department for Education so even the 'early adopters' are struggling to find their way using updates on social media! The whole approach seems to have been piecemeal at best and hasn't reached everyone who needs to be informed. Things are being created to fill the void and even the source document is problematic as many experienced and knowledgeable teachers/staff are finding. **Please remember that Development Matters is NOT the EYFS.** Sadly, this again typifies a policy driven approach by political imperatives rather than real evidence. If you want a document created by a wide range of experts in early childhood in the Early Years Coalition, then look no further than Birth to 5 Matters. This is guidance is: 'by the sector, for the sector.'

One thing that definitely needs to change is assessment in the EYFS as it is often inaccurate and burdensome. The baseline is set to return in 2021. However, schools will not be required to carry out the EYFS profile in the summer term of 2021. How I wish we could follow Scotland's lead where the earliest years are beginning to be taken seriously. 'The Royal Foundation' led by the Duchess of Cambridge is a must-read as it emphasises on that we do today in early childhood impacts upon the world of tomorrow. This report was conducted by Ipsos MORI and revealed that only a quarter of parents recognise the importance of early years.

2020 was the year that the movement 'Black Lives Matter' made real headway alongside the pandemic. Awareness of race and culture have really been highlighted and we are now aware of how easy it is to slip into unconscious bias. We must keep the Unique Child central in our pedagogical provision and practice alongside remembering that the world of tomorrow should be at the forefront of our thoughts. We must get into the habit of thinking what impact all these developments will potentially have on our provision, practice and professionalism for our children and families in particular.

During all three pandemic lockdowns, early years provision in schools and settings were deemed 'low risk' in England on the basis of purely economic reasons so that parents could continue to work, rather than on the basis of science and health grounds. Many staff have been left feeling anxious and fearful about going to work, with little PPE or social distancing and the let down over regular testing and vaccines. Whilst the PVI sector, nursery classes and schools are open, occupancy is down and there are severe effects on funding. Some children may stay home-educated and not return to school. Whilst we know that early education and childcare are absolutely vital for the economy, it is also crucial for the children themselves, and the staff have been

working flat out to continue to support the children and families both face-to-face and by remote learning online.

Meanwhile the effects of lockdown particularly on the wellbeing and mental health of some families has created 'hidden harms' as parental stress has risen alongside child protection issues. Over 6,000 UK parents and carers have reported symptoms of anxiety and depression. In some situations, sensitive leaders of schools and settings have offered places seeing that these children were potentially vulnerable. With higher numbers of key/critical care workers attending school during the third lockdown this has created pressures elsewhere. During the pandemic the creativity, hard work and dedication of leaders and staff in schools and settings is to be applauded as they dealt with increasing levels of infection from Covid 19. Estimates of 1 in 10 adults testing positive were being quoted in Nursery World but in some cases whole schools rather than just bubbles needed to close temporarily. Meanwhile the government declined to make infection rates in schools and settings, public. One wonders if they have really got the best interests of those who work with young children?

Now as we look forward to a return to school by all, some inevitable concerns exist. Many of us have listened to the media giving messages about the need for children to 'catch up' and fill their 'lockdown gap'. These phrases will require sensitive handling as that whilst children may need time to rebuild and recover this should be centred in the joy of learning through play indoors and out. By using kindness, compassion and letting the children drive what you do should be central. Some children will have experienced losses in terms of routines, structure, friendships, opportunities and freedom which will generate consequences. There will be also very sadly those who will have experienced bereavement, hunger, poverty, trauma, attachment and anxiety issues. The wise leaders will be supporting these frail, fragile and fragmented learners (5%) with extra special care having audited what each family has experienced. Then they will use creativity, care and compassion in their teaching and learning to rebuild relationships, engage with communities, scaffold learning to regrow confidence via a transparent, relevant co-constructed active and personalised curriculum which gives children the time, space and advocacy that they need. Then the children will be able to participate with learning again and be re-motivated to engage.

Kathryn Solly - Early Years Champion

Information Officers Report

My work has been the usual help and advice to schools campaigning against closures. This is despite the difficulty, for example, of holding the Statutory public meetings in ways easy for parents and communities to manage - not least the requirement to consult anyone potentially affected by the closure proposed - the pace has hardly slowed. We are advising in cases in Wales and Southern England after earlier pressure in the North of England.

In those latter cases we came across for the first time a statute under which other involved e.g. dioceses and councils can just ask for premises and land to be given to them regardless of founding document trust details. For two schools we managed to squeeze from the DfE that they had a right to oppose such applications - the first two we helped were diocesan closures - and we have not heard of any final decisions yet and in both cases the situations seem to have become protracted as if the dioceses may be having second thoughts at such awesome behaviour. It came after a growing trend for dioceses to try to close schools using a strategy of telling their Chairs, diocesan appointees, their schools really were no longer viable so close them yourselves.

In North Yorkshire we had cases in a diocese publicly shown to be a million pounds in debt, and largely urban in character with little responsible awareness of the rural areas it also managed. Then in Surrey, Guildford wanted to close and take over the premises of a school because the cathedral needed repair.

So, we advise Church of England schools to be very wary and to engage in serious early lip-reading and between-the-lines signs of such entirely self-interested motivation threatening the future of usually very good schools. The small school model has several unique virtues lending long-term educational effectiveness. Where governors finally withdraw their own closure proposals the diocese turn then to the usual enemy, the local authority, to pursue the usual route. In advising Governors to close their own schools they not only use flawed but predictable arguments but also fail to advise the governors that there are long-standing different terms of action that affect such self-willed decisions that do not apply in a normal Local Authority case, for example, a longer period to any final closure date. So, Governors are easily misled by powerful bodies with all access to the real requirements and heavily motivated to ride roughshod through them.

Occasionally, as this March, we are asked to advise on small secondary schools in the context of local people wanting to open one because their villages are poorly served by different provision. This gives a real opportunity to share all the positive literature we hold that back our claim the small school remains the most effective model of educational and social effectiveness yet developed. We have featured a school of just 380 pupils which every year came in the top five schools in all the categories of success used nationally for comparison. Small-scale is human-scale and that works with public services based on people not systems. We continue to lobby Parliament, MPs and organisations potentially sympathetic to our members and their work using all that we know about those afore-mentioned virtues.

We advise still as it is true that keeping close, warm relationships with ward councillors and members of relevant Parliaments well ahead of any potential harm planned is vital. Such people aware of that you are doing can be very helpful if asked in good time to represent you in the high places where issues of policy and provision are emerging - such as funding - and not least if closure starts to threaten. They need that local awareness of quality to intervene effectively in the otherwise stereotypical flawed ways usually tried to persuade

diocesan and local authority decision-makers to wipe out perfectly good schools invariably popular with parents.

Parents need to be seen as potential support both in such cases and in general as early closure strategies often involve wilful airing of doubts, early small-scale consultations called 'informal' designed to leak out and undermine parents support before launching a full formal closure proposal. When that happens the maximum support immediately of parents is vital. It stands to reason that parents remaining supportive of the school's work drives any such ultimate impressions and action.

We are well aware that for children born today the future is changing radically and rapidly and, though technology promises them long lives, 100+, what are their prospects for life and living? We note technology doing what Steven Hawking warned a year before he died: *"if AI and robots reach levels predicted possible it will be the end of humanity."* They are and he is right, and it seems likely to face those children born today.

NASS believes that self-supporting communities are the model for the long-term survival of all that we know and value. This priority for the small-scale models our members represent is rarely discussed even in the most developed "think-tanks." It may be the necessary outcome of an otherwise powerfully enslaved technological world.

Mervyn Benford - Information Officer

Headteacher Liaison Officer Report

The pandemic opened up more opportunities to communicate with other small school headteachers around the country and it has been brilliant to interact with heads from Yorkshire, Cumbria, Cornwall and all places in between at our ZOOM meetings. Not only do we get better attendance and involvement, but there are more meetings than we ever had before.

There has been the same trend on Twitter and the Small Schools Group has discussed many topics and asked each other advice ranging from sparsity to curriculum and assessment in a small setting. The NAHT has been following up its focus on small schools and although the original meeting that Neil and I were to attend was cancelled, I attended a focussed meeting on 25 March 2021 with the DfE re the consultation on sparsity funding.

A headteacher in West Sussex had written a very detailed article about the winners and losers from the proposed new way of calculating sparsity funding and we sent it out to all NASS members as well as the link to the consultation.

The meeting was very useful and they listened to our concerns, as although raising sparsity funding from £45,000 to £55,000 and changing the criteria from distance by road, rather than as the crow flies, sounds attractive - most small schools do not qualify, as they are not also remote and yet they are losing out because the lump funding sum has reduced.

I asked that the DfE also review quickly the impact of this lottery of funding on small schools and said we will be canvassing both our NAHT and NASS members next year to give our own feedback to them.

Julie Kelly - Headteacher Liaison Officer

Social Media

NASS have now set up a twitter account for the charity and a Facebook page is coming also. This allows us to stay in contact with our members at the hit of a button. We are now aware with so many younger teachers within small schools and the organisation; this is a great way to stay in touch and get our news out to people. Currently, it is being used as a way of staying in touch and passing on new information. However, we want to develop this into a tool for sharing information and help get those working in small schools in contact with each other. Follow us on twitter at @NASmallSchs.

Nicola Townsend

Treasurers Report

Total income for the year was £2557.72 and expenditure was £1163.45 giving a surplus for the year of £1394.27. Income from subscriptions reduced by £214, income from HMRC was down because the claim for tax relief on personal subscriptions was for a shorter period than in 2019. Expenditure fell by £1624 due in the main to the effects of Covid-19 with only two Trustees physical meeting taking place, and also lower costs associated with visits to schools. In addition, we have reduced the cost of production of Newsletters by a greater use of email. Going forward, we very much hope that the constraints of lockdown will reduce in 2021 and costs will increase. Because of the reduction in expenditure we decided that subscriptions for the 2019 members would be waived.

Andrew Taylor - Treasurer

Receipt and Payments account for the period 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020 Registered Charity No. 1169002

2019	Unrestricted	Restricted	Glasshouse	Total
	Funds	Funds	Trust	Funds
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Subscriptions	2475.00			2475.00
2689				
HMRC	82.72			82.72
134				
Total Receipts	<u>2557.72</u>		<u>2557.72</u>	<u>2823</u>
Payments				
Meetings	148.60		148.60	901

Newsletters	136.00		136.00
285			
Chairman's Expenses			
139			
Information Expenses			
45			
School Visits	312.40		312.40
249			
Governor Training			
90			
Administration	566.45		566.45
281			
Conferences			
597			
Total Payments	<u>1163.45</u>		<u>1163.45</u> <u>2787</u>
Net of receipts/payments	1394.27		1394.27
Cash funds last year end	<u>6109.84</u>	<u>5.70</u>	<u>12.53</u> <u>6128.07</u>
Cash funds this year end	<u>7504.11</u>	<u>5.70</u>	<u>12.53</u> <u>7522.34</u>
Represented by			
Co-op Bank	<u>7522.34</u>		<u>7522.34</u>

Signed DR Woodage - Examiner