



**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