



Entered on the Register of Charities on 10th June 2020

Registered Charity: 1189871

Charitable Incorporated Organisation - "Lancaster & District Schools' Singing Festival"

Financial year: 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023

2023 Trustee's Annual Report & Accounts

Objectives of the charity

To educate the public in the art and science of music and in particular in choral singing for school children through their participation in the Lancaster & District Schools' singing festival, its affiliated choirs, competitions and related musical events. The Charity works in close partnership with the Lancashire Music Hub to achieve its objectives.

Activities and achievements in 2021

Background to the Singing Festival Charity

The Lancaster & District Schools' Singing Festival (LDSSF) started over 70 years ago, with a legacy bequeathal for the festival to use the Ashton Hall at Lancaster Town Hall for one week a year. In 2014 community music organisation, More Music engaged with the festival to develop the event alongside the Lancashire Music Hub as part of their on-going development of a countywide vocal strategy. The Hub began a rejuvenation of both the organisational and artistic elements of the festival using the existing committee of a local schoolteacher, a primary Head and a schools music coordinator alongside the Hub's Singing Lead, the Strategy Co-ordinator, professional musicians and the team at More Music.

Over a period of five years, the festival team changed the LDSSF model to reflect current best practice: clarifying and streamlining committee roles; creating teacher training opportunities; providing digital resource packs; recording tracks and performing with a live band and school workshops. After the event schools provide feedback digitally, helping to shape the future of the festival; both in its musical content and organisation.

There has been a significant increase in the number of schools and children engaging with the festival – in 2020 1420 children from 30 primary schools were due to take part, and the increase in numbers would have been accommodated via an additional KS2 concert on Friday afternoon. The schools involved represent the diverse geographical and social groups within our area; from small rural schools, to large, challenging, urban primaries. There is also participation of SEND students

from a specialist school within the community. The festival would have featured performances from local KS4 and KS5 soloists in the intervals (including musicians from LMS County Ensembles, local secondary schools and the Lancashire Youth Vocal Ensemble), which gives the children an aspirational insight into the potential future development of their instrument or voice.

2020 activities

Due to COVID pandemic the 2020 Lancaster & District Schools' Singing Festival (LDSSF) which was due to run from 19th-23rd March with 1420 children from 30 primary schools at the Ashton Hall in Lancaster was cancelled on 16th March 2020. Although it was not possible to hold a singing Festival in March, many of the schools and individual children from participating schools took part in a Virtual Big Sing in June 2020, with materials (warm-ups, rehearsal and instruction videos from the Lancashire Music Hub Vocal Leaders) made available for free on YouTube in advance.

2021 activities

The LDSSF organising committee booked the Ashton Hall in Lancaster Town Hall for the 15-19th March 2021, however they were advised by the Lancashire County Council team in October 2020 that the Lancaster Town Hall was going to remain closed until at least May 2021, and therefore the festival booking was cancelled.

Given the ongoing COVID restrictions in 2021 preventing large gatherings or singing events, the charity trustees worked closely with the Lancashire Music Hub, and supported their initiative to develop instructional videos, songs, warm-ups and vocal games on the LMS You Tube channel at no cost to schools or individuals. The trustees actively promoted the LMH "Jump Up and Join In" project to all the primary schools in their area.

2022 "Music in Me" project

The LDSSF organising committee worked with Emma Williams and the LMH Singing Strategy Group to develop virtual "Big Sing" opportunities for 2022 as COVID guidance meant in-person large singing performances were still limited. Again, the festival was able to benefit from some financial support from LMH to fund the project (Emma William's time). The festival also continued to engage with the Lancaster Town Hall team to continue the legacy of using the Ashton Hall for the festival, and they booked dates for March 2023.

The LDSSF organising committee wanted a way to work with the LDSSF schools and maintain their good relationships and the 74-year heritage of our singing festival.

Schools were offered the chance to be involved with the following the "Music in Me 2022" project. The project provided each school with:

- A FREE set of songs, chosen and arranged for schools including.
 - Lead sheets
 - Backing Tracks
 - Performance Videos
 - Teaching Notes and curriculum links
 - Both KS1 and KS2 options

PLUS

- A FREE singing Workshop visit for your school from Debbie Pilkington or Emma Williams.

Schools registered in March, online resources were circulated in April and workshop visits were made from May to July. The aim of the project was for schools to be able to engage with this simple, achievable, and fun opportunity, and for the festival to continue to build their musical relationships across our area, through singing.

2023 Singing Festival: 20 – 24 March

After a three-year break the singing festival returned to the Ashton Hall at Lancaster Town Hall, with over 1500 local school children coming together to perform five concerts. The children aged between five and eleven from 37 primary schools in Lancaster, Morecambe and the surrounding districts, entertained their families and friends as well as local dignitaries including the Mayor of Lancaster, Councillor Joyce Pritchard with newly composed pieces, pops songs and songs from around the world. The theme for KS1 was “Wonderful World” and the theme for KS2 was “We’re All in This Together”.

In addition to the wonderful singing, the festival was able to showcase the talents of young local musicians: Ellie Knowles and Annie Hughes (vocalists); Ash Murphy and Logan Aitchinson (beatbox); Hannah Wickes & Clara Spence (saxophonists) and the Turning Point Theatre Art dancers.

The festival was bequeathed the use the Ashton Hall for one week a year to promote singing in schools over 70 years ago (2018 was our 70th year concert). The number of schools and children taking part in 2023 represented the largest festival to date – 73rd year of concerts (given the 3-year COVID break).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2023
KS1	569	502	572	634	470	590
KS2	591	601	711	845	950	977
TOTAL	1160	1103	1283	1479	1420	1567

The festival project has two focus areas: Key Stage 1 led by Debbie Pilkington, supported by Emma Williams, Singing Lead for the Lancashire Music Hub, who also leads the Key Stage 2 concerts. Schools were advised of the concert dates in July 2022, and began registering their interests. The fee for participation was £2.50 per child registered, and the festival Trustees decided to reduce the cost of concert tickets from £4 to £3 given the economic situation. As has been the case historically, schools were permitted to offset their cost of travel with the ticket money raised.

The Trustees were greatly encouraged to see the engagement of new schools as well as long-standing supporting schools of the festival after the 3-year break. A teacher introduction evening was held in November – taking the teachers through the themes and key songs for each focus area. Online resources were provided to schools in January, followed by school workshop visits during February and March.



Selection of feedback on the 2023 festival

Debbie Pilkington, KS1 conductor said:

“We have really missed being able to hold our festival in the historic Ashton Hall and return with songs celebrating our ‘Wonderful World’ and ‘We’re All in this Together’. It has been a privilege to be back working with our local schools. To be greeted with excitement and

enthusiasm, not just from the children but from the staff too, is testament to the boost to our well-being that singing together can bring.”

Emma Williams, Singing Lead for the Lancashire Music Hub who conducts KS2 said:

“It is so exciting to be back with our singing schools in the Ashton Hall for the first time since 2019. The Singing Festival has a long, wonderful legacy of bringing our school community together in song and this year is no exception. Hearing all the young voices will be total joy!”

Paul Bowden, Headteacher at Slyne-with-Hest St Luke’s CE Primary School, and a member of the organising committee said:

‘It is a joy to see the smiles on the children’s faces as they have practised the songs to take part in this year’s Singing Festival. Having had to take a break from the festival during and after the pandemic, it is wonderful that we have returned and bigger and better than ever. The festival is a long-standing treasure in the school calendar.’

Sarah Harding, KS2 teacher, Overton-St-Helens

“It has been wonderful to see the confidence develop and shine through our children as they have learnt new songs! They are very much ready for and excited about performing to an audience in such a grand venue!”

Alex Thomas, Year 2 Class Teacher, Bowerham Primary and Nursery School

“The Year 2 children at Bowerham have absolutely loved practising the songs for the singing festival. They have really enjoyed exploring songs in different languages and cannot wait to perform with the band at the Ashton Hall.”

Financial Review

The Charity is engaged with the Lancashire Music Hub (LMH) in the development and delivery of the Singing Festival. LMH have since their engagement made an annual allowance of £3000 to the festival, which is used to cover the professional fees of the Singing Lead for the music service who oversees the festival programmes and delivery, delivers KS2 vocal workshops in schools and conducts the KS2 and assists with the KS1 concerts. The allowance also contributes to the cost of the live band both for recording the programme and playing at the concert rehearsals and concerts themselves, as well as covering the majority of the time cost for the Festival Secretary for the year. In addition, the festival charges schools a flat £2.50 fee for each pupil registered to take part; and charged £3 for concert tickets and there is a retiring collection at the end of the concert. Schools are permitted to offset the cost of coach travel to the festival against ticket money raised, sending the festival any positive balance.

In 2023 the festival returned after a three-year absence due to COVID. The festival bank account at the start of the financial year was £8912.62. The 1567 pupils registered raised £3739. Ticket sales raised £1682. This figure was low as expected by the Trustees due to the significant rise in the cost of coach transportation which schools were permitted to deduct from their ticket sales, and the fact that ticket prices had been reduced because of the economic climate from £4 to £3. Donations by the audiences as they left the concert raised £1076. Lancashire Music Hub continued to support the festival as a strategic partner providing just over £3000 in financial support, and permitting Emma Williams Singing Lead LMH and Nicky Crosley, Singing Strategy Co-ordinator to work with the festival trustees on the project. The closing balance for the financial year was £8.643.04.

Structure, governance and management

The LDSSF singing festival is run by a very small organising committee – 4 people (three of whom are trustees of the charity – Mr Paul Bowden, Mrs Debra Pilkington and Mrs Nicky Crosley and the Vocal Lead of the Lancashire Music Hub, Mrs Emma Williams) – with the focus being on the development and delivery of a high standard singing festival which is inclusive for diverse geographical and social groups within our area.

In addition, the charity has two more trustees – Mrs Sarah Griffiths (a teacher) and Mrs Elizabeth Wheildon, who review the overall annual plans and provide valuable comments.

All trustees who have direct contact with children are employees of Lancashire County Council and as such, complete annual training and certification in Child Safeguarding and have DBS certification.

Administrative Information

Lancaster & District Schools' Singing Festival is registered at Slyne-with-Hest, St. Lukes CE Primary School, Shady Lane, Slyne, Lancaster LA2 6JL. Since COVID trustee meetings are held via zoom meetings with full trustee attendance:

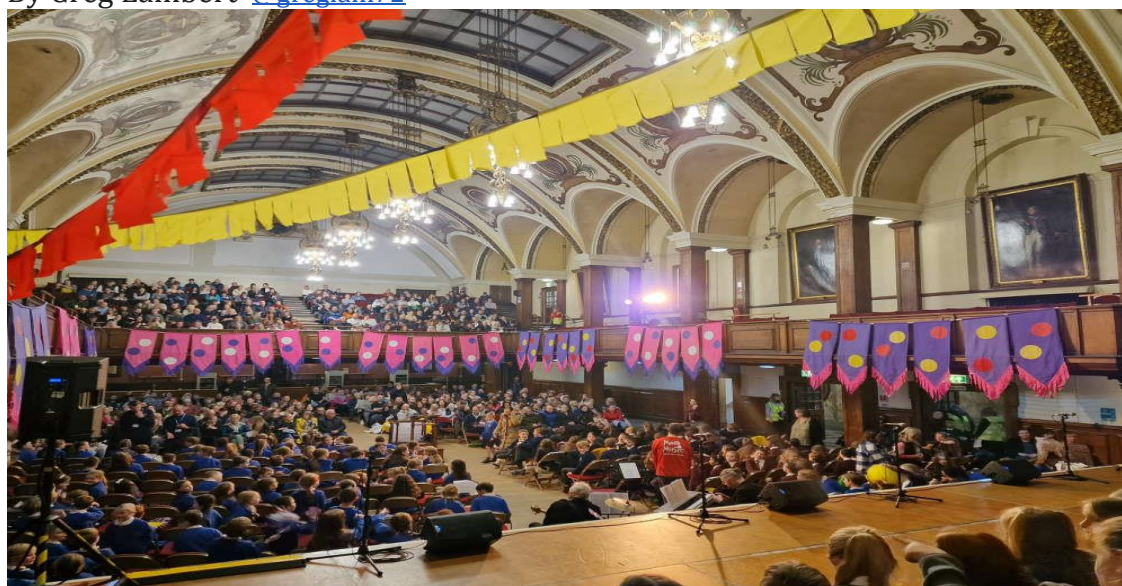
- 6 June 2022 (reviewing the 2022 “Music in Me” project and initial plans for the 2023 LDSSF festival including discussion on the financial fees and other arrangements)
- 31 October 2022 (review of registrations for 2023 LDSSF festival, with 16 schools requesting to perform in daytime concert on 24th March – whilst we can only accommodate 14. Confirmation of approach to two schools to move to midweek evening concerts).
- 24 February 2023 (review of March 2023 LDSSF festival and approval of payments to be made to D Pilkington and N Crosley for services provided to the festival)
- 27 April 2023 (review and approval of the 2022 Annual Trustee Report and accounts for the Charity Commission)
- 17 May 2023 (review of 2023 LDSSF Festival outcomes, the draft 2022 Annual Trustee Report and accounts and discussion about the 2024 Festival plans with input from Cath Sewell, Regional Manager LMH regarding partnership support going forward).
- 17 November 2023 (review and approval of the 2023 LDSSF Annual Accounts and Trustee Report; details of meeting with Lancaster City Council and the plans for 2024).
- The Charity Trustees are as follows:
 - a) Debra Pilkington
 - b) Nicola Crosley (Secretary/Treasurer – Charity Commission contact trustee) * Nicola (Nicky) Donnelly got married in November 2021
 - c) Paul Bowden (Chair)
 - d) Sarah Griffiths
 - e) Elizabeth Wheildon

The 2023 Annual Trustee Report was approved at the zoom meeting on 17 November 2023

Lancaster schools singing festival is 'bigger and better than ever'

Thursday, March 30th, 2023 8:22am

By Greg Lambert [@greglam72](#)



More than 1500 schoolchildren came together to perform five concerts in the biggest ever schools singing festival held in Lancaster.

The Lancaster and District Schools' Singing Festival took place at the Ashton Hall in Lancaster last week with children aged between five and eleven from 37 primary schools in Lancaster, Morecambe and the surrounding districts taking part.

They entertained their families and friends as well as local dignitaries including Councillor Joyce Pritchard, mayor of Lancaster, with newly composed pieces, pops songs and songs from around the world.

In addition to the singing, the festival was able to showcase the talents of young local musicians: Ellie Knowles and Annie Hughes (vocalists); Ash Murphy and Logan Aitchinson (beatbox); Hannah Wickes (saxophone) and the Turning Point Theatre Art dancers.

The number of schools and children taking part in 2023 represented the largest festival to date.

The festival was given the use of the Ashton Hall for one week a year to promote singing in schools over 70 years ago and continues to be supported by Lancaster City Council.

Debbie Pilkington, KS1 (Key Stage 1) conductor, said: "We have really missed being able to hold our festival in the historic Ashton Hall and return with songs celebrating our 'Wonderful World' and 'We're All in this Together'.

"It has been a privilege to be back working with our local schools. To be greeted with excitement and enthusiasm, not just from the children but from the staff too, is testament to the boost to our well-being that singing together can bring."

Emma Williams, Singing Lead for the Lancashire Music Hub who conducts KS2, said: "It is so exciting to be back with our singing schools in the Ashton Hall for the first time since 2019. The Singing Festival has a long, wonderful legacy of bringing our school community together in song and this year is no exception."

Paul Bowden, Headteacher at Slyne-with-Hest St Luke's CE Primary School and a member of the organising committee, said: "It is a joy to see the smiles on the children's faces as they have practised the songs to take part in this years Singing Festival. Having had to take a break from the festival during and after the pandemic, it is wonderful that we have returned and bigger and better than ever. The festival is a long-standing treasure in the school calendar."

Sarah Harding, KS2 teacher, Overton-St-Helens, said: "It has been wonderful to see the confidence develop and shine through our children as they have learned new songs! They were very much ready for and excited about performing to an audience in such a grand venue!"

Alex Thomas, Year 2 Class Teacher, Bowerham Primary and Nursery School, said: "The Year 2 children at Bowerham have absolutely loved practising the songs for the singing festival. They have really enjoyed exploring songs in different languages and couldn't wait to perform with the band at the Ashton Hall."

Here are some photos from the festival from the schools' Facebook pages.

Thurnham Glasson C of E Primary School



Winmarleigh Church of England Primary School



Ellel St John's Church of England Primary School





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Charitable Incorporated Organisation - "Lancaster & District Schools' Singing Festival"

LANCASTER & DISTRICT SCHOOLS' SINGING FESTIVAL

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

SUMMARY OF CHARITY BANK ACCOUNT – RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

- Full bank account transactions audited by Mrs Caroline Lindsay

DEBITS			CREDITS		
Date	Narrative	£	Date	Narrative	£
28/2/23	Tim Uffindell KS2 workshops	319.20	27/6/22	Bank balance	8912.62
9/3/23	Stramongate Press – concert programme tickets	397.86	18/7/22 – 15/3/23	Registration fees	3739.00
24/3/23	Removal van for transporting decorations	360.00	23-27/3/23	Donations at concerts	1076.00
27/3/23	Emma Williams – KS2 workshops & concerts	895.99	28/4 – 18/5/23	Ticket sales	1410.00
	Debbie Pilkington – KS1 workshops & concerts	920.55			
	Payment of festival band, sound engineer, PA equipment & photographer	2,417.50			
	Nicky Donnelly – festival week project management, travel & parking	829.48			
9/6/23	Tiered seating	540.00	30/6/23	Lancaster Christ Church	186.00
	Total payments	£ 6,680.58		Total receipts as at 19 June	£15,323.62
	Outstanding payments: donation re bunting £50 & PRS fees £84.77	134.77		Outstanding ticket sale receipts: Castle View £81	81.00
	TOTAL	£ 6,815.35		TOTAL	£15404.62

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	30 th June 2023	30 th June 2022	30 th June 2021	12 th June 2020
Cash – opening bank balance 27/6/2022	£8,912.62			
			£9,663.81	£9,848.56
Other monetary assets	267.00		0	0
Liabilities	134.77		0	0
Bank balance as at 30 th June 2023	£8643.04			

A financial overview was prepared by Mrs Nicola Crosley (nee Donnelly), Charity Trustee and audited by Mrs Caroline Lindsay, School Business Manager at Slyne-with-Hest School and the closing balance concurred with the Charity's bank statement as at 30th June 2023.

Debbie Pilkington and Nicky Crosley are charity Trustees and the payment for their for services (delivery of school workshops and performances and festival project management) were approved by the other Trustees prior to the activity happening.

APPROVED BY THE CHARITY TRUSTEES AT THE ZOOM MEETING ON 17 November 2023