

HOLMWOOD PRESCHOOL WALLINGTON

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 01/04/2023 TO 31/03/2024

Holmwood Preschool Wallington

Wallington URC

20 Stanley Park Road,

Wallington

SM6 0EU

Charity Commission number: 1196919

Companies House number: CEO27452

Trustees:

Sheila Cruchley (Chair)

Lynn Skelton (Secretary)

Craig Bowman (Minister of WURC, ex officio)

Karen Green (day to day Manager, ex officio)

Christopher Jackson

Bookkeeping: Prepared Ltd

Payroll Services: Essential Payroll

Objectives

The object of the CIO is:

To advance the education of children of pre-school age by the provision of safe and satisfying learning through play by:

- i. providing a safe stimulating environment ensuring equal opportunities for all children regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, home circumstances and medical background
- ii. promoting public interest in and recognition of the needs of pre-school children and their families.
- iii. adhering to national and local requirements for early years settings.

Holmwood Preschool becomes a Functioning CIO

During the 2023-24 financial year, Holmwood Preschool Wallington has finally begun to operate as a functioning Charitable Incorporated Organisation, concluding a long drawn-out process to separate the preschool activities from those of Wallington United Reformed Church.

For many years, Holmwood Preschool operated as an activity of the church. For various reasons, it was agreed that the preschool should be established as a charitable body in its own right. Holmwood Preschool Wallington was officially recognised as a CIO by the Charity Commission on 3rd December 2021 with a new constitution.

However, the CIO was not able to operate as intended for the following two years. As the preschool is an Ofsted-registered early years provision, its activities could not be transferred to the CIO until Ofsted had made an inspection and re-registered the operation. That process was finally completed when the preschool was re-registered by Ofsted on 5th December 2023.

Until that time, Wallington URC continued to operate the preschool under its previous Ofsted registration, with the long-standing team of experienced employees continuing to provide high quality care and education for the under-fives.

The CIO has therefore only been fully operational with effect from 5th December 2023. Despite the formal change of status, the leadership team and staff essentially remain the same.

Upon re-registration on 5th December 2023, the preschool finances were immediately separated from those of WURC through a formal transfer from the church to the CIO. The preschool had been keeping its own bank accounts for many years, preparing its own annual accounts and reporting to the Elders' Meeting of WURC and to preschool parents at an AGM. However, as the preschool was a church activity its accounts were also required to be reported in the church's annual accounts. This is no longer the case.

Whereas the preschool had previously made regular donations to WURC for the use of church premises, the CIO now operates under a signed Licence to Occupy and pays rent at an agreed rate. We also have a separate agreement relating to the storage of equipment on the premises.

Trustees

Our constitution provides for potential Trustees to be nominated by the church, by the preschool staff and by the parents or carers of children attending the preschool. The Trustees may also appoint others who they feel would bring relevant skills and expertise to the operation of the CIO.

Initial Trustees had been put in place as part of the process of establishing the CIO, being drawn from existing supporters of the preschool within the church. However, they did not meet regularly until the preschool became operational as a CIO on 5th December 2023. Because of the Christmas season, the first Trustees' meeting following the formal transfer of operations was held on 19th January 2024. Since then, the Trustees have met quarterly by zoom. Occasional discussions are held via email if an urgent matter needs addressing.

Approaches have been made to various parents and carers to become trustees, but those who had expressed interest at the outset were no longer in a position to take on a two-year term of office by the time the Ofsted re-registration had been completed, mainly because their children were moving on and would soon be starting school. Now that we are a functioning CIO we will endeavour to attract other individuals to become trustees, but this will probably be more effective after the start of each school year in September when the new cohort starts at preschool. All potential trustees will be appointed in accordance with our Constitution.

Management structures

In addition to the staff who directly look after the children, directed day to day by our Manager, we have a paid bookkeeper and a paid administrator who is the primary contact with the local authority and prospective parents.

The Chair of Trustees manages the HR functions and is also the primary contact for the Manager for all issues ranging from outbreaks of infectious diseases, premises problems, supporting families in need, and staffing needs. The chair also liaises with the bookkeeper to form a Finance Sub-Committee, which makes financial decisions that are reported to the Trustees, or, where appropriate, seeks permission from the Trustees. The Secretary may also be involved in Finance Sub-Committee discussions.

Finances and Banking

In May 2024 we took advice from the Charity Commission and submitted a nil return covering the period from the CIO being registered on 3rd December 2021 until 31st March 2023, because the CIO was not operational during that period.

This Annual Return covers the whole financial year from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, even though Holmwood Preschool only began to operate as a CIO from 5th December 2023. Recent advice from the Charity Commission and our accountant is that this return should show the income and expenditure for the entire reporting period.

Income

As an Ofsted registered preschool, we receive funding for each child's place from the government via the Local Authority. This takes into account children's ages, number of sessions attended, social situation and any special educational needs. A small number of parents of two year olds who do not meet the funding criteria pay fees at the lower 3 and 4 year old rate. We have held our fees at the lower rate provided by the LA in order to make the preschool more accessible for parents, and we sometimes provide additional subsidies to any children whose families are in need.

Local authority funding is increased each April, and those increases were greater in 2023-24 than in recent years. That has made a big difference to the financial health of the preschool, as can be seen in our accounts.

Expenditure

Our expenditure is primarily on staff wages, payment for use of the premises, public liability insurance and membership of the Early Years Alliance which supports early years provisions. The increase in government funding has meant that we been able to award the staff a bigger annual pay increase than usual, and we decided to implement the increase from April, rather than the start of the academic year. This will be reviewed annually to ensure that staff are remunerated fairly and sustainably to help us to retain and attract high quality staff.

We subscribe to the Tapestry secure online reporting system about a child's progress and engagement, where staff regularly upload photos and observations and each family can access their own child's records at any time. It is excellent value for money and is included in the accounts under Support Costs.

Equipment is sometimes bought new and sometimes via online channels such as Facebook marketplace; materials are occasionally provided by staff, or other friends of the preschool. Each December we identify specific projects to focus resources on refreshing e.g. the home corner, water play, cosy seating for the book corner etc.

Banking

Holmwood Preschool has three accounts with the Trustee Savings Bank. The Main Account is used for all day-to-day transactions, including paying the wages each month. Funding payments from the Local Authority are also made into this account. The Reserve Account holds sufficient funds to cover three months of costs in case we have to suspend operations for a catastrophic event such as flooding. This account earns a small amount of interest. The third account is kept for card payments, and is mostly used for online purchases. The card is held by the Preschool Manager and money is transferred into the account as requested to cover specific purchases.

We are very cautious about spending, and as a result the preschool finances are very healthy.

Our Activities

Holmwood Preschool provides a nurturing environment for young children before they reach statutory school age. It runs morning sessions on Monday to Friday during term time for 38 weeks of the year. Each session lasts for 3 hours and there is an optional Lunch Club for a further hour, three times per week. Eighteen children attend each session, and there are usually four staff, which means that our staff/children ratio exceeds the required level. We have five staff who are all qualified in Early Years provision (Early Years teacher, Diploma, NVQ 3 and NVQ2). Safeguarding the children is our highest priority, and all daily routines take this into account as the children use the toilet and play inside and out. They also have use of the large hall, which is accessed by a corridor and internal stairs within the premises. These areas are shared with other premises users, and the staff are rigorous in ensuring that the children are accompanied as they go to and from the hall.

How is Holmwood Preschool CIO's purpose beneficial?

The Trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. Holmwood Preschool CIO benefits the children on its roll and their families by giving nurturing and stimulating educational experiences with the well-being of the children as the first priority. Parental satisfaction is high, and they say that they find staff nurturing, knowledgeable and professional and feel reassured by the fact they are always around to respond to any questions or concerns. This has been achieved even with parents who were not able to visit or introduce their child to preschool by being there with them. From the way the children talk to their parents/carers about their day and the way they are eager to come to preschool, parents state that it is clear that staff have strong relationships with all the children.

Who benefits from the CIO's purpose?

The beneficiaries are the children, their parents and their wider family.

The benefit to the children is that they thrive and develop their curiosity, their engagement with their learning, their relationships with other children, their language and through that, their understanding of the world. Staff value the home experiences of each child and build on the partnership with each family.

All parents benefit by having confidence in the setting, that it will cherish their child and keep them safe as well as providing educational experiences that will develop their child's social, emotional, physical and intellectual development.

Parents who find the separation from their child a difficult process are helped to manage this and find that the evident happiness of their child and good communication from the preschool settles their own anxiety.

Parents with a child whose development is giving concern benefit from additional communication and plans are made in partnership with the parents so the child benefits by having the parents and preschool working on the same strategies. If further intervention is needed meetings are brokered by the staff with expert advice from the local authority early years SEND advisors.

In addition to the funding adjustments referred to earlier, we look for opportunities to support families in need both practically and financially.

Providing for Children with Additional Needs

During this reporting period there were two children on roll who had an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP). These were drafted in conjunction with parents and the Local Authority Adviser by our Manager, who is also our Special Needs & Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO). Two other children had a smaller degree of Special Educational Needs. The high level of needs during this reporting period required a great amount of extra work by the manager and one assistant who had excellent skills for supporting these children. During the year, that assistant left the preschool for another job, and recruiting a suitable replacement proved very challenging. Other staff took on extra sessions to maintain the high quality of provision while several attempts were undertaken to recruit a replacement. During the Spring Term of 2024 we finally found and appointed a suitably qualified and very experienced Early Years Level 3 assistant.

One of the families whose child has an EHCP negotiated with the Local Authority for her to stay at Holmwood for her school Reception year (Sept 2023 to July 2024), because of the great progress she was making at preschool, and she has blossomed.

Parent and Carer Involvement

During this period, we have been fortunate in having a number of parents/carers who already knew each other quite well, as their older children had previously passed through the preschool.

With backing from the Manager and staff, these parents and carers supported the children's Christmas performance of songs telling the Nativity story by providing mince pies, cakes, teas and coffees. This is a very popular event with the relatives and friends of the families attracting 60+ adults.

In January 2024, a parent who is a professional film-maker produced – at no charge – a video to go on the preschool website. This shows the preschool facilities and the various activities that the children enjoy from day to day. This has been used by prospective parents as an alternative to coming to visit. All of the families of the children involved were asked for permission before the filming and the video project has been a great success.

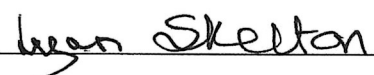
Agreed at the Trustees meeting on the 14th with amendments approved by email.

Role/Name /Signature

Date

Chair Sheila Cruchley 

24/01/25

Trustee Lynn Skelton 

24/01/25

**Examination of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, for
HOLMWOOD PRESCHOOL WALLINGTON**

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. It included a review of the accounting records kept by the organisation and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and the pursuit of explanations from Trustees about such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit. Consequently, no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view', and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention: (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements (a) to keep accounting records and (b) to prepare accounts which accord with those accounting records, have not been met; or (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PH' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Philip Hyde, CPFA

21 January 2025

