

Stepping Stones Pre-School Nursery

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 August 2024

The trustees present their Annual Report for Stepping Stones Pre-School Nursery (also called Stepping Stones Playgroup).

Stepping Stones operates a pre-school nursery in North Belfast. It normally operates from St Gerard's Community Centre, 722 Antrim Road, Belfast, but for the year ended 31 August 2023 (and subsequent two years) it has operated from the adjacent Park Lodge PS site, whilst building work is carried out close to the Community Centre. The Nursery caters annually for 24 local children of pre-primary school age, reduced in the year ended 31 August 2024 to 23 to reflect the space restrictions of the temporary space being used. The Nursery' stated benefits are:

the advancement of education: enhanced positive early learning experiences for children in the "area of benefit", which develops both their learning and social skills; improvement in healthy living in the area through ongoing health and hygiene initiatives in the Playgroup; empowerment of parents to participate in the Playgroup which provides them with experience that they can use in other areas of community development.

The public element of the benefits have been stated as:

provided to the children (from the "area of benefit") attending the Playgroup, and their families. As the Playgroup serves different children/families over time, the wider local community benefits from having a local pre-school educational resource available to them. As parents are empowered through their participation in the Playgroups' management committee, the local community benefits from those parents using these skills/experiences in other fields/organisations.

The Trustees are confident that the stated/intended public benefit has continued during the year ended 31 August 2024: all available places (23 in this case) were filled, with the Management Committee overseeing the Nursery through periodic management meetings and ongoing communication. During the year the Nursery generated a modest surplus of £1,206 (the previous year a surplus of £326): additional financial support received during the year was used to tackle the financial implications of the temporary move (additional costs directly due to the move, further additional staffing costs and the reduction in income arising from the restriction on our capacity from 24 to 23 children for the year). Otherwise, the Management Committee continued to tightly control costs, contributing to the current year's modest surplus.

These accounts, prepared using the accruals basis, are filed with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. In addition to income from Government funding for pre-school places the Management Committee undertook a number of fundraising activities during the year, the proceeds of which were used to buy new equipment for the Nursery and contribute generally to ongoing running costs.

The Trustees during the year were as follows:

David McKee (Chairperson)

Edwina Weiniger (Secretary, becoming Chairperson for the 24/25 year)

Peter McClean (Treasurer)

Ursula Quinn

Maeve Smith (becoming Secretary for the 24/25 year)

Staff are encouraged to continue their development with appropriate training, supported by the Nursery.

The new financial/school year, starting on 01 September 2024, saw the Nursery achieve full local attendance once again (attendance once again capped at 23 to reflect space restrictions in our temporary space in Park Lodge PS). The Management Committee have continued to monitor cost control, and engage with our long term landlord about a likely return date to our permanent space. Based on the how the year is developing, the Management Committee is confident that the 24/25 year will once again see the Nursery generate a modest surplus

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter McClean', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter McClean, Treasurer, 28 March 2025