

ANDERSONSTOWN TRADITIONAL & CONTEMPORARY MUSIC SCHOOL

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

Trustees' Annual Report

The Trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, have pleasure in presenting their annual report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025 which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a directors' report and accounts for Companies Act 2006 purposes. The Trustees confirm that the financial statements comply with the requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice which applies to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015).

Reference & Administrative Details

Reference and administrative details are shown in the schedule of members and professional advisers on page 1 of the financial statements.

Directors and Trustees

The directors of the charitable company are its trustees for the purpose of charity law. The Directors and trustees who served the charity during the period were as follows:

Olive Benson (Chairperson)
V Quinn (Treasurer)
Conor McKay (Secretary)
Pearse Tohill
Goldston Rajasingh Joseph
Niamh O'Donnell
Tyler Gilmore – appointed 07/03/2025

Structure, Governance & Management

Governing Document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a Memorandum and Articles of Association, which was last amended at an EGM in October 2009, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006. Each member has agreed to contribute £1 in the event of a compulsory winding up. It is registered as a charity with the Charities Commission (NI).

Appointment of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the overall governance of the charity. Trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting by the members present and the total number of Trustees shall not be less than 3.

Trustees shall hold office until the next Annual General Meeting following his/her appointment. A retiring Trustee shall be eligible for re-election.

The Trustees shall have the power at any time and from time to time to appoint any person to be a Trustee, either to fill a casual vacancy or as an addition to the existing Trustees. Any Trustee so appointed shall hold office until the next following Annual General Meeting and shall then be eligible for election.

During the year, 1 new Trustee was appointed. With assistance and support from Arts & Business and Boards123, the Trustees continue to address Succession planning & Trustee

Recruitment, particularly in areas where the current Trustees feel the need for particular skills that will enhance the future development of the school. This process is ongoing.

Trustee Induction and Training

New Trustees undergo an induction to brief them on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the Charities Commission guidance on public benefit, content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the board of trustees and decision-making processes, policies and procedures, the business plan and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training events where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role. Trustee Induction & training is part of our ongoing Succession planning & Trustee recruitment review.

Organisation

The Board of Trustees meet monthly and delegates certain responsibilities to the School Manager. The School Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the affairs of the charity and for implementing the policies and operational plans as agreed by the Board of Trustees. Between meetings of the Board of Trustees, the School Manager reports to the Chairperson. The School Manager is assisted by our new post of Project Development Manager, (appointed May 24), full time Programme Co-ordinator and a part time Administrator.

Related parties

None of the Trustees receive remuneration or other benefit for their work as trustees with the Charity. Any connection between a trustee or senior manager of the charity to related parties must be disclosed to the full Board of Trustees in the same way as any other contractual relationship with a third party. There were no such disclosures in the current year.

Risk Management

The Trustees have a risk management strategy which comprises:

- An annual review of the risks the charity may face.
- The establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate those risks identified; and
- The implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

In providing access and opportunities to people and children, the Charity recognises that there are potential risks to children and vulnerable adults. A key element in the management of this risk is the establishment and implementation of a robust chart of policies and procedures including Privacy Policy, Access NI Disclosure Check, Child Protection Policy and the renewal and training of staff and tutors in these areas. Online Protocols introduced in 20/21 where reviewed and maintained throughout the year.:-

The Trustees are satisfied that the necessary policies and procedures are in place to safeguard staff and participants, and ensure that the benefits provided outweigh any potential harm.

The second main area of Risk Management has focused on the financial stability of the Charity and has resulted in the Trustees investing in scenario planning in the event of possible future funding reductions. A key element in the management of financial risk is via the reserves policy and the Charity's ability to increase unrestricted reserves. To this end, as part of the Charity's Strategic Plan for the period 2021 – 2026, we will seek to secure at least three year grant funding from alternative funders in order to give us the resources to establish and deliver new commercial/sales/marketing opportunities and build and blend on activities and styles of delivery.

While successful in securing 3 year funding for a new post of Project Development Manager,, we have been unsuccessful in securing funding for our posts of Programme Coordinator

beyond Sept 25 , full cost recovery for the post of School Manager and Administrator ,and in year rising overhead costs. These factors were prominent in the decision to voluntary close ATCMS in November 2025.

Objectives and Activities

The purposes of the Charity are: – (a) advancement of the arts and culture, particularly but not exclusively the art of traditional and contemporary music; (b) advancement of education; (c) promotion of such other charitable purposes as may from time to time be determined.

The main activities undertaken in relation to our purposes

In planning the Charities programme of activities for the year, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit including fee charging. Affordability and access to the programme is important and in setting the level of class fees, the trustees give careful consideration to the accessibility of our activities for those on low incomes.

The focus of the Charities programme is to provide affordable and accessible opportunities for those living within disadvantaged areas of Belfast to engage and participate in music activities. This is achieved through the provision of a rolling programme of Irish traditional and contemporary music classes, workshops, performances and examinations. The majority of our class activities were delivered face-to-face and maintained a reduced level of online class services, via Zoom, for our beneficiaries.

During the year, our programme of activities involved –

1. Musical Instrument Classes:

Pursuing the Charity's purpose of 'Advancement of the Arts & Culture', in total we delivered 971 tutorial music classes during the year. On average, class delivery equated to 33 classes per week that consisted of our own music class programme and service provision class delivery. All of our activities were delivered in disadvantaged areas of Belfast. Overall, 566 individuals engaged in our music classes, workshops, performances and other activities, during the year.

2. Performances:

We delivered 6 end of term live performance concerts in the venues where classes are held. These were performed by the class participants, our main beneficiaries, and we also engaged in a further 46 performances during community festivals and events. In total, approximately 45 participants took part in performances that attracted in the region of 20,000 audience numbers overall and who seen the beneficiaries showcase their achievement's and talent.

3. Examinations:

Through the Charity's programme of activities, the 'Advancement of Education' was addressed via the provision of music classes, which are structured to follow the progressive syllabuses of a variety of examination boards. In this period, 12 of our pupils engaged in accredited examinations, via the LCM and RGT Boards (LCM for traditional instruments and RGT for contemporary guitar). All passed, achieving Merit and Distinction awards.

4. Workshops:

During the year, the Charity's programme entailed the delivery of 47 music workshops, which were delivered in various community venues. Participants were provided with tin whistles and bodhrans, giving them the opportunity to join in. These were designed to inspire young people's interest in Arts and Culture and to encourage participation; workshops were provided 'free of charge'. Over 350 individuals attended and benefited from the workshops.

Achievements and Performance

The trustees continued to meet monthly, face-to-face and also via Zoom whichever was most convenient. Monthly Board Meetings provided the forum for planning, timely monitoring, evaluation and budgetary control. Our manager provided monthly project updates to the Board and any variation from the proposed timetable was highlighted. The Board also reviewed how the delivery of our programme was meeting our original targets and the needs of the beneficiaries we serve.

Through the Charity's 'Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures', the Trustees used information from Registration Forms, Attendance Records, Questionnaires and Activity Data, etc. which provided information that allowed the monitoring of class provision and project progress, against the main targets on a term by term basis.

Records of Examination Entrants, Grades and Pass Rates were updated and reported upon to inform the Evaluation Procedure. Participant and Audience numbers attending workshops and performance events were collected on a term by term / event by event basis.

Feedback from participants was reviewed through 'questionnaires, comment forms, interviews, etc; in accordance with the Charity's procedures. Feedback was also sought from a wider beneficiary group, e.g.: parents, community workers and schools; this enabled the Trustees to identify the broader impact of the project on the community.

During 24/25, we maintained our normal activities. Class provision reduced slightly by 2% and participant / beneficiary numbers also decreased by 32%, based on last year's (23/24) figures. We increased workshops delivery by 30% while examination entry levels reduced by 30%. Performance delivery increased during the year by 6%. In comparison with our actual delivery figures, we managed to achieve the desired outcomes for the benefits to participants. The trustees have continued to implement the Charities Strategic Plan 2021-2026

The table below shows the growth in activities from 23/24 to those achieved in 24/25.

	Actual Achievements for 2023 / 2024	Actual Achievements for 2024 / 2025
Music Classes	991	971
Workshops	36	47
Performances	49	52
Examination Entries	17	12
Participants	835	566
Audience	18,000	20,000

We positively responded through the delivery and continued development of our programme-evidenced through participant feedback and testimonials detailed below; the main benefits that derive from the Charity's work and impact directly on the beneficiaries, are:

Increased Skills and Personal Development –

- children and young people living within disadvantaged areas, have access and opportunities to participate in affordable arts and cultural activities, where such facilities and resources would not be available.
- develop practical musical skills
- team-work, self-discipline, social skills, communication and respect are encouraged and enhanced
- encourages creativity, raises ambition, improves confidence and self-esteem

- our tutors are supportive, give praise, reassure and encourage the children to progress at their own pace

Increased Educational and Employability Opportunities –

- participants gain accredited music examinations
- young people can demonstrate their ability to apply themselves to a specific discipline such as music and attaining an accredited qualification strengthens this – contributing to their educational and employment opportunities in their future
- a positive outcome of learning to play a musical instrument, 'in the future', participants are able to demonstrate that they have ability, discipline, confidence and skills that will enhance opportunities when seeking employment or entry into university.
- some participants progress to more advanced levels of playing and move on to learn the skills of teaching and sharing their knowledge with others.

Improved Relationships with Family, Friends and Others –

- an outcome of the Charity's activities, evidenced on the experience of our tutors, is that young people and children participating showed positive changes relative to being disruptive, restless in class, mixing better, interactive, attention spans and more attentive.
- confirmed by parents, others showed positive changes within and outside of the home – more engagement, less introvert, better relationships, mixing with others.
- the Charity's programme of activities also impacts positively on young people, especially those who demonstrate shyness; and as a result, they are more confident to express themselves and show-off their abilities to others, both at a peer level, a family and wider public level.
- the Charity's programme assisted older people to strengthen social networks, learn something new, build confidence, improve opportunities to have fun, improve physical and mental well-being.

Testimonials from beneficiaries:

1. My daughter Aoife has attended An Droichead for around eight years. The classes have taught her tin whistle, given her confidence to perform and nurtured a love of traditional music. I would like to thank you and particularly Amy for your hand in instilling that appreciation of traditional music.
2. Connie loved her guitar lessons, thank you to all the staff, especially Omar Connie's guitar teacher...
3. My son has really enjoyed his banjo lessons and everyone in his class. Thank you.
4. My son loved his drum class and gained so much from it, Leo was amazing with him
xx

Financial Review

The charity achieved a net income deficit of £4,154 from a total income of £164,247.
(For 2024: Net income deficit was £27,830 from a total income of £99,157).

Our principal funding sources were grants from the ACNI, Screen NI, A&B along with self-generated income from Class Fees and fundraising.

The support of the community and our funders continues to be essential to maintaining our varied programme of activities.

Pricing Policy

Our pricing policy reflects our strategy of enabling people in Belfast, especially children and young people living within disadvantaged areas, to have access and opportunities to participate in arts and cultural activities, at an affordable price offering value for money. Class Fees remain at £40 per term for both 'face to face' and online classes. Attendance at concerts, workshops and performances are generally for free. As part of the Charity's Strategic Plan for the period 2021 – 2026, our pricing policy will be reviewed to investigate scaled pricing and other commercial metrics.

Reserves Policy

Unrestricted funds are needed to provide funds which can be applied to specific projects to enable these projects to be undertaken at short notice, to cover the running costs of the Charity for a limited period should there be a significant shortfall in projected income and to allow for investment in Change/Strategic Development initiatives. The amount of unrestricted funds held at 31st March 2025 was £14,712 (For 2024: £26,502).

Trustees discussion of unrestricted reserves is ongoing throughout the year so that financial challenges and opportunities and their implications for unrestricted reserves, operational activities of the School and its future plan can be considered. Cashflow is important in the light of new information about timing and trends in income and expenditure. These factors were taken into consideration at the time of signing the accounts.

Auditors

A resolution to re-appoint the auditors, O'Hara Shearer, will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

Small Company Exemption

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Responsibilities of the Trustees

The charity trustees (who are also the directors of Andersonstown Traditional & Contemporary Music School for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. The Trustees present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2025. The Trustees confirm that they comply with the requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice which applies to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1st January 2015).

Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

Therefore, these Financial Statements are not prepared on a going concern basis. The Trustees made the decision on 7th Aug 2025 to wind down and close ATCMS because we are finding it difficult to secure sufficient income (both own Earned income & Grant funding) to meet budget and cash flow forecasts for 25/26 and meet the requirements of our Unrestricted Reserves policy. It is with sadness that the Trustees have concluded that, after 34 years of operation, we should close on a voluntary basis at the end of November 2025. The Trustees consider it no longer appropriate to prepare the Financial Statements on a going concern basis, given that the decision has been made. We will keep our stakeholders informed about the planned closure, and the financial statements depart from accounting standards and the Charities SORP (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006, to the extent necessary to give a true and fair view.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

By order of the Trustees:

Valerie Quinn (Treasurer)

Date: 13/10/25

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'V' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.