

Kiddies Castle AGM – 8th October 2024

Chairperson's Report

Firstly, I'd like to welcome you all here to Kiddies Castle's AGM for the 2024-2025 year. And thank you for taking the time to come along, it's much appreciated by the entire Kiddies Castle Team.

I'd like to thank a number of people who have been key to the running of Kiddies Castle during the previous 12 months, and indeed the 2 years I've been involved.

Firstly, I'd like to thank Ann Dixon for helping us with staff changes and also providing valuable advice and assistance the staff during a busy year. With a new Leader and Deputy, Ann was a great sounding board for the team.

Many of you will be aware that Mary Holgate retired at the end of the last school year. Mary had been at Kiddies Castle for more years than she would like me to disclose, and she has helped many children and parents over the years. She will always be associated with Kiddies Castle and I would like to thank her for all of her help and support during my time as chairperson.

We have been very fortunate to have a great committee in place, with everyone willing to help and do what was required to ensure we could allow Kiddies Castle to provide the valuable service that it does for the local community. I'd like to especially thank Maire, Catherine and Andy who stayed on in roles in the committee for a 2nd year despite their children having moved on to P1.

On the staffing side of things, I have already spoken about Mary but we had a very special team of Maeve, Niamh, Yvonne and Natasha who all had new roles to learn whilst delivering the high quality service for all the children. The entire group really stepped up and were a pleasure to deal with. Maeve took on a big job and has grown day by day, and it's been great to see and hear the things she has planned for Kiddies Castle. Niamh has sadly left us to continue to her education and I know her positivity will be missed by everyone. Yvonne has been with Kiddies Castle for a long time but stepped up into the role of assistant and has been a great addition to the team. Like Maeve, it's been great to see her grow in confidence and continue to develop. Natasha came into the setting last year as a cleaner and I can't overstate how important her reliability and high standards are. So much so that she has now stepped up to a part time assistant role which is great to see.

With Mary's retirement, I'm delighted that Kaitlyn has now joined us as Deputy Leader. She has hit the ground running and has embraced everything about the Kiddies Castle ethos. I hear she's a great baker so make sure you come along to the craft fair and find out for yourself.

Not wanting to repeat myself from last year's AGM but as with all charities, funding is one of the main concerns and it's something that we as a committee have spent a lot of time trying to address. We have undertaken a fundraising project where we have sought support from local businesses and thankfully, we have been able to raise c. £8,000 during this and I'd like to thank everyone that has donated and to those involved who made the request or had a conversation. We will be thanking each of these businesses over social media during the school year.

As a parent of a child has attended previously and with one still to attend, it's not lost on me or anyone in the committee, that the onus falls to the parents to help raise the money and support our fundraisers, and I'd just like to thank everyone for any donations that have been made. It literally is a case of every penny counts.

I'd like to thank Paddy Gillen also for his work on submitting a number of successful grant applications which has proved invaluable.

In terms of the setting itself, I think it's a very exciting time to be involved in Kiddies Castle. We have a great team, a team that I think the children will love to spend time with and learn from.

My final point is in relation to the committee for this year. I'm aware that a number of the current committee are not seeking to join the committee for this year as their children have moved on from Kiddies Castle. Again, I would like to thank them for their help and I'd ask everyone who is able to do so, to give real thought to joining the committee. Without one, Kiddies Castle won't be able to operate which would be a massive loss to the community.

Finally, after an enjoyable 2 years, I would also like to step down as chairperson although I will remain involved to ensure a smooth handover to another chairperson. I feel like the time is right for a fresh face with a great team in place. For anyone who would consider taking on this role, or another role such as Treasurer or Secretary, all I can say is that you won't know less about what needs done than I did when I first took the role. It's daunting and it's different, but it's incredibly rewarding. During my time I've been postman Pat who has collected Santa letters, I've watched the children meet Santa, I've heard the laughs and seen the smiles from children as they played, and that's before I mention how much I've learnt. In short, it's definitely something worth doing.

Thank you.