



POLISH LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND AFFAIRS
TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT
2022-2023

NIC107785

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1.Introduction

The Polish Language, Culture, and Affairs is a constituted organisation created by the Polish emigrants. We are registered Charity (NIC107785) and company ltd recognized by Companies House. We do run Polish Saturday school POLCA for children from Polish families or mixed relationships. Our school is to provide an additional Polish education: Polish language, history, geography of Poland, art, and culture. We do have a team of teachers and assistants and several volunteers, including Board members. Polish Saturday school started in 2017 and it is our main project. As an organisation we do support Polish community in Northern Ireland at many different fields. We are also cooperating with the local organisations and bodies, working as a part of multi-cultural Belfast.

2. Year 2021 – 2022

We have started in September 2021 with over 150 pupils. Due covid restrictions and agreement taken between POLCA and our partner Harding Memorial Primary we were obliged to not exceed this number of attending children, to avoid risk of spreading the virus. This unfortunately was the reason why we could not accept more applicants, however, when the restrictions were lifted, we could bring more young people to our organisation. In September 2022, the number of our pupils reached 170 and we can expect that the next season can be even higher, as the Polish emigrant community is one of the largest in Northern Ireland. Even though many Poles are permanently settled in UK and Ireland and coexisting with the local communities, they are strongly interested to cultivate Polish language, culture, and art. The Polish community want our children to be able speak Polish language and gain an acknowledge about our country of origin, also because many of our families are existing in Poland.

Due the number of the children we had to increase a number of teachers and assistant – it was 20-22 people working for Saturday school. We also allocated several young volunteers – mostly teenagers to every class. Some of these young people attended to POLCA school in the past.

During this year we faced several different nature problems, starting with post-brexity reality and financial difficulties of group of our parents. Another significant matter was an unprovoked Russian aggression to Ukraine, Poland's neighbour, and the country whose history and roots are related to Poland. To show our support to the fighting Ukrainians we have organised on 5th of March 2022 collection for Ukraine, in cooperation with **Polish Consulate** and **Harding Memorial Primary**. We have received a great response not only from Polish community but also from many other Belfast people, among them many residents of Cregagh road area.

3. Year 2022-2023

We have started a new school season in September 2022 with 170 pupils and 22 teachers. The number of our young participants was changing during a year, as some of our pupils were leaving school for different reasons-moving area, or leaving UK for Poland, however we still had a number of new

applicants. That allowed us to keep the same number of children, however we are aware, that with so many new applications we need to consider an opening of another unit in the future.

Usual number of activities has been provided during a year, with a few new events. In October 2022 we have restarted POLCA Sport Club Programme, as a promotion of the physical activity is one of our priorities. Again, we had several of the young (mostly teenagers) volunteers, who have been allocated to all classes.

In March 2023 POLCA has been granted a membership by the Education Authority in Northern Ireland, as we have met criteria of Youth Club requested by EA.

In April 2023 POLCA hosted Cross Cultural Polish Academy – a conference dedicated various aspects of education for Polish community abroad. Several workshops and lectures were held and a number of teachers from various Polish Saturday schools and organization participated in this event. Cross Cultural Polish Academy was organised in cooperation with ORPEG- Institute for Development of Polish Education Abroad – a Polish government organization supporting Polish education abroad.

In June 2023 POLCA has been visited by the representants of Armenian Foundation, who provided a several workshops and lectures for our children and teachers, regarding history of this well settled in Poland community, history of the Polish-Soviet war 1920 and...the historical board and card games, created by the young Polish teachers for the children and youth. These games are based on Polish history and acknowledge of some aspects and facts of the history is necessary to participate in that sort of activity.

We have closed the season with the great Children's Day- an event with several activities, workshops and sport competitions for our children and parents. This took place on the ground and in the hall of Malone Rugby Club, who kindly granted as an access to their facilities.

Season 2023-24 has started in September, with the same number of pupils (around 170) and teachers (22) and these numbers have not changed until December 2023.

4. Events and celebrations

Carnival Ball for POLCA children – 11/02/ 2023

A great costume party with several games and competitions organised by the teachers and parents in cooperations with other local organizations.

Cross Cultural Polish Academy – 21/04/2023

A conference for Polish teachers from Polish Saturday Schools in Northern Ireland, hosted by POLCA, organised in cooperation with ORPEG-Institute for Development of Polish Education Abroad, in relation to important aspects of Polish education abroad.

Constitution of the 3rd May Day – 06/05/ 2023

Organised in cooperation of the Polish Consulate, in memory of the first Polish Constitution, also known as Constitution of the 3 May 1791. This is one of the most important national celebrations in Poland. Our children could participate in workshops, games and competitions and learn about Polish history.

Children's Day – 03/06/2023

An event held by POLCA every year in Malone Rugby Club – games and competitions for the children and parents including football tournament and art competitions with over 200 participants. It was organised with support of the Polish Consulate, local Polish businesses and – most important – by the parents of our pupils.

"Put the belt on!" –10/06/2023

An event organised in cooperation with the Armenian Foundation- games, workshops and lectures related to the Polish -Lithuanian Commonwealth history, Polish-Soviet war 1920, and a history of Armenian Community in Poland

End of School Year -24/06/2023

A ceremony of the end of school year – a great meeting of teachers, children, and parents. Children have been awarded for their hard work during this year and the parent could accompany them during the event.

3 Years Old Admission Ceremony - 07/10/2023 *

An official ceremony of "acceptance" dedicated to the youngest group in presence of their parents. This ceremony is usually organised once a year in October, to create a bond between the school and new pupils.

Polish Independence Day 11 November – 12/11/2023 *

A celebration in memory of the Independence of Poland, regained on 11/11/ 1918, after 123 years of Russian, Prussian, and Austrian occupation. This day is one of more important for our community. A variety of different activities were provided, including poetry tournament, history workshops and art competitions. As usual a group of our pupils and teachers have visited Milltown Cemetery to commemorate the Polish Military graves. Groups of eldest pupils visited an Ulster Aviation Association in Lisburn– to have an opportunity to see all gathered planes and other equipment in UAA hall, a part of the exhibition in this place is dedicated to Polish Pilots fighting in UK during the II World War. This trip was organised with significant help of For Your Freedom & Ours- an organisation promoting Polish military men history in UK.

"Dictation competition" – 02/12/2023

A Polish Language exercise competition held by the Polish Saturday School in Newry. A group of our pupils travelled to Newry to participate in the Language competition with the great success, winning some awards.

Christmas in POLCA - 16/12/2023 *

A celebration known also as "Jaselka" – one of the Polish traditions celebrated with Christmas songs and performances created by our pupils, with – of course – Santa's visit! This year an event took place in Willowfield Parish Hall-thanks to generosity of Willowfield Parish Community of Woodstock Road Belfast

*Similar events were organised in the past seasons

5. POLCA current Board

Chairman – rev David Samuel Armstrong

Reappointed for further term at the Annual General Meeting on 13/01/2024.

Secretary – Aleksander Paprocki

Reappointed for further term at the AGM on 13/01/2024.

Trustee - Mateusz Gawlik

Reappointed for further term at the Annual General Meeting on 13/01/2024.

Trustee – John Cieslik

Reappointed for further term at the AGM on 13/01/2024.

Former Trustees:

Trustee – Jacek Kocoń – passed away on 18/08/2022.

Trustee – Przemysław Straus – temporary member from 25/08/2022 to 19/08/2022.

6.Supporting Organizations

During financial year 2022-2023, POLCA was supported by:

Aid the Poles in the East Foundation

Polish Foundation supporting Polish community abroad in cooperation with Polish government.

Armenian Foundation

An organisation of Polish Armenians- a community settled in Poland since XVI century-bonded with Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Republic of Poland

ORPEG- Institute for Development of Polish Education Abroad

A Polish government body supporting Polish Education abroad

Youth Action

This body usually provides access NI checks for POLCA, as our organisation has YA membership

Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council supported POLCA Sport Club in the season 2022-2023- fund received helped us to cover part of expenses for the club activity and enabled us to pay an additional sport equipment.

Education Authority Northern Ireland

POLCA has been granted a membership of EA as a body meeting criteria of EA Youth Club

Polish Consulate in Belfast

Polish Consulate in Belfast supporting various projects dedicated to development of Polish community in Northern Ireland in cooperation with Polish Authorities.

For Your Freedom & Ours

An organisation promoting Polish Military Men, fighting during II World War based in UK.

In the past POLCA was also supported by: Wspolnota Polska Foundation, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Volunteer Now, Halifax Foundation and Black Asian Minority Ethnic.

7. Future plans and projects

At the beginning of POLCA our members recognised that to develop the organization POLCA must operate at many different fields. We had many plans- some of them have been implemented, start of the other was delayed due different reasons. Failure of some other programs was caused by the number of unpredictable factors: covid 19, Brexit, war in Ukraine. The other reason, why we could not run planned in the past projects is lack of permanent sources of funding, as we cannot operate depending only on membership fees or grants. As we also have lost some funding sources (Wspolnota Polska Foundation) the Board of POLCA decided to concentrate on the Saturday school as our priority project. However, the growing number of pupils and a need to provide another form of activities for pupils leaving the school (teenagers 11+) means that we will have to consider new plans and opportunities in the future.

8. Finances (01/06/2022 – 31/05/2023)

Total incomes: 68176

Total expenses: 69880

Net profit/loss: - 1704

All other figures can be found in POLCA Micro-entity Accounts for 31/05/2023.

This report was created by the secretary of the Board.

Aleksander Paprocki

On behalf of the Board

