

FIRST STEP PRE-SCHOOL LTD

Annual Report

To 31st July 2011

This report covered by pages 1 to 10, along with the attached financial statements, was approved by the Trustees for presentation at the Annual General Meeting of First Step Pre-School Ltd on 12th October 2011.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by:

Clara Mason, Chairperson

Date

The chairperson presents this report with the financial statements of the company for the year ended 31 July 2011.

INCORPORATION AND CONSTITUTION

First Step Pre-School Ltd is a registered charity (No 1022996) and is registered in England as a company (No 5885935). The company was incorporated on 25th July 2006 and commenced trading on 1st August 2006.

The Pre-school's current constitution was formally adopted at the Annual General Meeting of 2002

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY AND OBJECT OF THE CHARITY

The principal activity and object of the company and charity, in the period under review, was to advance the education of children below compulsory school age. The Pre-school owns a building situated on leased land at Christ the King School in Thornbury and rents a second building at Crossways Infant School, also in Thornbury. Sessions run concurrently at both sites, where qualified and friendly staff provide stimulating and creative play, that enables learning to take place in a fun and secure environment. We look upon pre-school as the first stepping-stone to school and school life.

MISSION STATEMENT

Working together to provide quality care and a foundation for life long learning.

BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

First step pre-school has been educating children and benefitting the community of Thornbury for the last thirty years. We welcome all children in the local community from every background.

Our work with children from 2.5 years to school age means we help children learn and develop important social skills they will take with them into school and beyond. We lay important foundations in skills such as turn taking, staying safe, communication and language development, teamwork and conflict resolution. All these skills enable our children to be a responsible member of their local community.

Our work means we work closely with all the local primary schools. This work is of benefit to our children and to the schools themselves as well as the wider community. We often visit local schools and this year we have taken children to see an infant school production of "The Gruffalo," Easter assembly, a royal wedding activity morning and many, many other events. We also work closely with our local schools to prepare our children for starting school by visiting the reception class and using school facilities for PE and other sessions.

As well as local schools, we work with our local SureStart Children's Centre. They used our premises in Aug 2010 whilst their own were being refurbished. We are also investigating running joint sessions with our families and those that attend the Centre.

The work we do with the children in our care is of great benefit to the wider community as our staff are a source of information and expert knowledge on many aspects of childcare and we impart this knowledge to our families. Our staff are always willing to advise and discuss such issues as potty training, diet and mealtimes, sleep and behaviour management. This is a real source of support to local families and so the wider community.

Our pre-school is run by a management committee made up of parent volunteers. This is another way in which we benefit the community as we provide our parents with the opportunity to contribute to the development and running of our pre-school through this voluntary work. An important aspect of the committee's work is in fundraising for pre-school and in doing this we work a lot within the local community. For example we have links to our local community garden project, local businesses who donate to our events and we have run a number of events including a toy sale, Easter Fayre and Fashion show. We also participate in community events such as Thornbury Carnival.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – Clara Mason

The new committee was elected at our AGM in the Autumn term and it was good to see a number of familiar faces remain on the committee as well as welcome some new additions.

I would like to thank everyone on the committee for all their help, support, ideas and contributions throughout the year. We have worked well as a team and I have really valued the commitment people have made. The fundraising team have, as always, been very busy under the direction of Emma Curtis. We have benefitted from Emma's experience in fundraising this year especially in the development of a new fundraiser- the Easter Eggstravaganza . This was a big new event and it was great to see so many staff, committee members and parents involved on the day. Laura Smithson has done a great deal of work designing, setting up and managing our new website which I am certain will prove a real asset to pre-school. I would like to thank Gary and Clare for their invaluable help and support as Treasurer and Vice-Chair respectively and to Helen in her role as secretary.

I would, of course, like to thank the staff for all their hard work this year. It is so fantastic to be involved with an organisation with such dedicated professionals who care so much about the work they do. The results of our parent/carer questionnaires were again full of positive comments about the work of the staff and they should feel rightly proud of all they have achieved.

I will be remaining on the committee next year and hope to continue in the role of Chair. I look forward to continuing to work on developing the role of the committee, our communication with parents and encouraging more involvement from parents. I am also looking forward to working further to develop how we promote the great work the pre-school does.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Gary Adams

I am pleased to report that the Pre School has made a small financial surplus of £4,210 on a turnover of £111,312. I would like to thank the managers at both sites, all the Pre School staff and the Committee for their help in achieving this positive result.

The surplus will be carried forward into 2011/12 to help offset unavoidable cost pressures including increased gas and electricity costs.

Looking forward, the constraint on the Pre Schools main source of income, the government nursery education grant, is likely to continue as the government tackles the public sector budget deficit. On this note, the importance of fundraising activity to help maintain and improve the facilities and equipment available to the children remains. I would like to recognise and thank the fundraising team for another successful year. It's great to see the improvements that this has enabled at both sites, benefitting both the environment and the play equipment available for the children.

LEADERS' REPORTS – Jenny Harris with news from Christ the King site

It has been another busy and successful year which has seen us being part of the Every Child a Talker campaign, aimed at assessing children's speech and communication and identifying those that may need additional support. We have made the most of our new outside area by growing lots of vegetables and fruit. The children have particularly enjoyed looking for minibeasts, playing in the sandpit and transporting each other around the garden on the trolley we purchased from fundraising money.

We celebrated Grandparents Day by inviting them to come in and help and some of them talked to the children about what it was like when they were a child. As always we took Harvest gifts into the school, which were later distributed to the elderly of Thornbury. Bob the librarian brought Treasure Chests for the children and read them a story.

Christmas was a very busy time as usual, with all the children making lots of Christmas goodies! The afternoon children enjoyed parties at pre-school and the morning children performed their Nativity called "The Baby's Coming" for their families and had a Christmas party jointly with the Crossways children at Cattle Country, which included a train ride to meet Santa.

Another learning experience for the morning children was Bedtime Stories, when we all came back to Pre-school in our pyjamas and enjoyed stories and hot chocolate with spray cream and marshmallows! We also celebrated the Chinese New Year of the Rabbit by doing Tai Chi, dragon dancing and tasting Chinese food. The children learned about life cycles by watching the development of tadpoles, stick insects and caterpillars. Zoolab came to visit again, bringing with them a wide range of creatures, including a cockroach, frog, snake, tarantula and rats, which the children got the chance to touch if they wanted. Some parents came in to share experiences with the children talking about life in France, visiting Australia and photographing wildlife in Tanzania.

In March we raised £65 for Comic Relief by dressing in red, decorating cakes and sticking a red nose on the Gruffalo. We went to watch Crossways Reception classes perform "The Gruffalo" and also went to watch their Easter Assembly. Back at Pre-school we celebrated

Easter with an Easter Egg Hunt. We celebrated the Royal Wedding by making a wedding collage, crowns/tiaras and having a picnic. We borrowed the handwashing machine and dental health box from South Gloucestershire Council, so that the children could learn about the importance of personal hygiene.

The morning children had a visit to the library and at the third attempt the police came to visit us, bringing their police car for the children to explore. Also third time lucky, we were able to have our Sports Day and Family picnic, which had been postponed due to bad weather. Lots of families joined us in the Carnival Parade, dressing as butterflies, ladybirds, bees etc. The children also put on an End of Year Concert, singing their favourite songs from the past year and an Art Exhibition for their families.

We have made the most of the school's facilities which helps aid the children's transition to school, by visiting the Reception Class, exploring their woodland and using their hall, playgrounds, fields and adventure play equipment, which the children have enjoyed. We have also spent some more fundraising money by having some playground markings put down on the school playground, choosing a road circuit, with a roundabout, petrol pump and traffic lights – great fun to drive around!

The year came to an end with everyone dressing up as pirates or princesses and all the children had parties. The morning children got together with their Crossways friends for a slightly damp party at the Chantry, though still had fun having their faces painted and on the bouncing castle. Their families joined us for a picnic too.

LEADERS' REPORTS – Penny Smith with news from Crossways site

We were sad to say goodbye to Tracey at the beginning of the year and Carol at the end of the year. Claire has started her NVQ level 3.

During the course of the year the morning children have taken part in a wide range of activities to help prepare them for school, including visiting the reception classes and playing with reception children in their playground. They have also had many visitors and we have had students on work experience or college placements also with us. As Jenny has mentioned, Zoolab returned again with their collection of snakes, gerbils, snails and other small creatures. We celebrated safety week by inviting the police who brought their car and the children were able to sit inside it, use the flashing lights and later on in the year Dawn and Kelly came for lunch bringing their sandwiches. In addition for road safety week we had a visit from a South Gloucestershire traffic warden, who showed the children the correct way to cross the road and kindly gave us a road safety pack.

Staff from the library brought treasure chests for the children and in July we walked to the library where we were read a story and had biscuits and squash. As usual we walked to the local shops and to visit Tesco, where the children were able to use the tills. We also had a pyjama evening with bedtime stories, torches, hot chocolate and milkshakes. We all enjoyed Sports Day where there were races for younger brothers and sisters as well as parents.

A great deal of excitement and interest was generated by the emergence of our butterflies from their chrysalises – some of which actually happened during session times! We successfully grew tomatoes, beans, strawberries, butternut squash and lots of herbs which we ate at snack time. Also, if you look in our garden you can see Claude the caterpillar growing.

At Christmas all the children enjoyed the parties and the morning children performed “The First Christmas” play for their families. We also ended the year with a performance to families about our activities through the year.

We have also benefited from the efforts of the fundraising team and have received a new canopy and fence so that we could update our garden and make it larger. We also purchased a woodwork bench, tools, Christmas dressing up, some story books, CDs and lots more!

Both leaders would like to thank all volunteers who have done rota duty through the year. It really does make a difference.

FUNDRAISER’S REPORT – Emma Curtis

The fundraising calendar at First Step was as always very busy. It helps that many fundraising events have now become well established.

Annual Toy Sale, November 2010, Methodist Hall

We had a fantastic selection of toys donated by parents and local families. The sale itself was well attended and items that were competitively priced sold well. Having said that, the profits from toy sales were down this year. We recognise that this market is becoming increasingly competitive as other organisations run similar events, and supermarkets and other retailers offer low price toys. However profits from the sale of cakes more than made up for the drop in toy sales. Thanks must be given to all those who generously donated delicious cakes and biscuits for the sale.

Calendars

The run up to Christmas was really busy. The calendars with the children’s portraits continue to be popular although sales were slightly down this year. We owe a big thank you to Rolls Royce for the printing as well as many other local businesses who sponsored this product.

Raffle

We held our Christmas Raffle and again benefited from the huge generosity of our parents and friends of the preschool. In fact we were able to produce at least 8 quality Christmas Hampers and despite the economic downturn local businesses were also really generous in their donations. Whilst tickets sales were up on last year and we sold all our tickets we were unable to capitalise on the demand for tickets due to the high cost of printing more tickets. I would strongly recommend that the committee investigate obtaining estimates from other printers to see if we can obtain a more competitive price for our tickets and if this is not possible we need to increase the price of tickets.

Christ the King and Crossways School Christmas Fayres

This year we worked collaboratively with our two host primary schools to run Christmas stalls at their Christmas events. We ran a Guess the Weight of the Christmas Cake and Guess the Weight of Santa’s Sack and tattoos at CTK. Many thanks to Annette Johnson for the donation of the home made Christmas cake and to Hasbro Toys for the toys.

At Crossways we offered tattoos and a game created and designed by Selina.

Easter Eggstravaganza

We had a quiet third term as we got ready to prepare for the big fund raising event of the preschool year the Easter Eggstravaganza

These events proved to be very popular and with wonderful weather and the successful selection of a suitable date (the first Saturday of the School Easter Holidays) this event was very well supported. We offered pony rides, (quite stressful and exhausting - many thanks to Suzie and Penny and her children) a bouncy castle, the hugely profitable and successful Easter Chocolate tombola that was very popular with the children, (again many thanks to the generous donations of parents and to Karen for organising). We also offered an inflatable football pitch, biscuit decorating, Easter Egg hunt as well as Easter crafts and an Easter Bonnet competition, face painting, nail painting and tattoos. As ever the Café was also extremely profitable again thanks to the generous cake baking abilities of our parents and many thanks to Marie and Jenny for running this very busy stall.

This event was also a great piece of PR for the preschool, it was reported in the Gazette and we had included Thornbury Community Garden and CTK PTFA. Many families from the school were also in attendance on the day.

The event was hugely successful but only possible to the huge amount of volunteers that the preschool were able to secure on the day. There were approximately 30 people who offered their services on the day to support this event.

Photonix Photographers October and May

Many thanks to Clara who organised these profitable events entirely. As parents I know we all appreciate the opportunity to see professional photos of children and to share them with our friends and family.

Invitation Books April

Following the successful sale of Invitation books last year we again offered these discount books for sale to our preschool families. Take up was better this year, perhaps word has got out about the savings that can be made. We hope to continue to offer these books again in the future.

CTK Summer Fayre

We ran a preschool stall offering tattoos, cards for sale and a target ball game obtained from the Toy Library. Attendance was definitely lower this year, perhaps due to the change of date, it followed the summer half term.

Crossways did not run a Summer Fayre.

Welly Wang

Held at both sites, this was very popular and was well attended with a great atmosphere as parents cheered on all the children's attempts. Thank you especially to Selina who covered the CW site for me with Laura in support.

Thornbury Carnival July

This was a very busy but successful day. The parade was well attended with many families dressed up as bugs or butterflies and it was great to see so much support for the preschool. We also ran a stall on the Mundy Playing Fields offering tattoos, a sweet tombola, a Frog Hoopla

and a Giant Connect 4. This is great PR for the preschool because most other preschools and schools choose not to run a stall, and we were able to offer an affordable stall that was attractive to children.

A huge thanks to CTK who lent us tables and a Gazebo and also to Clare Traylor who helped organise me when with just 2 days to go, it all felt a bit much!

Thank you

Clara needs a special mention who in addition to her role as Chair offered me unlimited source of support and help on all events as well as endless floats.

This Year's Learning

- You can't do this job alone, it is too big.
- I could not do this job and also apply for grants.
- As a preschool we do a lot in a year.
- Use the toy library.
- Work with the PTFAs, perhaps offer a combined Carnival stall to share the load.
- Parents are very generous at donating items in response to specific requests.
- We received more help at our events than I could have imagined.
- Don't give up with the matched giving it will pay dividends one year!

Net profit from our fundraising activities

Event	2011	2010
	£	£
Photographs	515	596
Christmas Calendars	288	373
Xmas raffle	207	165
Toy sale	202	175
Easter fundraising	604	178
Welly Wang	247	287
Invitation books	98	80
Carnival	112	-
Xmas + summer fayre	91	133
Uniform	-131	
Fashion show	-	345
Donations	250	26
Other fundraising	44	
TOTAL:	2527	2083

TRUSTEES

Trustees for the Charity are elected each year at the Annual General Meeting and are known as 'the committee'. Candidates are proposed and seconded by the AGM attendees; election is by a show of hands or a written vote. Trustees for the year 2010/11 were:

All the Trustees became effective following the AGM last year. i.e. from 6th October 2010.
The Trustees are:

Clara Mason	Chairman
Gary Adams	Treasurer
Helen Milne	Secretary

There were also the following committee members:

Clare Traylor	Vice Chairman
Emma Curtis	Fundraising Co-ordinator
Laura Smithson	IT/Website Co-ordinator
Clara Mason/Amie King	Policies Co-ordinator
Clare Rogers	Publicity Secretary
Donna Tucker	Health and Safety Representative
Helen Milne	Safeguarding Children Co-ordinator
Jennifer Darton	Parents Representative
Ruth Bilbe	Parents Representative
Wendy Shippam	Parents Representative
Justine Barnes	Parents Representative
Andrea Redman	Parents Representative
Sally Shaw	Parents Representative
Justine Stoffel	Committee Member
Sharon Borg	Committee Member
Emma Wiles	Committee Member

STAFF

Staff employed by the Charity during the past year are detailed below, along with their curriculum responsibilities:

Jenny Harris	- Leader, Christ the King and Knowledge & Understanding of the World
Penny Smith	- Leader, Crossways and Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
Crossways Site- Suzanne Golledge	- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Tracy Stringer	- Resigned August 2010
Claire Gaynor	- Creative Development Knowledge & Understanding of the World
Helen Stolliday	- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and Language, Literacy and Communication
Carol Ling	- Resigned July 2011 - Physical Development

Christ the King Site- Karen Watola	- Creative Development, Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
Amanda Starr	- Language, Literacy and Communication
Lisa French	- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Vicky Filer	- Physical Development
Both Sites- Tiffany Needham	- Book-keeper and Administrator

IMPROVEMENTS/ BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2011/12

1. Ensure financial stability for the Pre-School
2. Improve Pre-School facilities and resources we provide for the children, their families and the community.
3. To build on relationships with parents and their involvement in their children's learning and development.
4. Improve the sharing of information with other settings/carers.
5. Look at the needs of the community to establish whether we need to extend our care.

UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The unaudited financial statements for the year ended 31st July 2011 form part of this report and are attached to the end of it. The Reserves Policy of the Pre-school is outlined on the following page.

RESERVES POLICY

The funds held by First Step Pre-school fall into three categories:

Unrestricted Funds

Unrestricted Funds are needed to cover staff costs and those of administration and support without which the Pre-school could not operate.

Income levels vary during the year, but expenditure levels remain relatively constant throughout. Income is at its lowest during the Autumn term rising during the Spring to its highest level in the Summer term- this is due to the availability of voucher funding.

The Trustees consider it prudent that unrestricted funds should be sufficient to cover one month's administration and support costs. This level will ensure we have adequate resources to cover our outgoings whilst income is at its lowest level during the Autumn term. Without this funding level we would not have sufficient funds to ensure our continued operation to the end of January.

The Trustees will monitor and review this unrestricted fund reserve level with reference to income forecasts and changes in funding on an annual basis to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the Pre-school.

Restricted Funds

Restricted funds normally arise from donations or grants which have been received to meet the costs of specific items of expenditure. Occasionally, there is a time lag between the receipt of these funds and the related expenditure, thereby resulting in Pre-school holding the funds until payment is made.

Designated Funds

Designated funds are amounts specifically excluded from being used to meet the day-to-day running costs of the Pre-school. Sums raised through fundraising activities fall into this category. Such funds may be spent at the discretion of the Trustees to provide additional resources or to pay for special events outside the normal running costs of the Pre-school. In addition funds have also been set aside to cover specific items of expenditure. The Trustees have identified four designated items:

1. A fund has been established for repairs and maintenance to the building we own, which is sited at Christ the King School. It is acknowledged that buildings such as ours do not have a "long" life and that it is prudent to set aside monies for its repair or even replacement.
2. A fund to cover the cost of renegotiating the lease for Christ the King site.
3. A fund to meet any costs associated with negotiating any rent reviews at Crossways site.
4. A fund to meet the costs of acquiring a larger building to replace that currently used at the Crossways site or to acquire the lease on the existing building.

The Trustees will review this reserve level on an annual basis to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the Pre-school.