

Grey Court Education Fund Trustees' Annual Report

1 September 2019 - 31 August 2020

Objectives and Activities

The Grey Court Education Fund was set up in 2011 as a charity (1141466) and a company (07499941) limited by guarantee “to advance the education of pupils of Grey Court School by providing educational, recreational and other charitable facilities in augmentation of such facilities financed by the local education authority or the Department for Education”. The Fund works alongside the Parents Association charity (296593) for the benefit of the Grey Court school community.

Main activities during the year

Starting in 2018-19 Fund Trustees decided in 2018-19 to support the school's IT provision by purchasing a number of Chromebooks, helping to fund the costs associated with the transition to a “Google Chrome” school, and the security and charging capacity needed to help maintain this provision. Further funding was committed in February 2020 and another 30 chromebooks, licenses and a LocknCharge facility were added to the school's stock.

This proved to be a timely purchase when the government implemented the COVID-19 national lockdown in March 2020. Grey Court was able to lend Chromebooks from stock out to students who would otherwise have been digitally excluded in key exam years. This played an important role in ensuring as many students as possible could access their education at a critical time for these young people.

During the year the Fund supported the purchase of a further 60 Chromebooks, licenses and charging facilities, with the help of match funding from the Richmond Parish Lands charity. The aim of this order is to ensure that all students in non-exam years who do not have a computer on which to study at home will be able to borrow a school device.

Following the national lockdown, schools faced extraordinary expenditure items in their preparation to re-open. The need for year group “bubbles”, each with its own facilities, entrance, exit and breakout areas for before school and lunchtimes, meant a review of the entire school infrastructure.

There were insufficient toilet facilities to enable each year group to be able to operate as a bubble; the library was tired and the layout of the school's food technology suite was inappropriate for practical lesson teaching.

The decision was taken to upgrade two existing toilet blocks (one in each wing of the main school) to modern unisex facilities such that each could support a year group. Food technology was completely refurbished and the library had new flooring, lighting, furniture and bookshelves. Trustees agreed to fund up to £120,000 in refurbishments (approximately 50% of the required total), all of which would remain relevant to the school post-COVID-19..

By September 2020, it was clear that only £100,000 of the £120,000 agreed had been spent on the improvements. Trustees agreed that the remainder could be spent converting another identified and dis-used area within the main school into a small classroom that could be used immediately as a teaching preparation resource of a size that could keep staff socially distanced during the ongoing COVID restrictions. Once social distance regulations are lifted, this will be converted, as planned, into an additional small classroom.

Finally, a raft of school furniture in excellent condition was acquired from the former site of Richmond upon Thames college to replace broken and damaged school stock. This cost £10,000.

Plans for the future

A primary concern for the next five to ten years is in facilities and capacity to meet growing demand and concentration of activity on limited spaces within Grey Court School. Increased pressure is already felt on sports facilities, technical classrooms, general classrooms, wider school infrastructure and access. In addition, the Education Fund is mindful of the additional community need for appropriate spaces that the Ham Close redevelopment will pose. Trustees' plans are to invest judiciously to balance the needs for wider educational enhancement of Grey Court students while ensuring those enhancements also meet community needs.

Education Fund investment will therefore be informed by the Grey Court School ten-year development plan alongside local authority's strategic analysis of community facility need.

Financial review

The new academic year started with a concerted campaign to boost the number of new regular contributors to the Grey Court Education Fund.

The previous year (2018-19) saw a decline in year-on-year contributions of around 15%, with total contributions for the year across all streams of £50,542. The aim was therefore to impress upon parents of new joiners to Grey Court how much of a difference the Fund can make to the ability of the school to meet pupils' wider needs.

A proactive approach was taken at all year group curriculum evenings to encourage those parents in a position to contribute to do so.

The target was to boost numbers of parents donating regularly to at least 10% of the student body in each year group which would equal funds received averaging around £5,000 per month. This would enable the Fund to have greater certainty of income in order to commit to capital projects and other school enhancements.

The net result was an increase in the number of parents donating from approximately 8% of the student body to around 12% of the student body. Aside from extraordinary contributions, the monthly average donations totalled £5,000.

The majority of new contributions came on stream in the first term of the academic year, enabling trustees to see a clear pattern in monthly income emerging, at a time when school budgets were squeezed and there were many potential demands upon those accumulated funds.

Funds net of extraordinary one-off donations totalled £60,000, an increase of 17% on the previous financial year. In addition, more than £32,000 was donated via the donor tree to support the school's ambitions in particular areas, such as library and food technology.

Prior to these in-year contributions, accumulated capital at the start of the 2019-20 financial year stood at £87,919.

Some items, supported by the Fund, are ongoing commitments. Examples are the school's recycling facilities and a proportion of the director of development's salary.

While the majority of funds raised by the Education Fund (c. 80%) are unrestricted, a portion in each year is restricted funding. In the 2019-20 financial year, c.£2,000 was raised specifically for library renovations and a further £15,000 was donated on the understanding that it would help enable this project to be completed. Work on this project was undertaken in July and August 2020.

Structure

The Grey Court Education Fund was set up in 2011 as a charity (1141466) and a company (07499941) limited by guarantee "to advance the education of pupils of Grey Court School by providing educational, recreational and other charitable facilities in augmentation of such facilities financed by the local education authority or the Department for Education".

All trustees of the charity are also directors of the company.

Governance and management

In a review of governance and management Trustees took the decision to make changes to the board membership and management structure to increase the separation between trustees and school staff, and to broaden the range of community involvement. During June and July a number of school governors and parents who have been involved in fundraising for Grey Court and for the Fund were approached. There are three additional trustees whose terms of office will start in September 2020. All three are parents of students at the school, and are currently involved in the wider school community.

Helen Shore, Louise Thomas and Andree Frieze were appointed as trustees (and also as directors of the Grey Court Education Fund company) on 16 September 2020.

The governance review also concluded that Chris Rhodes, headteacher of Grey Court School, was sufficient representation from the school; and so Victoria Price and Madeline Thomas resigned as directors of the Grey Court Education Fund company and charity trustees on 16 September 2020. Trustees would like to thank Ms Price and Ms Thomas for their contributions to the running of the Fund during their tenure.

Frank Kitson remains a director of the Grey Court Education Fund company and charity trustee. He is a past parent and governor, but is otherwise independent of the school being neither a member of staff nor a current parent.

Chris Rhodes, remains a director of the Grey Court Education Fund company and charity trustee. He is the headteacher of Grey Court School.

The management of the Fund's activities is undertaken by Chris Rhodes, the headteacher, and Madeline Thomas, the school's director of development (whose work is part funded by the Fund).

LIST OF TRUSTEES

The trustees for the 2019-20 accounting period are as follows:

Francis Kitson
Christopher Rhodes
Victoria Price
Madeline Thomas

ACCOUNTS HERE