



ANNUAL REPORT

01/09/2023-31/08/2024



NORTHWEST DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL
REGISTERED CHARITY # 20200314
CHARITY TAX EXEMPTION # CHY22181
COMPANY # 614393

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LEGAL & ADMINISTRATION

Company Name: North West Democratic School

Company registered number: 614393

Charity tax exemption number: CHY22181

Charity Regulatory Authority number: 20200314

Registered office: Milkwood Farm, Tawley, Castlegal, Co. Sligo

web: sligosudburyschool.com

facebook: [SligoSudburySchool](https://www.facebook.com/SligoSudburySchool)

instagram: [@sligosudburyschool](https://www.instagram.com/sligosudburyschool)

Board of Trustees

Gayle Nagle, Chair

Maura Duignan, Company Secretary

Patrick Alan Anderson, Treasurer

Jack Feakins

Fabian Kaiser

Eloise Devaney

Pete Symmonds

Board Committees

Finance Committee: Patrick Alan Anderson, Gayle Nagle, Maura Duignan

HR Committee:, Gayle Nagle, Maura Duignan

Accountant:

Burke & Associates Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors,
45 Wine Street, Sligo F91 XV4X

Principal Bankers: AIB, Stephen St, Sligo

Solicitors: O'Hare O'Dwyer Solicitors, Greenfield Road, Sutton, D13

OUR STORY

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

North West Democratic School was founded in 2017 by a small group of committed parents and educators who perceived a real need for viable alternatives to the mainstream model of education in our society. The motivating factors that brought us to this conclusion went beyond reservations about rigid curricula, lack of non-secular options, and overcrowded classrooms. Rather, through our experiences as mainstream educators, homeschool educators and parents, we saw a need to return to more genuinely child-centered approaches to learning, to a model of education where children could learn to become responsible adults by experiencing from their earliest years the consideration and expectation of equal membership in society, with a right to an opinion and a right to be heard.

We commit to nurturing an educational atmosphere that equally respects all forms of learning, and tailors learning and personal development to individual needs. We wish to foster students' innate capacity to direct their own learning, and support them with the resources necessary to meet their self-expressed needs and personal academic goals.

PURPOSE / OBJECTIVES

The main object for which North West Democratic School was established is "*the provision of Democratic Education in the North West of Ireland for the benefit of young people, their families and the wider community.*" Specifically, our goal is to establish and maintain a living democratic environment where individual members pursue learning and personal development in the way that best meets their needs while participating in a community of self-governance and justice where each member's voice is equally valued and heard.

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Our mission is to support autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and self-reflection, empowering each individual to grow into a capable, compassionate, and self-aware member of society.

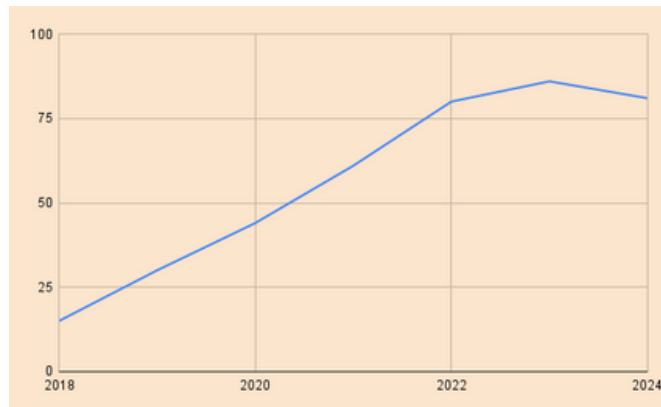
Our vision is an educational environment where each child has agency, and is supported on their chosen learning path to create the life they want. All of our activities are rooted in our core values of Freedom, Trust, Respect, and Responsibility. Values of empathy, diversity, and creativity arise from these core values.



LEADING THE WAY

ADMISSIONS

We have shown sustained growth since our inception, and projected applications for future years indicate continuation of this growth. Since 2018, we have grown from 15 to over 80 students, attracting families from around the world. We employ 12 staff.



As we are reaching capacity in our current building we anticipate a leveling off of admissions until we are able to expand our facilities. Our students are young people from a wide range of backgrounds and geographical areas who are otherwise unable to access a “level and quality” educational provision that is “appropriate to their needs and abilities”. - Education Act 1998

Between 2017 and 2024, 22 families have moved to Sligo and its environs to become members at our school. There are 82 people living and working in this rural location that would not be here if it wasn't for our enterprise.

So far, we have created 12 secure, permanent and meaningful jobs. Over the next 10 years we intend to create 12 more. These jobs have enabled our staff to sustain themselves and their families in this rural location. Our enterprise is an important provider of long-term employment in the area, both now and into the future.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

There is a pressing need for alternative models of education nationally. This is evidenced by the non-progression rates for first-year students (12% of 3rd level students drop out after their first year of studies) and the rise in the number of Irish families choosing to homeschool or seek alternative schools (from 700 in 2011 to over 1800 in 2021).

Our goal is to develop our school into a Centre of Excellence for Self-Directed Democratic Education so that stakeholders in education can observe and learn about this model.

We support new and emerging democratic schools at the foundational stage of their development. We provide training, opportunities for observation and affiliation with the Democratic Education Ireland movement,

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

We have invested in a secure base from which to expand by purchasing our school buildings and seven acres of grounds. We have planning permission for the development of our campus.

Development Plan Next Steps - Completed

- Raised €190k in gifts and donations
- Submitted Planning Permission Applications for new build
- Developed Fundraising materials to present project to donors

ABOUT US

KEY GOALS 2023-2024

- **Student Supports**

- Increase outdoor shelter spaces - Dedicated quiet building - whole school review and update of Risk Assessments including new and re-purposed spaces
- Staff CPD - continuous learning and sharing of resources
- Continue to review housekeeping laws and get a new system operating efficiently
- Mentoring focus - continued from last year and new
- young people are responsible for their own learning
- develop self-reflection skills - freedom, responsibility, community
- use new Compass software to record notes all in the one place

- **Internal Operations**

- New Admin Clerk (school secretary) role - merge of Office, Law, Management Manual, Elections, School Meeting secretary - all matters related to admin
- Compass
- Review and update Management Manual



- **Growth & Development**

- Complete planning permission process - further information - plan approach for build and timeline
- 9. Complete fundraising plan and raise / secure pledges for 2 million by Summer 2024
- 10. Continue work with DemEd Ireland to grow the movement nationally

- **Steps after Sudbury**

- Continuation of the Sligo Sudbury graduate programme
- Take first steps towards becoming a QQI provider - establishing a route to accreditation (guests)
- Continue to develop partnerships with external organisations for the purpose of apprenticeships, volunteering, and work experience.

- **Parents & Community**

- Support parents with networking opportunities - parent chat, parties, gatherings
- Support parents with deepening understanding of the model - newsletter, podcasts
- Increase parent volunteering at school
- New parent orientation and supports meeting after enrolment

The specific work undertaken in these five areas in the 2023/4 year are set out in the GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS section of the report.



OUR ACTIVITIES

OPERATING CONTEXT

We are registered with the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS) of TUSLA, Child and Family Agency - our school is a registered Independent school through this government agency. There is currently no government funding available to our school.

It is our express policy to facilitate integration with the wider community through co-operation in teaching, learning, modelling, and other experiences as may be required. We are committed to providing equality of access to education through recognizing the different needs, abilities and choices in education, fostering self-confidence in young people, and nurturing an attitude to learning that is life-long and self-motivated. We have developed collaborative relationships with Third Level Institutions of Education, local cultural institutions and local businesses.

We are founding members of the National Association of Democratic Schools, Democratic Education Ireland. Through this group we intend to effect national change, educate educators, policy makers and others on democratic education principles and the benefits to this model of education on our young people and society as a whole.

WHO BENEFITS

The primary beneficiaries of our organisation are:

1. The **children and families who** value the self-directed model of education and the culture of personal autonomy, personal responsibility, and agency that it provides. Families make this choice for a variety of reasons, some as a philosophical choice, and others because they are seeking an alternative to a system that does not meet their child's needs. The students that attend our school come from a wide range of backgrounds and geographical areas. Families have relocated from America, Europe and Ireland to attend our school.
2. The **staff members** who work at our school have the opportunity to do meaningful work and have the freedom to use their skills to enhance and individualise children's educational experience.
3. **Students of education**, at primary and secondary level, who carry out internships at our school to learn about democracy in education, child-led learning, and self-directed education.
4. **Mainstream schools** and the **Department of Education** directly benefit from the relief we provide to children whose needs are not met by mainstream educational settings. The cost of educating these children is borne directly by their families and our school, relieving the exchequer of this cost.
5. **Fledgling Democratic schools and start-up groups** in Ireland benefit from our experience through our Founders Week programme. Members of other schools can spend a week with us to understand how the theory works in practise. We also provide ongoing practical support to new schools thus increasing our impact and effecting change on a national level.

CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT

I am most grateful to our entire school community—and to every one of our students—for another successful, engaging, and enlightening year at Sligo Sudbury School.

This year we were delighted to maintain our core staff team, whose commitment, professionalism, and wholehearted support for our learning community continues to shape the vibrant culture of our school. Their dedication enables our students to flourish, and we deeply appreciate their ongoing service. Our school's visibility and outreach grew significantly. Students, parents, and staff appeared as podcast guests with the School of Empowering Education, Ireland AM, and Don Berg's Agentic Schools. In January 2024, we proudly launched A Self-Directed Life, our own school podcast dedicated to exploring diverse experiences of self-directed learning and living—both within our school and in the wider world.

Creative and collaborative endeavours thrived this year.

- The Drama Club staged a captivating performance of Appropriate Audience Behaviour, delighting everyone with its wit, talent, and originality.
- After many months of patient craftsmanship, students combined individually crocheted squares into a stunning, colourful blanket—a wonderful symbol of community effort.
- Coding Club continued to innovate and concluded the year by teaching staff how to build their own characters and games in Scratch.

Our commitment to supporting new self-directed schools continued, including welcoming staff from True Nature Sudbury School for Founder's Week. We also enjoyed a rich array of visiting expertise: professional dancer Meara Kirwin taught Sean Nós and set dancing, while a workshop on neuroscience and emotional literacy deepened our students' personal development and wellbeing skills.

Music remained a cornerstone of school life.

- Bands The Majestic Frogs and AMBER recorded an EP on cassette tape, learning skills in studio setup, equipment use, and collaborative production.
- Delirium performed on the JAM@TheSquare stage at the Queen Maeve Festival.
- The Majestic Frogs and our Voice Group lit up the Hawkswell stage during a Music Generation concert.
- Student Sean Boni even graced the stage at Vicar Street as part of Kieran Quinn's Theme Nights.

Fundraising efforts were energetic and inspiring. Our School Skipathon in June raised an incredible €4,234—an achievement made possible by the unwavering enthusiasm of our 22 students and their families. In addition, we received an extraordinarily generous €20,000 donation from a supporter who believes deeply in our vision for establishing a Centre of Excellence for Self-Directed Democratic Education. Together, with additional contributions throughout the year, nearly €25,000 was raised, enabling our architects to progress to the next phase of the building project.

A major milestone was achieved with the granting of Planning Permission in March 2024 for the development of our school site and buildings. This landmark moment was celebrated with a joyful launch event at the school. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Dougal and Deirdre at LID Architecture for their creativity, expertise, and collaborative spirit.

This year also marked transitions in governance. After five years of dedicated service, four of our Board members stepped down. We are deeply grateful for their commitment and leadership. We warmly welcome four new members, each bringing valuable skills, experience, and enthusiasm to support the school into its next chapter.

We were sad to bid farewell to Jenny, a cherished member of our staff team who moved abroad, and we wish her every success in the future.

Our annual Summer Camp thrived once again—an important connection point with the local community and a strong fundraising support for the school. Many of our students served as facilitators, gaining meaningful workplace and life experience.

We concluded the school year on a high note with the submission of our final application for planning permission for our essential school extension and the development of our Centre for Excellence.

None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of our families, friends, and benefactors. Your grants, donations, and ongoing trust sustain and inspire us. We are also profoundly grateful to our staff team and volunteers, whose dedication to our philosophy and community spirit is the heartbeat of our school.

We look ahead with optimism and determination as we enter the next chapter of our growth—progressing our building project, launching our next fundraising campaign, and continuing to strengthen and promote Democratic Education throughout Ireland through our work with Democratic Education Ireland.

With sincere thanks for your continued support,

Gayle K. Nagle
Chairperson

SCHOOL MEETING STATEMENT*

**School Meeting is the governing body of the day to day operations of the school.*

This past year has been one of steady growth, positive change, and continued flourishing for our school community. We have welcomed a gradual increase in student numbers and made significant progress in developing our infrastructure and amenities. Together with students, we created new outdoor shelter spaces that enhance our year-round use of the grounds, and we reorganised indoor areas in response to students' evolving needs, including the establishment of dedicated quiet spaces for study and research.

Students participated in a wide range of enriching local outings throughout the year. These included outdoor hikes, visits to the Art Gallery, the Engineering Fair, and the Science Fair at Atlantic Technological University Sligo, as well as Open Days at MSLETB and SCFE. Each opportunity provided meaningful learning beyond the classroom and strengthened connections with our broader community.

Staff continued to invest in their professional development, completing training in teen wellbeing and mental health, along with Microsoft Dreamspace Facilitator training. The implementation of our new administration software, Compass, has greatly improved record-keeping and streamlined communication with parents, contributing to smoother school operations.

We were especially proud to celebrate the achievements of our older students this year. Two students completed the Sligo Sudbury Graduate Program in June 2024, presenting comprehensive e-portfolios documenting their self-directed learning journeys. In addition, six students earned Gaisce Awards—two Bronze and four Silver—demonstrating resilience, initiative, and personal growth.

While we had hoped to progress in becoming a recognised QQI provider, ministerial regulations have paused new applications until criteria are finalised. Although this is disappointing, we remain committed to pursuing recognition once applications resume.

As always, we extend our gratitude to all students and staff who actively participate in our democratic governance. Your engagement, responsibility, and respect for process are what make a democratic school truly function. We also thank the Board of Trustees for their confidence, guidance, and oversight, which continue to support the healthy development of our community and its governance.

With appreciation for a successful year and anticipation for what lies ahead,

Isabel Kuroczka
School Meeting Secretary

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

The financial year 2023–2024 marked another year of growth for Sligo Sudbury School, concluding in a healthy financial position. The student population increased by 8, resulting in a corresponding rise in fee income from €252,596 to €292,366.

Fundraising income decreased from the previous year, totaling €3,798, while donations increased to €16,491, contributing to an overall moderate increase in total income from €285,393 to €320,618.

Assets decreased to €731,088 due to the purchase of the school building and site, the acquisition of a prefabricated music building, and additional on-site developments. Liabilities increased to €59,039. A balance of €262,000 remains on the loan from our landlord, Beaconsfield Properties, secured on favourable terms for the acquisition of the original school building and site. Repayments of this loan are fully budgeted for in the coming years.

Income and expenditure for the year resulted in a net surplus of €55,982, up from €44,613, primarily due to more efficient management of staff salaries and operational costs.

The Financial Management Committee of the Board is satisfied that budgetary planning and fiscal management remain prudent and appropriate, ensuring the continued safe growth of the school and its community.

Insight into Income and Expenditure

Full details of finances are provided in the detailed accounts below.

,

Patrick Alan Anderson -
Treasurer

GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

North West Democratic School is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity.

GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

North West Democratic School is in compliance with the Charities Governance Code and reviews this compliance annually.

The Company Secretary takes the lead role in compliance and completes the Compliance Form annually. The Board of Trustees reviews the completed Compliance Form and signs off on it before reporting to the Charities Regulator.

We observe best practice guidelines in our fundraising practices as recommended by the Charities Regulator.

Relevant policies are reviewed annually. These include Child Safeguarding Statement, Policy and Procedures, Admissions Policy, Health & Safety Policy, Fire Safety Policy, Staff Recruitment Policy, Employment Contracts, Volunteer Policy.

We have a three-year rolling process to review all other policies.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees is legally responsible for the oversight of all of the work of the company including but not limited to the school's financial and employment practices, health and safety, fundraising, accounts, sustaining the business into the future and adhering to laws relating to Charities. It plays an important role in holding the vision and ethos of the organisation, Day to day operations are delegated to the School Meeting which reports termly to the Board of Trustees.

Internally, the Board of Trustees ensures that Sligo Sudbury School practices and policies are in-line with the bylaws, mission, and core principles of the school and are up to date with government guidelines and the general laws of the land. It consults external advisors as necessary. The Board of Trustees makes decisions by consensus. Decisions regarding employment, investments, and strategy are reserved to the Board,

Conflicts of Interest are noted and recorded in the register of conflicts of interest as they arise, which is a fixed agenda item.

The Board of Trustees delegates authority to the School Meeting for all management issues and day to day operational matters. The two structures have a collaborative relationship and hold each other accountable legally and philosophically.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

There are 7 members on the Board of Trustees (BOT). At our AGM, one third of our trustees retire according to our articles of association. Retiring Trustees are eligible for re-election. New Trustees can be nominated by an existing Trustee before being appointed.

New Trustees are provided with an induction pack as recommended by the Charities Regulator in accordance with best practice, Trustees sign a code of conduct agreement which includes a confidentiality and conflicts of interest clause.

During 2023-2024 the Board established subcommittees to the Board in Finance and Fundraising. The Finance sub-committee advises the Board on financial and legal aspects of investments. The Fundraising sub-committee develops the fundraising strategy for proposal to the Board.

Finance sub-committee members:

Maura Duignan, Gayle Nagle, Patrick Alan Anderson

Fundraising sub-committee members:

Maura Duignan, Gayle Nagle, Áine Cahill (parent), Sean Boni (student)

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Challenges and Achievements in the year

A major challenge in the year 2023-2024 was the resignation of three Trustees at the same time and the difficulty in finding suitable replacements in a timely manner.

Number of meetings held

There were five meetings held during 2023-2024 and occasional decisions agreed by email when necessary.

Record of attendance

Maura Duignan - 5/5

Gayle Nagle - 5/5

Pete Symonds - 3/5

Patrick Alan Anderson - 5/5

Jack Feakins - 5/5

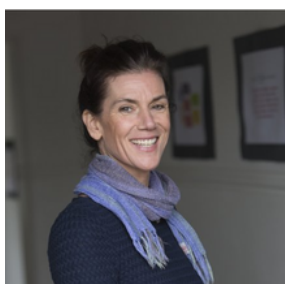
Eloise Devaney- 5/5

Fabian Kaiser - 5/5

TRUSTEES 01/09/2023-31/08/2024



Gayle Nagle Chairperson



Maura Duignan Company Secretary



Peter Symonds



Eloise Devaney



Patrick Alan Anderson, Treasurer



Jack Feakins



Fabian Kaiser

SCHOOL MEETING

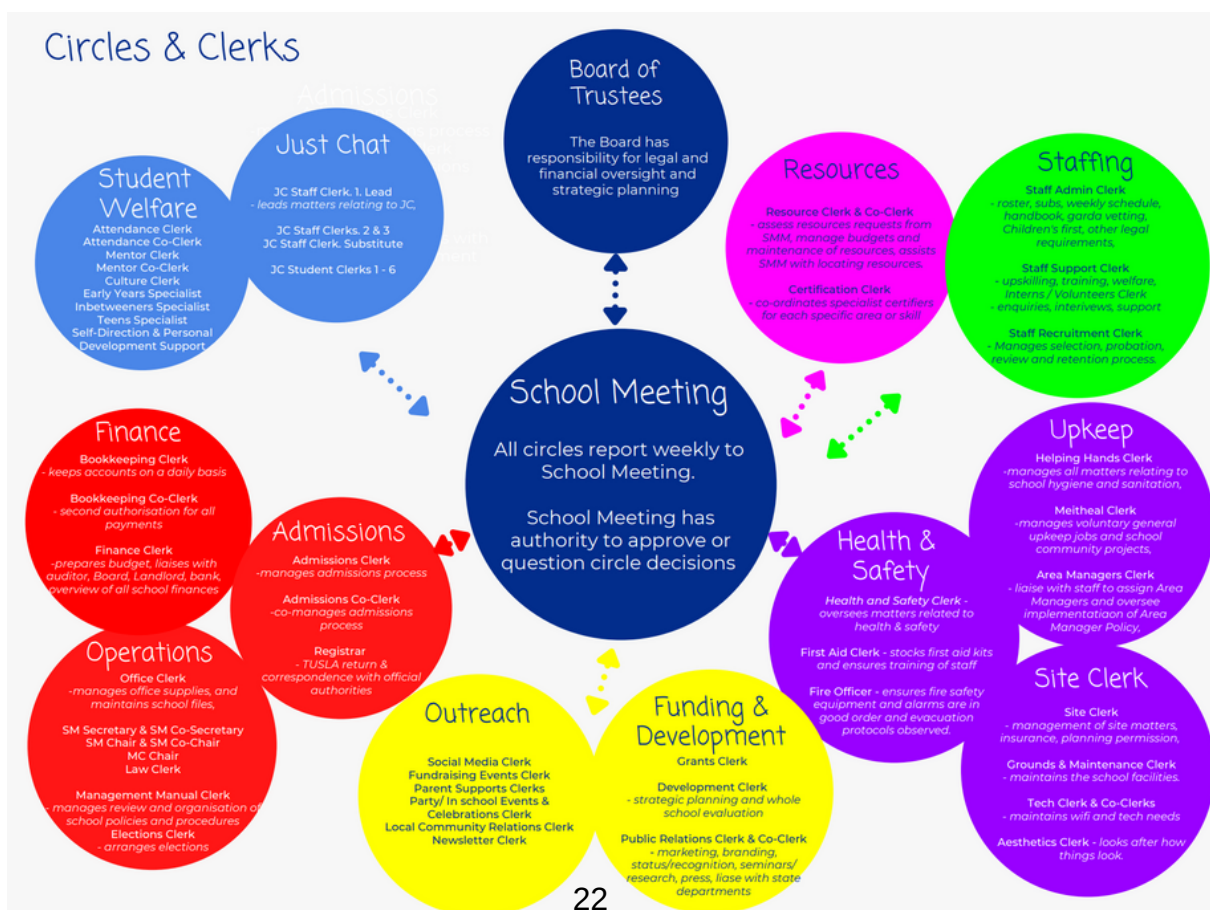
The School Meeting is the most important decision making body at our school. It is a forum in which community members take up challenges and problems, or make decisions regarding the daily life of the school. It meets twice weekly during school term. Students and staff members are given an equal vote, enabling every person affected by the outcome to have a say in how rules are formed and decisions made. Decisions are made based on consensus, with two separate hearings, allowing time for the minority to voice opinions and concerns before a final decision is made.

The School Meeting is the entity which leads the day to day operations of our school. It reports to the Board of Trustees termly. All decisions relating to legal, financial, safety, child protection, enrolment, and employment must be signed off by both structures.

The School Meeting further devolves responsibility to Circles and Clerks to ensure the smooth and efficient operations of the school.

Circles are committees of 2 or 3 staff members which manage various aspects of the day to day operations. Students can also join circles.

Clerks are staff members with responsibility to oversee the work of the circle and liaise between School Meeting and Circle.



HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

Our school is governed democratically by the School Meeting Members. These are the employed staff and enroled students of the school.

Day to day decisions are made by The School Meeting. These decisions include matters relating to purchase and management of resources, scheduling, school community agreements.

Circles have the authority to take action within the remit of the circle and must report interim decisions weekly to the School Meeting for approval. School Meeting has the authority to revoke a Circle decision.

School Meeting reports on its general activities to the Board of Trustees termly. Decisions relating to policy changes or exceptions, employment, annual budgets, and spends above €3,000 must be pre-approved by the Board of Trustees.

Our governance structures reflect the mission and values of the organisation, creating environment of trust and reciprocal respect through transparent processes in which all members have a voice.

The agency and participation of each member extends beyond their personal learning or educational choices to the management of the learning environment itself.

Board of Trustees, School Meeting, Circles and Clerks collaborate and provide appropriate checks and balances to ensure transparency and that all views are considered. This reflects our core values of Freedom, Trust, Respect, and Responsibility. Values of empathy, diversity, and creativity arise from these core values.

VOLUNTEERS

Our organisation benefits from a number of individuals who volunteer time, expertise and/or resources.

We have a Volunteer Policy and Procedure.

Volunteers are provided with guidance in relation to their role and the culture of the school, and how to deal with problems or queries. Volunteers are advised of Child Protection Guidelines, Confidentiality, and Fire Policy. The Volunteer Policy is reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees.

We seek volunteers for specific activities as needed, and welcome offers of volunteerism from members of our parent community on an ongoing basis. Volunteers regularly help with cleaning, maintenance, painting, gardening, planting trees, spreading mulch and preparing the vegetable beds in the polytunnel. In addition, parents and other volunteers offer classes and workshops on various topics such as neurodiversity, coding, and crafting.

The added value that these volunteers bring to our school is immeasurable and much appreciated by staff and students alike.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment contracts were created in consultation with **The HR Suite**, incorporating HR best practices and current employment law. Contracts are reviewed annually at a minimum, and as needed.

FUNDRAISING

We followed the Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public in all of our fundraising activities.

GOALS & ACHIEVEMENTS

1. STUDENT SUPPORTS

Our goals for 2023-2024 to improve student supports included

Increasing outdoor shelter spaces and review of use of spaces

We designed and created with the students a number of outdoor shelter spaces and play areas where children can engage in free play in the outdoors. These include an outdoor mud kitchen, access to trees and cover for creating adhoc shelters and dens, and purpose build semi permanent structures for shelter in poor weather. We also reviewed the use of indoor spaces to ensure designated quiet zones for concentrated study and areas for more social learning.

Staff CPD

Staff attended training in various areas including:

- Supporting children with Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
 - Staff completed training with Jeanna Clements and Naomi Fisher
- Fire Safety and First Aid training for all staff members

Review of housekeeping processes

Sharing spaces, cleaning, and resources in a multi-age, self-directed learning environment is an ongoing challenge for our community. The freedom and autonomy that is central to the ethos of the school presents a challenge to maintaining the kind of order and predictability one might find in a more structured environment. We trialled and reviewed a few different options over the course of the year, always in consultation with students and respecting their views and choices. It is still a work in progress.

Focus on mentoring and self reflection skills

Success with mentoring and supporting students with self reflection and development of strong self direction skills is varied depending on the student's background and personal inclination, and staff skill in this area. Staff ongoing CPD in this is a priority as well as collaboration with parents as primary educators, emphasising the responsibility of young people to engage with and drive their learning choices.

2. INTERNAL OPERATIONS

Our goals for 2023-2024 to improve internal operations included

1. New Admin Clerk (school secretary) role - merge of Office, Law, MM, Elections, SM sec - all matters related to admin
2. Compass
3. Review and update Management Manual

New Admin Clerk Role

We created a specific Admin role to merge a number of related clerkships and responsibilities into one role. This includes Office clerk, Law clerk, Elections, and School Meeting Secretary roles. This will allow for increased efficiency and oversight, decreasing the doubling up on work.

School management software system for administration and operations implemented

We invested in a School Management Software System (SMSS) to streamline management of student data while improving data protection, facilitate sharing of information between staff members, and communications with parents. Compass was implemented in September 2023 and is used for parent communications, record keeping, and protection of student data.

Review and update Management Manual

A long standing goal of the organisation has been to review and update our comprehensive Management Manual. This contains all of the relevant policies and procedures, community agreements, registration forms, and circle scope and practice documentation. The main challenge with the objective is the dynamic nature of our organisations processes and procedures, and the administrative burden it creates.

3. GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Our Growth & Development goals for 2023-2024

Complete planning permission process

The Planning Permission process was delayed by a request for Further Information from Sligo Co. Council in August 2023. We reviewed our plans at that time and revised the strategy and timeline. Planning permission was granted in February 2024 and we launched our fundraising campaign..

Fundraising Plan

Our goal to secure 2 milion euro in pledges by Summer 2024 was not achieved. However we have a strong community fundraising effort ongoing and remain undaunted.

Continue work with Democratic Education Ireland to grow the model nationally

As the leader of the initiative to form a national movement for Democratic Education in Ireland, we have continued to work to support nascent democratic schools around the country. There are five member schools as of August 2023. We have been instrumental in providing training, guidance and support to three of these schools.

Democratic Education Ireland has formed a registered company and operates to further the cause of democratic education at a national level. It is composed of representatives from all established democratic schools in Ireland.

We are committed to developing a Centre of Excellence to showcase this "Future-Fit" model of education. We want to continue to provide opportunities for hands on training and experience of self-directed, democratic education to policymakers and stakeholders in education.

4. STEPS AFTER SUDBURY

Our goals for 2023-2024 in this area were focused on developing and laying the foundations for graduates of our school to progress to further and higher education, and into the workplace.

Continuation of the Sligo Sudbury graduate programme

After celebrating our first graduates and school leavers in 2023 we are committed to continuing and developing further our internal graduate diploma programme. While there is not an obligation on any student to formally graduate or to demonstrate their learning, we have discovered that there is great advantage to supporting students in this process from the early teenage years.

Establish a route to accreditation

We researched again the possibility of becoming a recognised provider of QQI level 4 or 5 programmes but unfortunately this route has not been possible for our organisation. We plan to look into alternative routes next year, including internationally recognised qualifications.

Continue to develop partnerships with external organisations for the purpose of apprenticeships, volunteering, work experience

We focused on developing partnerships and opportunities with external organisations to support work experience. Student placements were carried out at The Model, Sligo.

5. PARENTS & COMMUNITY

Our goals for 2023-2024 in relation to Parents & Community were to:

Support parents with networking opportunities, deepening understanding of the model and share information and experiences of the model with the extended community.

There is considerable overlap with these goals. To address the need for supports for parents and community we have the following events and practices in place.

We strive to support parents socially and philosophically through hosting a number of events at school, including:

- Parent Philosophy Chat Nights
- Community parties at end of each term for parents and families
- Community Meetings to share plans and report on operations
- Individual parent meetings with staff twice a year

In addition we provide opportunities for parents to get involved through:

- Fundraising
- Volunteering as facilitators or in other ways

We communicate regularly with parents and the wider community through social media and mailings including:

- Monthly Newsletter
- Podcasts for Parents Newsletter

We provide parents with resources such as:

- Lending Library of books, videos and other resources
- Online social groups for networking and sharing resources

OUR PEOPLE, OUR IMPACT

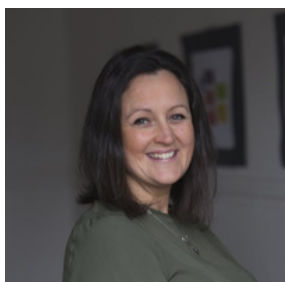
STUDENTS, STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & TRUSTEES

Since first conceiving the idea of starting a democratic school in the West of Ireland, our focus has always been to put learning back into the hands of the learners, to make education meaningful and relevant to the lives of each learner and educator.

At Sligo Sudbury School we are a team. Every individual - whether student, staff, volunteer, or family member - plays an important role. We believe that the family, peers, and the wider community all contribute in support of a child's learning and development. Collaboration and mutual support helps everybody succeed.

The following stories provide a glimpse into some of the lives that have been transformed by democratic education.

STAFF



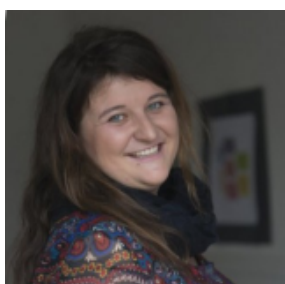
Gayle Nagle

Gayle is a founder member of the school. With a focus on mentoring, Drama and facilitating conflict resolution through the “Just Chat” Committee, she actively supports students in various areas. Gayle holds a number of administrative roles including child protection and site management.



Maura Duignan

Maura is a founder member of the school. She supports students with interests in English Language and Literature, Italian language, and Critical Thinking Skills. She is a Gaisce Leader and mentors students through the process of preparing their graduation portfolio.



Isabel Kuroczka

Izzy manages the office at school and fulfils many of the administrative tasks that come with running a school and a business. Besides that she engages with our young people daily, helping with problems large and small, supporting them to become autonomous, resilient and effective adults.



Ciara Barrett

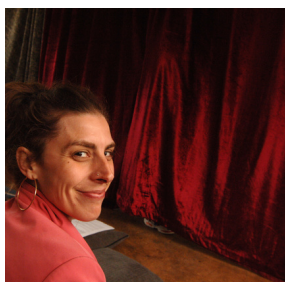
Ciara mentors and supports the younger students. She enjoys sharing her passions and skills of arts, crafts, cooking, baking, gardening, nature activities, crochet, knitting and playing games. She also sits on the Outreach, Staffing and Upkeep Circles and is a member of the JC Committee.



Conall O Fiannachta

Conall is a qualified Rock Climbing Instructor, Mountain Leader and Level 2 Kayak Coach. He has experience as a painter and decorator, rigger, machinist/toolmaker and loves to fix and make things. He supports students in many areas including climbing and bouldering, football and fitness, woodwork, leadership and team-building.

STAFF



Kim Kennedy

Kim enjoys creating an environment for expression and experimentation to flourish through crafts, art, writing, physical movement and language. They are inspired by their interest in community building and life-long learning to develop the school's conflict resolution process Just Chat Committee, and Consent workshops.



Krzysiek Dabek

Originally from Poland, Krzysiek has a passion for making things from natural materials. Since moving to Ireland, he combined his creativity and his love for the outdoors by becoming a Forest School Leader. At school he helps students with DIY projects, woodwork, drawing, stop motion animation, and music recording.



Troy Devaney

Troy's background is in engineering and he worked in the aviation industry for many years. He has always had a passion for the arts, training as a classical guitarist, and most recently extending into amateur dramatics. At school, Troy teaches guitar, facilitates drama club, and supports students with engineering projects.



Marko Hrvatin

Marko has extensive experience working with all age groups as a PE teacher and he is also a self-taught musician. His interests include singing, playing music, Olympic Handball, Basketball, Volleyball, skateboarding, gymnastics, wrestling, grappling, parkour and butoh.



Caroline Jepson

Caroline holds a BSc in Geology. Her passion for the earth sciences and for all kinds of crafting, sewing and upholstery bring a wealth of knowledge and skill in this area. .

STAFFING

Staff are contracted for 36 week school year plus statutory holidays and public holidays and are paid a monthly salary from September to June. Staff members are employed on either a 24 hour or a 28 hour contract.

There are two salary bands, one for entry level staff with up to two years' experience, and the second for all others. Staff performance is evaluated annually by peer review, student feedback and self-reflection.

Staff members with two years' service, who have children attending the school, receive a staff discount on their membership dues.

STAFF PAYMENT AND TRUSTEES

We have been permitted by the Charities Regulator to “make an agreement with a trustee for the provision of staff member services in return for payment.”

“Trustees must not benefit from their position beyond what is allowed by their governing document and the law and only when it is in the best interests of the organisation. There must be no financial compensation for the governance role, other than the reimbursement of reasonable, vouched, out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst volunteering for the organisation. The Charities Act 2009 does allow for charities to make an agreement with a trustee for the provision of services in return for payment. Any such agreement must be in writing and must not be prohibited by the constitution of the charity.”

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: GOVERNANCE RESOURCE BOOK FOR SMALL COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS.

The following recommendations of the CRA have been adopted:

- Increased number of Trustees on the Board to 7.
- Additional clauses added to our Constitution:
 - Conflicts of interest
 - Declaration of Interest
 - Register of Interests

FOUNDER STAFF AS TRUSTEES

Gayle Nagle and Maura Duignan are the Founder members of this organisation. We support the principle of volunteering and have committed to carrying on our activities as trustees in a voluntary capacity in order to establish, maintain, and develop this organisation as a charity for the benefit of the community at large. Considerable time, effort, energy and finance from personal resources were dedicated to getting to the first stage of development, and we foresaw the necessity of continued personal investment in realising the vision of the school. Because of the nature of the activities of the organisation, i.e. democratic, self-directed education, we felt our presence on the staff would continue to be essential to the establishment of the democratic culture of the school, to develop and train additional staff, and to ensure the stability of the organisation through the initial years. As research in this area shows that it typically takes five years to establish the strong foundations that are required for stability and continuity, we believe that it is in the best interest of the organisation to have founders on the staff with the necessary knowledge, skills and commitment to the vision and aims of the organisation. The democratic culture is the foundation for long term success and its importance cannot be over-estimated. The founders are the vision holders for this democratic culture and their presence in a full time capacity is necessary in order to impart that knowledge and vision to others.

Company Number: 614393

North West Democratic School CLG
Annual Report and Financial Statements
for the financial year ended 31 August 2024

North West Democratic School CLG

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North West Democratic School CLG

DIRECTORS AND OTHER INFORMATION

Directors	Gayle Nagle Maura Duignan Peter Symonds Eloise Gillespie (Appointed 19 October 2023) Fabian Kaiser (Appointed 19 October 2023) Jack Archie Feakins (Appointed 19 October 2023) Patrick Anderson (Appointed 19 October 2023) Andrew Hodson (Resigned 19 October 2023) Alannah Dawson (Resigned 19 October 2023) Eve MacSearraigh (Resigned 19 October 2023)
Company Secretary	Maura Duignan
Company Number	614393
Charity Number	20200314
Registered Office and Business Address	Milkwood Farm Tawley Castlegal Co. Leitrim
Auditors	Burke & Associates Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors 45 Wine Street Sligo F91 XV4X
Bankers	Allied Irish Bank Stephen Street Sligo Sligo Credit Union Wine Street Sligo F91KXY6
Solicitors	O'Hare O'Dwyer Solicitors Greenfield Road Sutton Dublin 13

North West Democratic School CLG

DIRECTORS' REPORT

for the financial year ended 31 August 2024

The directors present their report and the audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 August 2024.

Principal Activity and Review of the Business

The company operates the Sligo Sudbury School where young people aged 5-18 can learn through play and experience at their own pace, in their own time and in their own way.

The Company is limited by guarantee not having a share capital.

There has been no significant change in these activities during the financial year ended 31 August 2024.

Financial Results

The surplus for the financial year after providing for depreciation amounted to €55,982 (2023 - €44,613).

At the end of the financial year, the company has assets of €813,619 (2023 - €855,107) and liabilities of €403,570 (2023 - €501,040). The net assets of the company have increased by €55,982.

Directors and Secretary

The directors who served throughout the financial year, except as noted, were as follows:

Gayle Nagle Maura Duignan Peter Symonds Eloise Gillespie (Appointed 19 October 2023) Fabian Kaiser (Appointed 19 October 2023) Jack Archie Feakins (Appointed 19 October 2023) Patrick Anderson (Appointed 19 October 2023) Andrew Hodson (Resigned 19 October 2023) Alannah Dawson (Resigned 19 October 2023) Eve MacSearraigh (Resigned 19 October 2023) The secretary who served throughout the financial year was Maura Duignan.

Future Developments

The company has completed the purchase of two parcels of land beside the present school building in order to build and expand the school facilities and is in the process of planning this development.

Post Balance Sheet Events

There have been no significant events affecting the company since the financial year-end.

Auditors

Burke & Associates, (Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors), were appointed auditors by the directors to fill the casual vacancy and they have expressed their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of section 383(2) of the Companies Act 2014.

Accounting Records

To ensure that adequate accounting records are kept in accordance with sections 281 to 285 of the Companies Act 2014, the directors have employed appropriately qualified accounting personnel and have maintained appropriate computerised accounting systems. The accounting records are located at the company's office at Milkwood Farm, Tawley, Castlegal, Co. Leitrim.

Signed on behalf of the board

Gayle Nagle
Director
19 December 2024

Maura Duignan
Director
19 December 2024

North West Democratic School CLG

DIRECTORS'RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT

for the financial year ended 31 August 2024

The directors are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable Irish law and regulations.

Irish company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under the law the directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the Companies Act 2014 and FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", applying Section 1A of that Standard, issued by the Financial Reporting Council. Under company law, the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the company as at the financial year end date and of the surplus or deficit of the company for the financial year and otherwise comply with the Companies Act 2014.

In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies for the company financial statements and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reasons for any material departure from those standards; and prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for ensuring that the company keeps or causes to be kept adequate accounting records which correctly explain and record the transactions of the company, enable at any time the assets, liabilities, financial position and surplus or deficit of the company to be determined with reasonable accuracy, enable them to ensure that the financial statements and Directors' Report comply with the Companies Act 2014 and enable the financial statements to be readily and properly audited. 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.

Signed on behalf of the board

Gayle Nagle
Director
19 December 2024

Maura Duignan
Director
19 December 2024

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT to the Members of NorthWest Democratic School CLG

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of NorthWest Democratic School CLG ('the company') for the financial year ended 31 August 2024 which comprise the Income and Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Changes in Equity and the related notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish Law and FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", issued in the United Kingdom by the Financial Reporting Council, applying Section 1A of that Standard. In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the company as at 31 August 2024 and of its surplus for the financial year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", applying Section 1A of that Standard; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs (Ireland)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are described below in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard for Auditors (Ireland) issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. **Conclusions relating to going concern**

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate. Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue. Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other Information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- the information given in the Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which, to the best of our knowledge and belief, are necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the company were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited and the financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

to the Members of North West Democratic School CLG

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified any material misstatements in the directors' report. The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the requirements of any of sections 305 to 312 of the Act, which relate to disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions are not complied with by the Company. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Respective responsibilities

Responsibilities of directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Directors' Responsibilities Statement set out on page 5, the directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework that give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the directors are responsible for assessing the company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, if applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the company or to cease operation, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements. A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is contained in the appendix to this report, located at page 8, which is to be read as an integral part of our report.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

Our report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with section 391 of the Companies Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditor's Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume any responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Fergal P. Burke

for and on behalf of

BURKE & ASSOCIATES

Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors

45 Wine Street

Sligo

F91 XV4X

19 December 2024

North West Democratic School CLG

APPENDIX TO THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (Ireland), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal control. Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors. Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the company to cease to continue as a going concern. Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
-

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

North West Democratic School CLG
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
for the financial year ended 31 August 2024

	Notes	2024 €	2023 €
Income		320,618	285,393
Expenditure		(260,261)	(236,405)
Surplus before interest		60,357	48,988
Interest payable and similar expenses	5	(4,375)	(4,375)
Surplus for the financial year Total		55,982	44,613
comprehensive income		55,982	44,613

Approved by the board on 19 December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Gayle Nagle
Director

Maura Duignan
Director

North West Democratic School CLG
BALANCESHEET
as at 31 August 2024

	Notes	2024 €	2023 €
Fixed Assets			
Tangible assets	7	<u>731,088</u>	<u>742,388</u>
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		82,531	112,719
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	8	<u>(141,570)</u>	<u>(161,643)</u>
Net Current Liabilities			
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		(59,039)	(48,924)
Creditors:		672,049	693,464
amounts falling due after more than one year	9	<u>(262,000)</u>	<u>(339,397)</u>
Net Assets		<u><u>410,049</u></u>	<u><u>354,067</u></u>
Reserves			
Income and expenditure account		410,049	354,067
Members' Funds		<u><u>410,049</u></u>	<u><u>354,067</u></u>

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime and in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", applying Section 1A of that Standard.

Approved by the board on 19 December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Gayle Nagle
Director

Maura Duignan
Director

North West Democratic School CLG
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY
as at 31 August 2024

	Retained surplus	Total
	€	€
At 1 September 2022	309,454	309,454
Surplus for the financial year	44,613	44,613
At 31 August 2023	354,067	354,067
Surplus for the financial year	55,982	55,982
At 31 August 2024	410,049	410,049

North West Democratic School CLG

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the financial year ended 31 August 2024

1. General Information

North West Democratic School CLG is a company limited by guarantee incorporated and registered in Ireland. The registered number of the company is 614393. The registered office of the company is Milkwood Farm, Tawley, Castlegal, Co. Leitrim which is also the principal place of business of the company. The nature of the company's operations and its principal activities are set out in the Directors' Report. The financial statements have been presented in Euro (€) which is also the functional currency of the company.

Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

2.

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the company's financial statements.

Statement of compliance

The financial statements of the company for the financial year ended 31 August 2024 have been prepared in accordance with the provisions of FRS 102 Section 1A (Small Entities) and the Companies Act 2014.

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis and in accordance with the historical cost convention except for certain properties and financial instruments that are measured at revalued amounts or fair values, as explained in the accounting policies below. Historical cost is generally based on the fair value of the consideration given in exchange for assets. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is the Companies Act 2014 and FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" Section 1A, issued by the Financial Reporting Council. The company qualifies as a small company as defined by section 280A of the Companies Act 2014 in respect of the financial year, and has applied the rules of the 'Small Companies Regime' in accordance with section 280C of the Companies Act 2014 and Section 1A of FRS 102.

Income

Income comprises school fees charged over the year together with fundraising and donations.

Tangible assets and depreciation

Tangible assets are stated at cost or at valuation, less accumulated depreciation. The charge to depreciation is calculated to write off the original cost or valuation of tangible assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives as follows:

Land and buildings freehold	-	-
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	-	12.5% Straight line

The carrying values of tangible fixed assets are reviewed annually for impairment in periods if events or changes in circumstances indicate the carrying value may not be recoverable.

Borrowing costs

Borrowing costs relating to the acquisition of assets are capitalised at the appropriate rate by adding them to the cost of assets being acquired. Investment income earned on the temporary investment of specific borrowings pending their expenditure on the assets is deducted from the borrowing costs eligible for capitalisation. All other borrowing costs are recognised in profit or loss in the period in which they are incurred.

Trade and other creditors

Trade and other creditors are initially recognised at fair value and thereafter stated at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method, unless the effect of discounting would be immaterial, in which case they are stated at cost.

Taxation

The company has charitable status and is therefore exempt from taxation.

Foreign currencies

Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are translated at the rates of exchange ruling at the Balance Sheet date. Non-monetary items that are measured in terms of historical cost in a foreign currency are translated at the rates of exchange ruling at the date of the transaction. Non-monetary items that are measured at fair value in a foreign currency are translated using the exchange rates at the date when the fair value was determined. The resulting exchange differences are dealt with in the Income and Expenditure Account.

North West Democratic School CLG
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the financial year ended 31 August 2024

3. Departure from Companies Act 2014 Presentation

The directors have elected to present an Income and Expenditure Account instead of a Profit and Loss Account in these financial statements as this company is a not-for-profit entity.

4. Operating surplus	2024	2023
	€	€
Operating surplus stated after charging:	2,899	2,899
Depreciation of tangible assets		
		2023
	2024	€
5. Interest payable and similar expenses	€	4,375
	4,375	
Interest		

6. Employees

The average monthly number of employees, including directors, during the financial year was 12, (2023 - 12).

	2024	2023
	Number	Number
		12
Employees	12	

7. Tangible assets

	Land and buildings freehold	Fixtures, fittings and equipment	Total
	€	€	€
Cost			
At 1 September 2023	725,287	23,192	748,479
Additions	15,922	-	15,922
Transfers	(24,323)	-	(24,323)
At 31 August 2024	716,886	23,192	740,078
Depreciation			
At 1 September 2023	-	-	-
Charge for the financial year	-	6,091	6,091
At 31 August 2024	-	2,899	2,899
	-	8,990	8,990
Net book value			
At 31 August 2024	716,886	14,202	731,088
At 31 August 2023	725,287	17,101	742,388

8. Creditors
Amounts falling due within one year

	2024	2023
	€	€
	73,738	73,738
	863	57
Amounts owed to credit institutions	4,786	-
Taxation	4,139	2,969
Other creditors	58,044	84,879
Accruals		161,643
Deferred Income	141,570	

North West Democratic School CLG
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the financial year ended 31 August 2024

9. Creditors	2024	2023
Amounts falling due after more than one year	€	€
	262,000	339,397
Long term loan		
Loans		
Repayable in one year or less, or on demand (Note 8)	73,738	73,738
Repayable between one and two years	81,772	81,772
Repayable between two and five years	167,625	167,625
Repayable in five years or more	12,603	90,000
	335,738	413,135

10. Status

The liability of the members is limited. Every member of the company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the company in the event of its being wound up while they are members, or within one financial year thereafter, for the payment of the debts and liabilities of the company contracted before they ceased to be members, and of the costs, charges and expenses of winding up, and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributors among themselves, such amount as may be required, not exceeding € 1.

Capital commitments

11.

The company had no material capital commitments at the financial year-ended 31 August 2024.

Post-Balance Sheet Events

12.

There have been no significant events affecting the company since the financial year-end.

Approval of financial statements

- 13.** The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the board of directors on 19 December 2024.

NORTH WEST DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL CLG

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

NOT COVERED BY THE AUDITORS REPORT

THE FOLLOWING PAGES DO NOT FORM PART OF THE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

North West Democratic School CLG
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
for the financial year ended 31 August 2024

	2024 €	2023 €
Income	292,366	252,596
School fees	3,798	8,473
Fundraising	16,491	12,682
Donations	7,797	11,642
Other income	166	-
Government grant income		
	320,618	285,393
Expenditure	200,699	174,607
Wages and salaries	18,565	16,439
Social welfare costs	100	3,362
Staff training	-	300
Rent payable	-	8,126
Insurance	9,494	10,289
Consumables	6,154	8,868
Light and heat	9,321	193
Cleaning	30	2,830
Repairs and maintenance	4,300	985
Printing, postage and stationery	1,086	336
Advertising	-	1,234
Telephone	1,115	238
	722	2,365
and Broadband	1,476	610
Computer costs	496	325
Legal and professional	1,405	2,399
Bank charges	2,399	2,899
General expenses	2,899	
Auditor's remuneration		
Depreciation		236,405
	260,261	4,375
		44,613
Finance		
Other interest	4,375	
Net surplus		
	55,982	

FUTURE PLANS

At Sligo Sudbury School, our future plans continue to grow from our mission to provide an educational environment where children have true agency over their learning and daily lives. We are committed to expanding opportunities for self-directed exploration, deepening our democratic practices, and strengthening the supportive community in which students' voices genuinely shape their experiences. As we develop new resources, partnerships, and learning spaces, we will ensure that each step reflects our belief that young people thrive when they are trusted to chart their own paths, engage in meaningful decision-making, and pursue their interests with curiosity, confidence, and a strong sense of belonging.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND SCHOOL CULTURE

Our goals for 2024-2025 in the area of Student Support and School Culture include:

Aesthetics. Increase and improve general aesthetic including visuals relating to SDE, the ethos and school practices.

We plan to enhance the overall aesthetics of Sligo Sudbury School by creating visuals that clearly reflect self-directed education, our ethos, and our daily democratic practices. This includes improving the look and feel of shared spaces, developing meaningful visual representations of our values, and ensuring that the school environment communicates warmth, clarity, and inspiration. Our goal is to make the physical and visual atmosphere more inviting and aligned with who we are as a community.

Staff CPD

We plan to deepen staff CPD by investing in further education and training focused on neurodivergence and self-directed education. This will include ongoing learning opportunities, expert-led workshops, and reflective practice sessions that strengthen our capacity to support diverse learners with understanding and confidence. By expanding our knowledge in these areas, we aim to ensure that every young person is met with informed, respectful, and flexible approaches that honour their individuality and uphold the principles of SDE.

Gaisce increase leaders

We plan to strengthen our Gaisce, the President's Award, programme by increasing the number of trained staff leaders and creating more structured support for students who wish to participate. By expanding leadership capacity, we can offer greater guidance, flexibility, and encouragement to young people as they set and pursue their personal goals. Our aim is to make Gaisce more visible, accessible, and integrated into school life so that more students feel empowered to take part and benefit from the challenge, independence, and personal growth it offers.

Review use of resources, our processes and agreements

We plan to undertake a thorough review of our resources, processes, and agreements to ensure they continue to meet the needs of our community and align with our core principles of self-direction and shared responsibility. This will involve examining how resources are accessed and maintained, evaluating the effectiveness and clarity of current processes, and reflecting on whether existing agreements still serve the school well. Our goal is to refine and improve these systems so they remain supportive, transparent, and responsive to the evolving needs of students and staff.

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

Our goals for 2024-2025 in the area of Internal Operations include

Elections and Circles review.

We plan to continue strengthening our elections and school circles by maintaining the regular rotation of staff clerkships and roles, ensuring that leadership remains dynamic, transparent, and shared. This ongoing rotation supports a healthy democratic culture, allowing different voices and perspectives to contribute to the organisation of school life. By keeping roles fresh and accessible, we aim to model the values of participation, responsibility, and collaborative governance that lie at the heart of our community.

Compass School Management Software System (SMSS)

We plan to further develop our use of the Compass School Management Software System (SMSS), with a key priority being the full integration of parents into the platform. To support this, we will host an introductory session at an upcoming Full Community meeting, ensuring parents feel confident navigating the system and using it to stay informed and engaged. By improving communication and streamlining information-sharing, we aim to strengthen transparency and connection across the whole school community.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Our goals for 2024-2025 in the area of Growth and Development include

Complete detailed plans for PHASE 1: SPORTS HALL, PITCHES, CAR PARK & PLAYGROUND

We plan to complete detailed plans for Phase 1 of our campus development, including the sports hall, pitches, car park, and playground. This will involve finalising designs, securing necessary approvals, and ensuring that each element reflects our commitment to safe, functional, and engaging spaces for students. By carefully planning this first phase, we aim to create facilities that support physical activity, community gatherings, and play, enhancing the overall environment while staying true to the ethos and needs of Sligo Sudbury School.

Review fundraising plan and raise / secure pledges for Phase 1 (1-1.5 million)

We plan to review and strengthen our fundraising strategy to support Phase 1 of our development, aiming to raise or secure pledges of €1-1.5 million. This will include evaluating current approaches, exploring new funding opportunities, and engaging the wider community in meaningful ways to build support. Our goal is to ensure a clear, achievable, and well-communicated plan that mobilises resources effectively while fostering shared investment in the school's future growth.

ENGAGEMENT WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Our goals for 2024-2025 in the area of Engagement with Parents and the Community include

Support parents with networking opportunities

We plan to continue supporting parents through a variety of networking opportunities, including Chat Nights and Community Meetings, to foster a strong and connected community ethos. In addition, our communication strategy will be enhanced with regular newsletters and podcasts, providing accessible insights into our educational model and philosophy, and helping parents engage more deeply with the life and learning of the school.

OUR VISION

Our organisation is in a growth phase and we have identified a need to expand our site and facilities to meet our current and future growth, and to deliver our vision of increasing awareness and practical knowledge of this model of education locally, nationally and globally.

We will establish an international centre of learning to benefit young people and their families now and into the future and also be a pioneering institute for self-directed learning and its application. Parents, educators, researchers, policy makers and other interested parties can visit us to gain experience and knowledge of this model of education to enable future generations and societies to thrive.

Our project will give more children the opportunity to enjoy a non-coercive educational environment that is flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate each learner's needs in the way that is most suitable for them, where children can learn and be respected in their choices in order to develop organically and coherently without internal or external conflict.

RISKS

We perceive the risks to delivering the project and our provision for these as follows:

- **RISK: OBSTACLES TO FUNDRAISING**

- The commitment of our current member families is very strong and we have been able to raise a significant amount of funds in a relatively short space of time. Our support base has grown and we anticipate our success to date will inspire confidence in new investors.

- **RISK: ATTRITION**

- Growth over these first 6 years of operations has been consistent and projections for the future confirm this pattern. We are confident that there is increasing demand for this service.

- **RISK: MAINSTREAM EDUCATION ADAPTING TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT OUR MARKET NO LONGER EXISTS**

- We continue to receive an increasing amount of correspondence from people working in education who are dissatisfied with the mainstream system. Educators are seeking alternatives and wish to come to our school to learn about the model. We are confident of our role in providing a model from which others can learn.

- **RISK: DELAYS WITH SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

- The commitment of our staff and Board of Trustees is very strong. We have planned the expansion on a phased basis to minimise the risk of disruption to operations.

DONORS AND BENEFACTORS

None of the work we do would be possible without the help and support of private donors, benefactors and philanthropists.

Our thanks to all of our financial contributors for their support and encouragement, and to the many other generous donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Our thanks also to the many private individuals and small businesses who have supported our raffles and fundraisers with donations and contributions, and to the loyal subscribers who have maintained monthly donations throughout the year.

THANK
YOU