



Business Plan 2024

Next Review Date: January 2025

Little Pippins Pre-School
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Ofsted Registration Number: 133726

Registered Charity No. 1105994

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Little Pippins Pre-School is a nationally PLA accredited charity pre-school providing Harwell Village and surrounding areas with early year's education for children aged between 2.5 years and 5 years. Run by a voluntary management committee, we are staffed by a professional team of early years staff.

We currently offer:

- morning sessions – 9:05am to 12:05 pm,
- afternoon sessions – 12:05pm – 3:05pm,
- or all day sessions - 9:05am – 3:05pm,
- and an Early Pips session starting at 8:35am.

2. BACKGROUND

Established in 1974 as a playgroup, Little Pippins met for just three mornings a week, in shared rented accommodation and was run by a group of volunteer parents.

In 1990, to meet the growing needs of the community the pre-school extended their operational hours and the number of children they could accommodate rose to 22 children. The extended services were made possible by two very important donations:

- A parcel of land, an old orchard, provided by a local resident for the sole use of the pre-school.
- Two second hand portacabins, refurbished by the pre-school, staff and helpers.

In May 2003 our commitment to providing excellent care and the highest levels of education was demonstrated by our accreditation by the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

In 2004, in response to parents' requests, Little Pippins opened a breakfast club for both primary school and pre-school children. We also introduced a lunch club every day and worked closely with Harwell After School Club enabling families to access flexible care from 8am until 6pm for pre-school aged children from 3 years old. In 1993, a playscheme had been introduced which ran each year for two weeks during the summer holidays. In 2010, the pre-school temporarily relocated off site while the construction of our new purpose-built pre-school was underway.

Construction began on site in the summer of 2010 and was completed in time for the start of the autumn term in 2011. The new timber-framed building offers excellent longevity and represents good value for money. Additional features such as the heat recovery system, Warmcel insulation, quality Cedar cladding makes it a sustainable building for the pre-school. Importantly, the new facilities increase capacity by **36%**.

Re-development of the external play area commenced in Summer 2011 with the help of additional funds raised and consists of a large area of the old orchard, a nature area, a construction zone, wet play, mud kitchen area, and vegetable beds with maths and literacy threaded throughout the garden area, followed soon after with a multipurpose covered sandpit and stage area and a pirate ship climbing feature.

In 2014 the Management Committee was presented with the Pre-school Learning Alliance Volunteer Award 'In recognition of your special contribution to improving lives of children and families in your local community.'

Janette Parker – Chair of the Board of Trustees
PLA

In 2015 Little Pippins was rated 'Outstanding' in its Ofsted inspection.

'The highly motivated and dedicated staff team provide children with a rich and purposeful learning environment that supports them to make excellent progress.'

Ofsted report January 2015

In 2016 the Preschool developed another area of the old orchard as a Forest school and have maintained at least one trained Forest School Leader within our staff team since. This has been a significant asset to the outdoor learning opportunities on the site, and we offer 2 sessions a week to small groups of children.

In 2017 the committee upgraded the children's' cloakroom to include more accessible facilities which develop and encourage independence.

In 2019, we were again inspected by Ofsted and rated 'Outstanding' for a second time.

"Staff have very high expectations of what children can achieve and their teaching is highly responsive to children's needs."

Ofsted Report July 2019

During the pandemic in 2020, we were unable to open our Breakfast club for pre-school and primary school children and it was replaced with an Early Pips club for the pre-school children requiring a slightly earlier morning drop off.

Following 2 years of fundraising, in 2020 a log cabin style outdoor classroom, The Nest, was erected providing a welcoming and 'natural' outdoor learning environment for small group work. In 2021, this was further enhanced with an enclosed shaded patio area to the outside.

In 2023, we secured grants for solar panels and the installation should be completed in 2024.

3. AIM

Mission Statement

Little Pippins Pre-School's primary objective is to enhance the development and education of children between the ages of 2½ and 5 years by offering appropriate play, education, and care facilities for all children whatever their race, culture, religion or means of ability.

Commercial

The aim of the pre-school is to continue to provide flexible, childcare, and early education to children from the age of 2.5 to 5 years. We want the pre-school to continue to be an

outstanding provision with excellent facilities. We want to ensure that the pre-school operates to the maximum capacity, is profitable and remains financially viable.

We offer 15 hours a week free places to 3- and 4-year-olds and to eligible 2-year-olds as part of the Early Education Funding scheme. Additional unfunded sessions can be attended for which a fee is payable. The fees are reviewed annually.

Surplus funds and profits from fundraising events will be used to enhance our facilities, invest in staff training, building reserves for future maintenance and development and support our own charity – **'Help A Village Child'** - the main purpose of which, is to be able to support local children who would benefit from attending additional sessions at the pre-school but whose parents are in financial hardship. We will maintain our reserves to ensure we have the equivalent of 3 months operating costs as a minimum and any redundancy to be paid to staff in case of closure.

We will actively market the pre-school in the surrounding area, keep our website updated with information on what we offer and use local (social) media and newsletters to ensure that the name of Little Pippins is well known to existing residents and those new to the area. We also regularly update our records held on the Oxfordshire Family Information Directory.

Our staff are our most important asset. We aim for all staff to be level 2 and 3 qualified whilst ensuring the correct balance and variety of skills. We continue to invest in their personal development and actively encourage further training that will benefit the staff and the services and support that we are able to provide the children at the setting. We also offer apprenticeship opportunities and support these members of staff to qualification.

Profits from fundraising are used to finance new and replacement, items of equipment and furniture, improvements and maintenance to the pre-school premises and projects to enhance the facilities and resources we offer daily for the children. Our volunteer committee oversees fundraising events such a regular raffle, Christmas Tree festival, Santa's Grotto, Easter Trail, Tombola stall at the village fair. In addition, we will encourage parents to support us by taking part in the weekly School lottery, using Easyfundraising when shopping on-line and supporting us by purchasing items from our Amazon Wish list.

Community

We will continue to work in the best interest of local children by enhancing relationships with other members of the community, e.g. Harwell Primary School, Harwell Fun Club (Toddler Group) and St Matthews Church, Harwell.

We will continue to take an active part in the local community by supporting other groups and participating in local events.

We will actively identify children who would benefit from additional sessions at the pre-school, this will include liaising with local health visitors, social services and parents.

We will support our families with information, parenting skills and strategies and will signpost them to external supports groups and services as appropriate.

We will continue to provide opportunities for local employment.

Services

We will continue to offer flexibility of sessions attended, mornings, afternoons, or all day to suit the families' requirements. We also offer an Early Pips club with an earlier drop off to help working families with childcare at the start of the day. When capacity allows, we may offer a short 'Diddy Pips' group session once a week for a few 2.5-year-olds as an introduction to their Pre-school journey. There is an after-school club at Harwell Primary school which Little Pippins children may be able to attend depending on availability. We will signpost parents to local childminder's who may be able to provide wrap around care or walk a child up to the afterschool club.

During sessions, the staff will offer a variety of focus group work opportunities within the setting to support the children's development and learning. This will vary depending on the needs of the children in the cohort but could be recognised activities such as Tales Toolkit, Spirals, Magic Train, Forest School, cooking, or schemes devised by our own staff. Where a need is identified and funding is available, we may use bought in external services such as Activ Totz sports, Boogie Beat music, football, yoga, cookery, Magic Train.

We also take the children on walks around the village e.g. to the shop, church – where we have our nativity-, farm, or park , and sometimes go on a trip on .the bus

We will continue our good relationship with Harwell Primary school and visit and share events with them. We may take some children to swim in their pool, visit their forest school and visit Reception classroom and teacher in the summer to help with the transition to school. We also invite the Reception Class children to visit Little Pippins' Garden and Forest School and join in at story time.

Each year we will review the need for and feasibility of a full breakfast club and will consider a play scheme during the summer break other holiday periods.

Premises

All internal upkeep in the building will be monitored termly. This will meet high health and safety and safeguarding requirements. Furniture will be replaced and upgraded as and when necessary. External redevelopment is ongoing including the development of the nature area, revamp of the construction zone, enhancement of the mud kitchen and suitable additional shade/weather protection areas need to be available in terms 5 and 6.

'The Nest' outdoor classroom provides a natural environment, is wi-fi enabled and fully resourced for small 'focus' group work.

The small room, The Core, used for group work prior to the Nest being built is being updated so that it provides a flexible use space - still in use a small group room but also as a staff and meeting room with additional office workspace, staff rest room and information library, and meeting room for parents and visitors.

We continue to hold gardening and maintenance mornings inviting parents to help with general maintenance and small projects to improve the garden and site. We will also advertise to and welcome other members of village groups and individuals, welcoming the community involvement and making this a regular event.

A second area of the site is being established as a new wild woodland copse to expand out outdoor learning and Forest school opportunities. It has been planted with native trees, shrubs and wildflowers and habitats to encourage wildlife are being created.

The outside area will be used as a model of excellence within the local area if not the County.

4. OBJECTIVES

We review our key objectives priorities for the year ahead annually and these are used to inform and guide fundraising targets, site maintenance and development projects, improvements to the services we offer, purchase and use of resources, staff appraisals and continuing professional development, and improving communication with and involvement of parents in our setting and in the wider community.

For 2024, our key objectives are:

- 1) To improve the future sustainability of the setting through
 - use of environmentally friendly resources and reducing general rubbish,
- 2) Enhance our provision of outside learning opportunities including staff training and replacement of the Astroturf area
- 3) To demonstrate ongoing improvement in standards by continuing professional development of staff and working towards recognised accreditations for the setting (such as Millie's Mark, Forest School, Eco Accreditation, Healthy Smiles)
- 4) To make new connections within the community and other village groups

Commercial

- Increase the community presence of the pre-school.
 - Harwell news
 - Harwell Fun Club
 - Fledglings
 - More events at St Matthews Church
 - Signposting parents to external support, foodbanks, etc
- Increase the balance of the general reserves.
- Identify suitable large grant opportunities and apply as applicable.
- Identify new fundraising event ideas and increase revenue from fundraising.
- Direct donations from local companies, employer community schemes, match funding.
- Annual review of fees
- Identify training opportunities for professional and personal development of staff.
- Aim for all staff to be qualified to level 2 as minimum.
- Improve staff wellbeing including:
 - Emotional demands of the job
 - Physical demands of the job
 - Interactions with parents.
 - Excessive workload.
 - environment (air quality, lighting, classrooms, staff rooms, cloakroom facilities)
 - Team building
 - Incentives and rewards

Community

- Further enhance relationships with Harwell Primary School Foundation Class and Fun Club baby and toddler group
- Develop our setting as a base to signpost parents to information, support and activities available in the community and parent education opportunities.
- Update our website and increase use of newsletters and social media to advertise the pre-school and fundraising events.
- Supporting village events and encouraging involvement in the community.

Services

- Annually review the demand for wrap around care with a Breakfast Club and After School club options depending on staff availability and financial viability
- Consideration of a play scheme during the summer break each year and evaluate the need for other such schemes during other holiday periods. (St Matthew's church run a summer play scheme in the village so we need to avoid any conflict with this and also find staff available to organise and run a holiday scheme)
- Work towards additional accreditation such as Millie's Mark (recognition of qualified staffing levels), Eco accreditation, Health Smiles
- Train another Forest School Leader and use more of the outside space for forest school style learning opportunities.
- Identify training opportunities for staff continuing professional development to support the services and support we offer children and their families.
- Review use of resources to reduce use of single use plastics and amount general rubbish generated.

Premises

- Complete development of outside area including 'wild' area.
- Investigate options to replace conventional heating system with alternative energy solution (such as solar panels or air source heat pump (longer term plan)
- Seek to save energy by installing LED lighting and by reducing heat loss through doors,
- Investigate installation of a grey water recycling system.
- Replace out-dated furniture and play equipment.
- Replace entrance gate with automated secure gating.
- Internal Redecoration,
- Reduce electricity usage.
- Tree survey (3 yearly)

5. ACTION PLAN

Short term plans – 1 year

Identify staff needs regarding wellbeing. Maintain staff rest room facilities in The Core.. Recruit and train staff as required to build a team who work well together. Create a positive working environment.

Maintain a Fundraising Strategy and 'Case for Support' to support fundraising and grant applications.

Increase Pillar 1 fundraising from:

- Families - e.g. Easter trail, Winter ball, Christmas Tree Festival, Harwell Feast stall, Raffle, sponsored toddle, tombola, any other smaller events by individuals and easy to run internal fundraisers for example 100 club, school lottery, Easyfundraising, Amazon Wishlist, cake stalls, treasure hunt.

- Community - direct donations from local companies, match funding from employers, Harwell Feast grant, other local small grant and community schemes e.g. Truck Fest Trust, supermarket and building society community schemes, direct personal approach, requests and sponsorships.

Investigate Pillar 2 fundraising opportunities- Grants from trusts, foundations and large organisation - and submit applications.

Increase the marketing of the pre-school - refer to the marketing plan below.

Complete solar panel installation project and review energy survey report recommendations including replacement of lighting with LED.

Complete redecoration of the Core and external timber treatment of The Nest and sheds as required.

Plan for improvements of outside areas including part fencing veranda, wild areas including fencing of forest school, replacing astroturf areas, pirate ship, sensory and growing areas, providing more shade.

Tree Survey and maintenance

Further enhance relationships with Harwell Primary School Foundation Class, Fun Club and other local groups. Organise visits for the children to and from the Primary school in the summer term to support transition.

Promote parental involvement in the pre-school with coffee morning for new families and encourage support with gardening and maintenance.

Regular review of fees by the Committee to ensure income is at a level to support the financial viability of the pre-school.

Plan a realistic budget that includes costs of expenditure on improvement projects and ongoing maintenance, achievable targets for fundraising income and at least maintains level of general reserves.

Monitor Income and Expenditure against the budget monthly to identify overspends and opportunities for savings.

Monitor use of resources and select environmentally friendly options and reduce waste where feasible to do so.

Medium Term Plans 1 – 3 Year

Maintain staff wellbeing, promote positive working environments for staff, recruit and retain highly qualified staff.

Develop our setting as a base to signpost parents to information, support and activities available in the community and parent education opportunities.

Complete works on veranda, outdoor area including paving and astroturf areas.

Seek grant funding for maintenance and improvement projects.

Investigate options for fully automated secure code entry gates to Orchard and secure funding.

Long Term Plans 3- 5 Years

Continue to promote positive working environments for staff. Achieve high standards in staff wellbeing, create an atmosphere where staff, children, parents and volunteers are working and relating to each other in a positive and productive way.

Sustain profitability

- Marketing plan
- Introduction of additional services as above
- Increase fundraising income through holding additional events, seeking donations, and applying for grants.
- Regular review of fees by the Committee - annually April
- Budget monitoring by Treasurer – monthly and identify opportunities for savings.

Increase the surplus each year and increase available general funds-

- See above – sustained profitability.

Professional and personal development of staff

- Training budget allocation and review by Treasurer - annually

Investigate options to replace conventional heating system with alternative energy solution such as ground/air heat source pump.

- Track government subsidised options - on-going.
- Apply for funding to energy saving trusts and grant making bodies - on-going.

6. MARKETING PLAN

We will establish a working group within the committee to actively market the pre-school. We will focus on our premises in particular the redeveloped and extended outside play area. We will promote the settings unique design that allows children to move seamlessly between indoor and outdoor play. We will market our improved accessibility and ability to provide full inclusion. We will do the following:

- 1 Market the changes to existing parents by the following medium:
Emails, Newsletters, Prospectus, Handbooks, social media, parent meetings.
- 2 Update our website – Little Pippins Pre-school is top of the first page when using search engines. We will also evaluate the impact and benefits of using Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn.
- 3 Hold an opening event to include local dignitaries, press and TV coverage for example on completion of significant project or event.
- 4 Additional fundraising events and special events will be publicised in the local press.
- 5 Appoint committee member to contact other local publications such as the Ladygrove News, Jump and Round and About magazine.
- 6 Invite village toddler groups to visit the Pre-school.
- 7 Organise more open days e.g. Autumn Play Day
- 8 Give presentations and/or visit local Children's Centres, village toddler groups and private toddler music group.
- 9 Send regular mail shots to Health Visitors, Community Workers, Medical Surgeries
- 10 Mail drop to every household in Harwell Village
- 11 Maintain our entry in the Oxfordshire Family Information Directory
- 12 Set up links with appropriate websites.

7. SUMMARY REVIEW

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outside Play Area• Premises• Orchard setting, village location• Open 5 days per week• Extended day (Early Pips• Staff• Community and Committee – run by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of marketing• Parent involvement• Retention of staff• Fundraising• Not offering the full 30 hours funded places.• Limited wrap around care
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open Days• Housing developments in Didcot, Harwell, Chilton and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus• Community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff morale, workload• Lack of fundraising• Low funding rates increases,• High minimum wage increases• Drop-in support from parents

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The committee Chairperson will monitor the objectives and targets identified in this business plan. They will be reviewed on a termly basis (3 times a year). The whole business plan will be updated annually and be ready for the beginning of each new financial year and for the Annual General Meeting.

The Treasurer will review budgets and cashflow forecasts monthly and present these to committee on a termly basis (5 or 6 times a year). Annual summary accounts will be presented at the AGM and the committee will closely monitor specific items such as staff development, fundraising and reserves. The treasurer will monitor all SEN, Inclusion and EYPP funding and report monthly to the committee.

The Manager will monitor closely any staff wellbeing issues and report to the committee termly (3 or 4 times per year). Any issues will be reported to the committee chair and addressed immediately with an action plan which will then be reviewed at the next committee meeting.