

St Christopher School
Charities Act 2006 - Public Benefit Report 2008/09

Introduction

St Christopher School (Letchworth) limited is a limited company (Company registration number 535836) and a registered charity (charity registration number 311062).

The object of the company and the charity (in summary) is:

"To establish and carry on at Letchworth... or elsewhere one or more Schools or Colleges for the education of girls, boys, or adults of either sex, and to carry on such Schools or Colleges as Interdenominational Schools with religious and ethical teaching based on the broadest principles of national and international fellowship and goodwill, and generally in accordance with the principles, traditions, and aims of St. Christopher School."

Under the Charities Act 2006, while the presumption of education as an activity for the public benefit has been removed, the advancement of education remains a charitable purpose. St Christopher School has not relied upon this presumption, but has always, and will continue to be, operated for the public benefit.

To assess public benefit, the Act establishes two principles:

Principle 1: There must be an identifiable benefit or benefits

Principle 1a: It must be clear what the benefits are

Principle 1b: The benefits must be related to the aims

Principle 1c: Benefits must be balanced against any detriment or harm

Principle 2: Benefit must be to the public, or a section of the public

Principle 2a: The beneficiaries must be appropriate to the aims

Principle 2b: Where benefit is to a section of the public, the opportunity to benefit must not be unreasonably restricted:

- by geographical or other restrictions or
- by ability to pay any fees charged

Principle 2c: People in poverty must not be excluded from the opportunity to benefit

Principle 2d: Any private benefits must be incidental

Passing the Tests

A. Charitable Purpose

The first test that the Governors should ensure that the School can pass is whether the School operates for a charitable purpose. The Charities Act 2006 sets out a number of charitable purposes. These include "the advancement of education". As a school, St Christopher clearly and demonstrably falls into this category. The School provides systematic and structured instruction by means of knowledge based teaching, skills training and physical training and development both in a formal classroom setting and by other means to children and adults from Letchworth, the wider UK and internationally.

The breadth of the School’s Objects also might allow for the School to be included under other categories of charitable purpose identified by the act, including:

- “the advancement of citizenship or community development” (“...*ethical teaching based on the broadest principles of national and international fellowship and goodwill*”),
- “the advancement of ... reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity” (“*Interdenominational Schools with religious and ethical teaching based on ...national and international fellowship and goodwill*”)

The italicized parentheses draw attention to the element of the School’s objects that may be relevant.

The School’s objects also allow for the Company to “co-operate with or subscribe to any association, society, or corporation whose objects are similar to the objects of the Company”.

B. Public benefit

The School’s activities must also be for the public benefit.

Principle 1: There must be an identifiable benefit or benefits

Principle 1a It must be clear what the benefits are

Principle 1b The benefits must be related to the aims

Principle 1c Benefits must be balanced against any detriment or harm

The objects of St Christopher School are set out in the Memorandum and Articles of St Christopher School (Letchworth) Ltd. These objects include:

“(T)he education of girls, boys, or adults of either sex, ...with religious and ethical teaching based on the broadest principles of national and international fellowship and goodwill” should provide an identifiable benefit . This benefit would satisfy principles 1a and 1b.

The Memorandum and Articles also include the aims:

“ To provide for the delivery and holding of lectures, exhibitions, public meetings, classes and conferences calculated directly or indirectly to advance the cause of education”

and

“To... affiliate, or co-operate with or subscribe to any association, society whose objects are similar to the objects of the Company”

For the purposes of 1b, we understand the Schools aims to include the education of:

- a. the pupils in the care of the School
- b. adults attending educational classes at the School
- c. boys and girls, not registered as pupils at the School, attending the School’s facilities for the purpose of academic, artistic, physical or vocational education
- d. adults undertaking educational or vocational training either at the School or elsewhere supported by the School
- e. the education of boys, girls and adults beyond the boundaries of Letchworth, both nationally and internationally.

1a and 1b – Identifiable benefits and their relationship to the charity’s objects

St Christopher School provides education:

| | | | |
|--|---------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| | To whom | How | (reference clause from Memorandum of |
|--|---------|-----|--------------------------------------|

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | | <i>Association)</i> |
| 1 | 30 girls and boys between the ages of 2 1/2 and 4 years in Letchworth (last year 18) | Through a recognised programme of instruction based on the Montessori educational philosophy at the St Christopher School Nursery. (3.B) |
| 2 | 155 girls and boys between the ages of 5 and 11 years in Letchworth (last year 120) | Through a structured programme of learning based at the School's premises in Letchworth. This is segmented by topic and taught in an informal and supportive environment focused on the full needs of the individual child that is fundamental to the School's educational philosophy. This includes curricular and extra-curricular activities. (3.B) |
| 3 | 275 girls and boys between the ages of 12 and 16 years in Letchworth (last year 291) | Through a structured programme of learning based at the School's premises in Letchworth. This is taught in an informal and supportive environment and is focused on the full needs of the individual child, usually preparing for GCSE and other public examinations, but also developing life skills that will equip them for life in the wider community, nationally and internationally. (3.B) |
| 4 | 80 girls and boys between the ages of 17 and 18 years in Letchworth (last year 84) | Through a structured programme of learning based at the School's premises in Letchworth. This is taught in an informal and supportive environment and is focused on the full needs of the individual child, usually preparing for A level and other public examinations, but also developing life skills that will equip them for life in the wider community, nationally and internationally. (3.B) |
| 5 | 120 adults in Letchworth (last year 135) | Through a varied programme of adult education and skills training classes. (3.B) |
| 6 | 3 children in Letchworth (last year 5) | Supporting the Sport England tennis initiative by providing lunches and access to our sports facilities (3.F) |
| 7 | 6 VI form pupils and 1 staff member from Huddersfield (last year 5) | Through partnership programme with New College sixth form college supporting the Kosovo project. (3.B) |
| 8 | 145 children in Kosovo (last year 112) – of whom 21 had special needs | Through the School's Kosovo Summer School project. (3.B) |
| 9 | 42 students in Kosovo (last year 41) | Training as leaders and facilitators of the Kosovo children's summer school. (3.B) |
| 10 | 12 adults in Kosovo | Through the on-going community programme in Kosovo, supporting the establishment and work of the "Kosovan Women's Craft Collective" (3.B) |
| 11 | Staff at Seva Mandir "Learning Camps" in Rajasthan | Training by St Christopher Staff. (3.B) |
| 12 | 60 children at Seva Mandir "Learning Camps" in Rajasthan. | Pupils and staff from the School teach a structured course to young children in Rajasthan as part an annual programme of visits (3.B) |
| 13 | 510 children in Ladakh | Pupils from the School teach a structured course to young children at the White Lotus School in Ladakh as part an annual programme of visits (3.B) |
| 14 | 45 adult teachers in Ladakh | Staff from the School teach workshops at the White Lotus School in Ladakh as part an annual programme of visits (3.B) |
| 15 | Children and adults of the White Lotus School in Ladakh (GBP 5k) | Fundraising and administrative support to help provide improvements to the School plant and equipment |
| 16 | 30 children and 3 teachers from France (last year 24) | Through the School's exchange programme |
| 17 | 16 children and 3 teachers | Through the School's exchange programme |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| | from Spain (last year 28) | |
| 18 | 2 adult trainee teachers in Letchworth (last year 2) | By sponsoring , supporting and training in association with HE colleges (3.F) |
| 19 | 2 adult trainees physical education teachers from Finland (last year 2) | As part of an educational training exchange |
| 20 | 1 adults in Letchworth and 1 adult in Cambridgeshire (last year 2) | Sponsoring, supporting and training for vocational qualifications (3.F) |
| | | |

(Data from financial year 2008/09.)

The School's commitment to internationalism has been recognised by the award of the DCSF International Schools Award in 2006.

In accordance with its aims, St Christopher School provides and maintains teaching spaces, sports facilities, swimming baths, theatres and lecture spaces these are used by the School and by local maintained schools, arts organisations, sporting clubs and youth groups.

| | To whom | How (reference clause from Memorandum of Association) |
|--|--|--|
| | 150 (est.) school-aged children | Through the organisation, support and promotion of an annual recycled fashion show and other community based educational activities. (3.B) |
| | 160 (est.) boys, girls or adults | Making School swimming facilities available to maintained schools at a reduced rate, providing swimming lessons and opening the facilities to community groups for a reduced rate or for free. (3.B ; 3.C) |
| | Local schools, charities and other organisations | Sharing and provision of facilities, including games fields, theatre, and sports hall (3.B ; 3.C) |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

In addition, St Christopher School 106 pupils are involved with community work with 18 local projects. The School has established an annual Community Action Morning involving all the School's pupils in activities supporting the local community, particularly junior school's in the Letchworth area.

1c – balancing detriment or harm

Since inception, the School has been aware of the holistic nature of its activities. In addition to its direct objects, the School has sought to minimise detriment or harm in the pursuit of its objects.

Today this takes the following forms:

1. Strong environmental policies – The School takes active responsibility for minimising its impact on the environment. The whole School tries to minimise use of scarce resources or resources that might prove harmful to the environment. The School minimises its waste and recycles a large amount of the waste it produces. Where practicable and possible, the School uses local suppliers to maximise its beneficial influence on the local economy and to minimise costs of freightage and transportation. The School's ecological credentials have been recognised by the international body, the Foundation for Environmental Education, with the award of their second "Eco-Schools" award.

2. The School's vegetarian policy – as well as the opportunity that a vegetarian diet gives the School to allow the greatest breadth of holders of different religious and ethical beliefs to at together, the School's vegetarian diet also helps the School to minimise the impact the harm it might do to animal welfare (the advancement of which is itself a charitable purpose) or the environment.
3. Ethical purchasing – where possible and practicable, the School uses fair trade goods and suppliers. The School is in the process of being accredited a fair trade School.

Particular public benefits provided by St Christopher School under Principle 1:

Choice

Diversity and choice are key underpinnings of current national education policy. St Christopher School offers an alternative approach to education that has educational value and professional structure. The existence of an alternative offering both to the current maintained education system, and to "traditional" independent schools, is an important benefit not only to the pupils in the School's care but to educational theory and practice in the UK.

Educational philosophy

Overarching and running through all the activities of the School is a central ethos that is based on considered and well-practiced philosophy of education and philosophy of life. The nature of the School's aims and methods mean that this philosophy is not static, but changes as the School adapts its ideas and practices for the real world in which children and adults live.

Informality

The informality of relationships within the School, where pupils, teaching staff and support staff do not wear uniform and all members of the community address each other by their first names, is an important and effective part of the way our pupils are educated. Such an approach is rare and contributes to the diversity of approach and choice available to parents and pupils.

Class size

The Governors believe that the education of pupils as individuals demand smaller class sizes and higher teacher-pupil ratios than are available within the maintained sector. This is a point of difference based upon educational philosophy and experience and offers an identifiable benefit to people educated at the School.

Integrated education

St Christopher School provides an integrated education from the age of 2 1/2 to 18, on a single site, within a linked and integrated community. This approach benefits certain children by offering a nurturing, coherent and continuous environment in which to learn and develop as people

Combination of curricular and extra-curricular education

The School operates on the understanding that the world in which young people grow up and which they join as adults is not divided neatly into matters intellectual and knowledge-based and matters involving less quantifiable, but equally important, skills. The education that it provides for pupils integrates the curricular and extra-curricular to ensure that a broad and complete educational experience prepares pupils for their future.

Absence of contrived competition

While acknowledging the need for pupils to be able to demonstrate to future educational institutions, employers and other bodies their ability, achievements and potential and recognising that the world in which we operate has many competitive elements, the School avoids contrived competition. We encourage and prepare children for success, but measure success on an individual and personalised scale, not against statistical averages or educational targets. Our educational practice reflects this belief.

Boarding

St Christopher School provides boarding for 39 pupils (last year 50). This not only allows access to the benefit of the School's education to people beyond daily travel distance to the School, it also provides for the care and development of pupils whose circumstances might otherwise effect their education and development.

Working with the maintained sector

In addition to its involvement with local schools with joint activities and facilities sharing, the School is registered with the Pathfinder project and provides boarding and day special educational needs provision for local authorities. Through its work, the School relieves the State of the cost of the education of the majority of pupils in its care.

Contribution to educational practice and debate

The School is a centre of excellence in learning and teaching. We develop and share good practice. Our staff inspect other schools and provide expertise and time to work on curriculum, syllabus and examination matters across the education sector. Our pupils' results are above the national and local authority average. The School, particularly with its distinctive ethos and educational philosophy contributes actively to the debate and development of national and international education provision, innovation and good practice

Principle 2: Benefit must be to the public, or a section of the public

Principle 2a The beneficiaries must be appropriate to the aims

Principle 2b Where benefit is to a section of the public, the opportunity to benefit must not be unreasonably restricted:

- by geographical or other restrictions or
- by ability to pay any fees charged

Principle 2c People in poverty must not be excluded from the opportunity to benefit

Principle 2d Any private benefits must be incidental

Principle 2a: beneficiaries appropriate to aims

The beneficiaries identified in the objects of the charity are the broadest possible – "girls, boys and adults of either sex". The benefit is available to the public and not a section of it. Beneficiaries are drawn from Letchworth and elsewhere. The beneficiaries are drawn from national and international groups. Beneficiaries are currently drawn from the following countries, reflecting the international spirit of the Charity's objects:

- China
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- India
- Kosovo
- Spain
- United Kingdom

2b: restrictions to opportunities to benefit

There are no geographical restrictions on the School's beneficiaries. The School maximizes its reach to beneficiaries by offering boarding for pupils and by outreach programmes that either directly visit, or support in other ways, overseas beneficiaries.

The School's interdenominational tradition and commitment and commitment to the broadest principles of national and international fellowship and goodwill help prevent undue restrictions on any beneficiaries.

Much of the benefit that the School provides is not charged for. Its overseas activities and its exchange programmes are provided to beneficiaries without charge. Where the School's facilities are made available for educational use by third parties, this is done at a lower – than-market rate or for free. Adult classes are charged at an accessible rate, to cover the incremental costs of providing the education. The governors do not believe the fees charged for these courses unreasonably restrict the opportunity to benefit.

Boy and girl pupils at St Christopher School Letchworth are charged fees. The cost of these fees may restrict the number of people able to benefit from this part of the charity's activities. In order to prevent this, the School makes available, through an endowed fund and through its financial planning, bursaries and fee remissions. Bursaries are means tested and are open for application by anyone eligible to join the School. In 2008/09, the School provided £371k (last year £293k), the equivalent of 5.4% of gross fees in means tested bursary funding. This provided up to 100% remission of the day fee to 50 pupils (last year 48). This represents 9% of the pupil body.

2c: people in poverty must not be excluded from the opportunity to benefit

None of the School's charitable activities excludes people in poverty. The School's educational activities outside the United Kingdom specifically benefit people in need and people in poverty.

While, if seen from an international standpoint, Letchworth and its immediate surrounding areas may not suffer from poverty, potential beneficiaries who might be considered to be in poverty relative to local or national norms are eligible to apply for support under the bursary scheme. This support can extend to cover all costs of day education. The absence of a uniform means that it's cost of purchase does not provide a barrier to entry. The School provides, in some cases of need, assistance with extras and incidental costs of education, including extra-curricular trips.

2d: private benefit

Private benefits provided by the charity are incidental. Staff are remunerated for their work for the charity. Their remuneration packages are market tested and reviewed by Governors on an annual basis. The School is prevented as a company from making any distribution to shareholders by its Memorandum and Articles.

Further information and links:

Charity Commission Guidance

Charities and Public Benefit (Jan 2008) -

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publicbenefit/publicbenefit.asp>

The Advancement of Education for the Public Benefit (Dec 2008) -

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publicbenefit/pbeduc.asp>

Public Benefit and Fee-Charging (Dec 2008) -

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publicbenefit/pbfeecha.asp>

St Christopher School on the Charity Commission Website -
<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/ShowCharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=311062&SubsidiaryNumber=0>

Other organisations

Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) - <http://www.fee-international.org/>

Eco-Schools - <http://www.eco-schools.org.uk>

International Schools Award - <http://www.globalgateway.org.uk>