

FUSS (Free UniformS for School)

Annual Report and Accounts

For the period 1stSeptember 2023 to 31st August 2024

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FUSS (Free UniformS for School)

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Registered Charity Number 1199396

Principal office St Luke's Methodist Church
19 Market Street
Hoylake
Wirral
CH47 2BF

Email fusshoylake@gmail.com

Website www.wirralfuss.co.uk

Trustees	Rev Helen Jobling	Chair
	Dr John Huthnance	Secretary
	Mrs Pamela Simms	Treasurer
	Mr Andrew Kemp	Development Manager
	Mrs Christine Conway	
	Mrs Margaret Allen	
	Mrs Sheila Fowler	

Bankers Lloyds Bank plc
137 Telegraph Rd, Heswall, Merseyside CH60 0AN

Independent Examiner Mr Andrew Lovelady

FUSS (Free UniformS for School)

Trustees' Annual Report

For the period 1st September 2023 to 31st August 2024

This is the second annual report of FUSS (Free UniformS for School).

The Objects of FUSS, as stated in the Constitution, are:

The relief of financial hardship among families in the Wirral and surrounding area by the recycling and provision or funding of clothing and equipment, in particular but not limited to school uniform, which they could not otherwise afford.

FUSS furthers its charitable purposes for the public benefit, by responding to requests to provide good quality, pre-used and new school uniform to families in need; and, through its wider activities, encouraging families, schools and those involved with child welfare in the environmentally positive practice 'reduce, reuse, recycle' in respect of school uniform, without regard to social or economic circumstances.

FUSS and its principles

In FUSS's first annual report, covering the period from June 2022 to August 2023, the Trustees gave a detailed account of the story of the charity, its principles, background, context, earlier funding, methods and operations: via its website, online services and its eight volunteer-led local Hubs. It is not proposed to rehearse these matters in such detail here, and the Trustees refer those interested to consult that earlier report, a copy of which is available via the Wirral FUSS website which also contains further operational information.

FUSS's principles remain the same. Known locally as Wirral FUSS, the charity encourages and enables the free distribution of school uniform, for re-use by families, without judgement of circumstances. There is no means-test: 'if you need it, and we've got it, you can have it'. We aim to follow the Christian principles of compassion, integrity, kindness and care – for families and for the environment – demonstrating faith-in-action: God's love for all. We also aim to reduce the amount of textiles entering landfill, by ensuring that any surplus uniform or unusable items are sent for textile reclamation or recycling. For every one tonne of clothing waste-prevented from landfill, seven tonnes of carbon emissions (mainly from replacement textile manufacture) are saved.

Achievements and Performance – 2023-24

During the 12-month period to the end of September 2024, FUSS:

- responded to 5,513 requests from families, schools and children's workers
- gave away 29,116 items of school uniform and equipment
- prevented over 12.7 Tonnes of clothing entering landfill, either by its reuse, or by recycling it

The figures above represent a 16% increase in requests, an 11.8% increase in uniform items given away to families, and a 16.5% increase in the amount of clothing waste-prevented, compared with the previous year. This significant increase in activity, though not quite as huge as that for the previous year, speaks to the continuing impact of the cost-of-living crisis: the fact that more and more families are struggling to cover the cost of uniform while budgeting for other essentials, especially food, housing costs and fuel costs. We hear many saddening stories of worry, hardship and distress; we try to do our bit to help. So many families express their gratitude for the help they receive. We also recognise that many families are becoming more inclined to engage with FUSS as they seek to be more environmentally conscious. We continue to provide considerable quantities of uniform for asylum seeking families.

FUSS functions due to the dedication and hard work of its Coordinator – Petra Dye-Davies – and its volunteers. Our Coordinator continues to work tirelessly in servicing the hubs, maintaining contacts, supporting the volunteers and spreading the word about FUSS. Several new volunteers started working with FUSS in 2023-24 in local hubs and in the Birkenhead Shop Hub. Some of our volunteers have been with FUSS for many years, some from the very start! This year we marked the retirement of three longstanding volunteers at our Lower Bebington Hub, much gratitude was expressed for their hard work and dedication; a new team is being built in their stead. There are now around 30 volunteers in addition to the Trustees.

The FUSS website also evolved further in 2023-24, providing more up-to-date information on Hub opening, improved features for selecting items on the online request forms, and more information on pick-up points. Donation drums were placed in several new school locations, signage updated or replaced, and other links with supportive community groups and venues were developed.

An innovation introduced in 2023, was an option, when making an online request for uniform, to select from which Hub the family would prefer to pick up their items. This has involved additional coordination by the Coordinator and those volunteers who help to re-locate requests to enable this to happen; but it has been an undoubted benefit to many families who have not had to travel so far to claim their parcels, and it has eased the summer congestion at our busiest Secondary School Hub at Hoylake. Several more pick-up locations have 'gone live' in 2023-24, in libraries and community facilities.

Hitherto the Birkenhead hub has been used under a Tenancy at Will between Wirral Methodist Circuit and the Pyramids Shopping Centre (owned by the Mars Pension Fund). In 2023 Wirral Borough Council took over the ownership of the Pyramids as part of a redevelopment plan and a new contract between Wirral BC and FUSS is under negotiation for a conventional 3-year lease. These negotiations have been protracted, but it is hoped that the lease will be signed before the end of 2024. In the meantime the tenancy has operated according to the existing arrangement.

During 2023-24 2023 FUSS's 'daughter project' in Skelmersdale has grown in its scope and impact. 'Skem FUSS' was developed with a grant from the West Lancashire District Council, and now operates with a Secondary Hub at Trinity Methodist, and a Primary Hub at the nearby St Paul's C of E. The Skelmersdale project is supported by a stand-alone website 'cloned' from the Wirral FUSS website. This has been an immense piece of work, but towards the end of the year Skem FUSS is looking towards independent operation, and it is hoped that before long the FUSS Trustees will be able to transfer the remaining funds (around 80% of the original grant) to the Skelmersdale churches, so they can be autonomous in determining how they resource their project going forward. The Trustees and our Coordinator are rightly proud of this achievement, made when FUSS's Wirral operations were also expanding.

Meanwhile, explorations continue to establish and fund a FUSS project in neighbouring Ellesmere Port. Conversations about a hub location and funding are ongoing with the Council and the local MP.

Financial Review

The day-to-day accounting is carried out by the Treasurer, and is reviewed quarterly by the Trustees as part of the Management Group's business. Online transactions are approved in each case by the Treasurer and one other officer. Payroll is sub-contracted to the Wirral Methodist Circuit, and all expenses and expenditure on resources made by the Coordinator are checked and authorised by the Treasurer and the Development Manager.

The Trustees continue to encourage donations and to seek funding from a variety of sources: to maintain the solvency of the charity, its commitments with regard to salary etc. and mindful of its Reserves Policy. Maintaining and expanding the work of the charity will require reliable income going forward and the Trustees are actively engaged in putting this in place. FUSS continues to be grateful for part funding from the Liverpool District, and to the

Circuit for operating payroll for FUSS and for continuing to contribute generously to the cost of the FUSS Free Shop Hub in the Pyramids, Birkenhead.

In 2023-24 FUSS has continued to benefit from the final two tranches of funding from the Liverpool Methodist District Advance Fund. A month before the end of this accounting period FUSS was successful in achieving a grant of £25,000 from the Steve Morgan Foundation to be paid in monthly instalments over the next two years. The Trustees decided that in the light of this grant we should make a second attempt to acquire a match-funding grant from the Lottery Community Fund in the next accounting period, to cover salary and running costs. Looking further ahead, FUSS hopes to benefit from funding by The Cupalt Foundation, commencing in 2025-26 and continuing, which may in time enable FUSS to explore employing a part-time assistant to work alongside the Coordinator.

Reserves Policy

The charity's Reserves Policy is reviewed annually by the Trustees in order that the agreed policy may be reported in the Annual Report and Accounts. Particular regard is made to uncertainties in relation to future levels of grant funding, and the charity's liabilities in terms of its responsibilities as an employer. The trustees' policy is to maintain the free reserve in unrestricted funds at a level which equates to approximately three months of unrestricted expenditure.

Policy Development

From 2022-23, since becoming a registered charity, the FUSS Trustees have been actively developing a set of Policy documents tailored to the specific operating context of FUSS. Specifically:

- Governance
- Reserves (see above)
- Risk Management
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Health & Safety at Work
- Staff Conditions of Employment
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
- Lone Working
- Volunteer Agreements
- Data Privacy (and data mapping)

Most of these have now been completed, are in operation, and are subject to annual review. Some further work is required on establishing a bespoke Safeguarding Policy and Procedure model to operate throughout FUSS including in hub settings where existing safeguarding regimes are in place. The Staff Condition of Employment policy has been updated to reflect the changes to the Coordinator's hours and role since her appointment.

Plans for the Future

We continue to raise awareness amongst families and schools about reducing, reusing and recycling in relation to school uniform.

Plans for developing our work in Ellesmere Port – part of the Cheshire West & Chester Council area – will continue (see above). In the summer, with increased volunteer help we were able to staff additional Saturday opening sessions at the Birkenhead Shop Hub. It is still our aim to increase access to this Hub at other times if volunteer staffing can be found.

Trustees are conscious that we are now in immediate need of a new Chair and a new Treasurer; recruitment and succession planning will require immediate attention in 2024-25.

The Coordinator and the Trustees, in conversation with the Hub teams, are actively looking at the pressure points in the FUSS system at our busiest times. We are aware that this year one or two hubs struggled to keep up with the online requests submitted in July and August running up to and beyond the ready-for-term-start deadline, while at the same time responding to those families attending the Hubs, and processing the increased amounts of donated clothing. It will be important to find some ways of easing these pressures going forward, as the evidence suggests that the demand for FUSS's service will continue to grow.

The Trustees and the Coordinator are aware of the age profile of some of our volunteer teams, and that there is a need going forward to identify and train new volunteers.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Trustees meet regularly as a Management group which also includes the FUSS Co-ordinator (the one part-time employee) and a volunteer at the Birkenhead shop. The Management group met in person four times in the reporting period. Regular items are: Report from the FUSS Co-ordinator, matters raised by volunteers, Documents and Policies, Finance (Present balance and near-term commitments, Raising funds for the future, Grant Applications), Other planning for the future. Minutes are kept by the Secretary.

There is considerable e-mail correspondence between meetings, especially between the Trustees with named roles (see below) who are also the signatories to the bank account; two signatures are required for any payment. The Development Manager is also the Line Manager for the FUSS Co-ordinator.

No Trustees received any remuneration, payments or benefits from FUSS other than refunds of legitimate Trustee expenses.

Reference and Administrative Information

FUSS (Free Uniforms for School): Registered Charity Number 1199396

Principal office: St Luke's Methodist Church, 19 Market Street, Hoylake, Wirral, CH47 2BF

Trustees:	(appointed until)
• Rev Helen Jobling, Chair	2024
• Dr John Huthnance, Secretary	2025
• Mrs Pamela Simms, Treasurer	2024
• Mr Andrew Kemp, Development Manager	2026
• Mrs Christine Conway	2026
• Mrs Margaret Allen	2025
• Mrs Sheila Fowler	2025

Trustees' Responsibilities in relation to the Accounts

The Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material mis-statement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the ability of FUSS to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting, unless the Trustees intend to cease operations or have no realistic alternative but to do so.



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

**Independent examiner's
report on the accounts**

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Charity Name
Free Uniforms for Schools (FUSS)

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31 August 2024

**Charity no
(if any)**

1199396

Set out on pages

R1 & R2

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/08/2024**.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Date:

09 October 2024

Name:

Andrew Robert Lovelady

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

Accountant

Section B**Disclosure**

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

NONE.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Free Uniforms for School (FUSS)

1199396

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period
from

01.09.2023

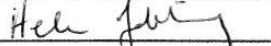
To

31.08.2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
District Grant 2023/2024 Methodist Church GB	12,000	-	-	12,000	17,664
District Grant 2024/2025 Methodist Church GB	12,000	-	-	12,000	9,000
Steve Morgan Foundation	1,042	-	-	1,042	-
SWD Premier Clothing	1,918	-	-	1,918	1,151
Donations	3,124	-	-	3,124	3,104
Other(Banner)	30	-	-	30	68
West Lancs Borough Council	-	-	-	-	20,000
AP Kemp Charities Fund	-	-	-	-	6,000
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	30,114	-	-	30,114	56,987
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	30,114	-	-	30,114	56,987
A3 Payments					
Salary	21,393	790	-	22,183	25,692
Travel	1,717	240	-	1,957	2,826
Expenses	1,233	437	-	1,670	2,384
Printing	23	-	-	23	14
IT	45	45	-	90	480
Insurance	403	-	-	403	403
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	24,814	1,512	-	26,326	31,799
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	24,814	1,512	-	26,326	31,799
Net of receipts/(payments)	5,300	(1,512)	-	3,788	25,188
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	7,451	17,737	-	25,188	-
Cash funds this year end	12,751	16,225	-	28,976	25,188

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current Account	12,751	16,225	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds (agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	12,751	16,225	-
		OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	 	PAMELA MARGARET SIMMS HELEN MARY JOBLING	18.10.2024 18.10.2024	