



Ochil Tower School

Annual Report & Review of the Year

2018-2019



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living, learning and growing together

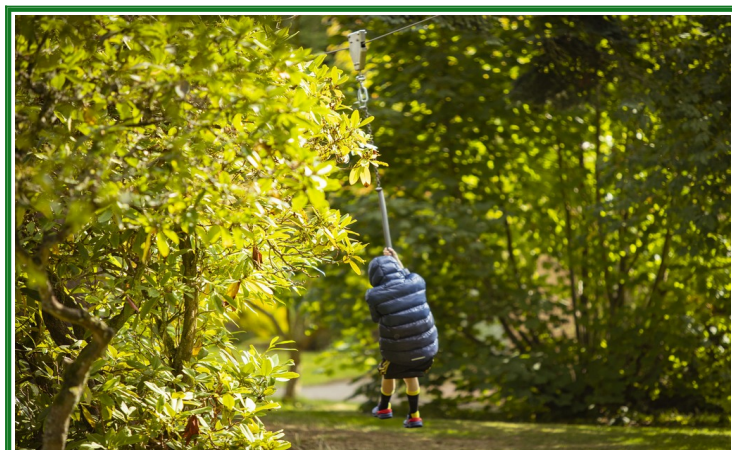
Introduction:

What a busy year it has been, it is hard to believe that the end of term is upon us already!

It has been a year of significant change and last June saw the retirement of the last two members of the four Joint co-ordinators that had led the school for so many years. The reins were very much handed over at that stage to the new Leadership Team. In the course of the past 12 months we have taken up the challenge that was set for us to integrate into the school a new 43 week programme and to ensure the completion of the Life Skills Centre, opening our age group up to aged 21.

All of us find transitions in life fairly challenging. It is a great development that we can now support our young adults at such a crucial stage, so that are guided and helped in adjusting and preparing for the next stage in their lives.

It has been a year of adjustment for all of us from the long established 38 week model to adding in the 43 week programme and the older age group. I am sure the school feels different for long standing staff members as a result of these required changes. Great efforts have been made to ensure that the ethos and culture of the school are retained and that Ochil Tower continues to be rooted in its Camphill values and works from a social pedagogy model – working with our students with a head, heart and hands approach.



Activities & Special Events:

As ever our year has been peppered with highlights that the children and now young adults can look back on with a sense of achievement. The Life Skills Centre opened in October 2018. In August of this year we will have a formal opening - we are looking forward to that very much. We have added a new shed to sit beside the Centre so that we can continue to develop our outdoor focus, adding creative spaces that can form a series of buildings/areas where people can learn and work together.

The resources, when allied to the correct support and guidance, are enabling young people to develop new skills that will increase their capacity for resilience and greater independence. Comments from our Commissioning partners about the Life Skills Centre have been very complimentary and greatly encouraging.

Throughout the year we have of course continued to mark special occasions with our traditional festivals. In September we enjoyed the Michaelmas Harvest Festival, creating the harvest altar and sharing a meal together. We had a bake sale in October with all proceeds going to the Marine Conservation Society.

We had a fantastic Halloween party and thanks to Annie, Janka and Judyta for organising a great puppet show of Hansel and Gretel. In November Stuart, along with Camphill Scotland, met the Children & Young People's Commissioner for Scotland to discuss how we might improve the transitions process for our young people into adulthood.

Camping week(s) at the White House have long been a tradition at Ochil Tower and this year was no exception. The children and young people have enjoyed canoeing trips, barbecues on one of the islands on Loch Tay and the chance to camp and experience the great Scottish outdoors. These trips are planned and delivered so well by our teachers' group, supported by care staff and co-workers to enable great experiences that

will live long in the memories of the children and young people. Particular thanks go to Boris who has the experience and positive attitude to make camping week(s) such a success.

On the 20th June Dochart Class did a beautiful performance of 'the Town Musicians of Bremen'. The play was much enjoyed by all, and it was a real pleasure to see how the children loved being on stage.

On the 23rd June we had our Family Day. This is always a great success bringing families together so that we can all enjoy games, great food and have the chance to reflect upon the reach and the impact that Ochil Tower has for so many families.

Fund Raising & Community engagement:

Red Nose Day was a great success and collectively the school raised over £500.00 to donate to the cause. Everyone dressed up and had the opportunities to throw wet sponges at a select few staff members – much to the amusement of all!



Fair Trade fortnight was a great success too with the children learning about fair trade across the

world. They considered how to shop ethically, thinking about the impact for people in communities far and wide.

Around Christmas time Isla class raised an impressive £225.00 for CATH - a homeless Day Centre charity in Perth. The class were very well received by the Centre.

Across the year we had a series of visiting groups:

Zoolab brought to us the world of small animals and bugs – a yearly highlight for most at Ochil Tower. The Musical Theatre, another yearly highlight brought to us the performance of the Selfish Giant – a fabulous production which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. The Nevis Ensemble, a very vibrant and large Street Orchestra came to perform in our hall where the interactive nature of having an orchestra in our midst was not only loved by Ochil Tower young people and adults but also some guests from both Corbenic and Blair Drummond.



Achievements, training and other activities:

The children and young people have continued to work very hard this year on developing new skills and gaining new knowledge across a wide range of topics and activities. Having the Life Skills Centre up and running saw an increase of activity –

weekly pizza and bagel deliveries, a laundry service not to forget the animal care and estate and garden work.

This year, the following qualifications have been achieved:

41 ASDAN: 36 Towards Independence, 1 New Horizon, and 4 Transition Challenges.

68 SQA National 1, 2 Personal Achievement Awards – 1 Bronze and 1 Silver

The Achievement Celebration for all pupils and the Leaving Presentations for the school leavers which all took place at the end of June were valuable and memorable occasions, giving the pupils and co-workers a real sense of accomplishment.

Three teachers and one House Coordinator were able to take part in a Child Protection training provided by P&K. The emphasis around potential exploitation of children and young people is an area which is vitally important. We have done a lot of foundation work with our pupils over the past six months or so on Sex Education and will explore relevant material and methods of looking at internet safety as a next step with the appropriate pupils and students.

Two of our staff have become MAPA trainers so that we can work to reduce incidents at school and equip staff to de-escalate situations that may arise as effectively as possible.

All our teachers are now registered with the GTC and have the option to work towards Full Registration by following individual pathways. Two teachers have achieved this by studying the PG Cert in Inclusive Pedagogy over the past year. Two more will embark on that journey over the course of the next school year. This year we engaged for the first time with PRD's (Professional Review and Development) which helps in guiding each of their learning journeys.

The teachers group continued the culture of having a termly teachers' day in the holidays and a great variety of topics were discussed during these sessions including :

- Mental Health focused work
- Curriculum development – how to identify our strengths and weaknesses and where we can improve
- School Improvement Plan – sharing and discussion
- Topics of the term – Energy, Waste Minimization, Plastic



The topic of Plastic is of course very current and was a challenging one for everyone. Through exploring the topic the children have helped us all to remind ourselves of what we can do to help the planet through being engaged in changing attitudes and re-using, re-cycling and reducing our use of plastics. Each class reached the conclusion that things need to change! Most pupils have also started to engage in Ecobricking – a way

of disposing non recyclable plastic. We hope to give you news soon of what we will build with these bricks.

Camphill Values in Practice - two staff have joined the Camphill Values in Practice training course delivered and shaped by long standing Camphill co-workers from Scottish communities. The aim of the course is to make people aware and deepen their understanding of some of the core principles and values of Camphill. Both are full of enthusiasm and are becoming great advocates for the course!

We were delighted to have our Care Inspectorate grades improve after our care inspection in January from 4 x 4's to 3 x 5's and a 4 on our Quality Themes:

4 for Care and Support

5 for Environment

5 for Staffing

5 for Leadership and Management

These improvements to grades represent a great effort from all of the team. The new care staff have had to build relationships with young people and the wider school staff and support teams, and their efforts and commitment are much appreciated.

Comings and Goings:

Over the course of this term we have introduced two new children and one young adult to Ochil Tower. We are now working in partnership with an increased number of Local Authorities and that is a very welcome sign.

Welcome to wee Charlie, Bonnie and Mark's new baby boy who was born in December 2018!

Richard Trinder, our gardener, left the school in January of 2019. Richard had been with Camphill at Ochil Tower and also Northern Ireland for well over 20 years. We miss Richard being around and we wish him and his new young family all the very best. Kirsty, house co-ordinator at Priory House, will leave us at the end of term in June and we are a wee bit upset about that as Kirsty embraced the school from the moment she joined a few years ago. We are though heartened that she will not be a loss to Camphill as she will be joining Camphill Blair Drummond as a Day Services Manager - good luck and best wishes to Kirsty.

On a very positive note Mirjam Schell has rejoined us to lead Priory house as a house co-ordinator. Her many years of experience within the community are welcomed. Mirjam was a teacher with Ochil Tower previously and I am sure she will do very well next term.



Grant Cowper joined us in April in a newly created post of Residential Care Manager. Grant has settled in well and is really enjoying his new working environment and his new role. We needed to strengthen the support for our expanding services and Grant will help to support our residential houses across the school. There have been a good deal of new faces coming to support both our residential care and school with new care staff enabling the 43 week programme and also staff in school support roles. All are very welcome and it feels like we are moving into a new era of Ochil Tower School with a wider and more diverse offering for our children and our young people.

Looking ahead to the coming year 2019/20:



It is a year to grow once again. From experiencing the loss of such a strong group of people that were pillars of the community for so long, the school has had to almost re-invent itself. That is where we welcome the new staff that I mentioned above who will play an important part in enabling our transition. They bring with them new ideas and a fresh perspective and we welcome their enthusiasm. As they grow in confidence they will have new impulses that will compliment our core of experienced staff and as a result the children, young people and young adults will benefit and thrive.

We thank all of those contributors and funders that helped to make the Life Skills Centre project a reality. This addition to the school is a very significant one. Children will be able to come to us at a relatively young age knowing that we have the potential to offer a continuum of consistent care and education that can last into young adulthood.

In summary, it has been quite a year. To all of our partners in the various Local Authorities around Scotland, Social Work and Education departments, our board of trustees, Camphill Central Scotland Trust, and of course families and friends we are hugely grateful for your continued support, we wish you all the very best for our new school year 2019/20.



Stuart Provan
Chief Executive
June 2019