



ESMS | Community

IMPACT REPORT

February 2024



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WELCOME FROM ANTHONY SIMPSON, ESMS PRINCIPAL

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our latest ESMS Community Impact Report. Since I started as Principal in 2022, it strikes me that our community and the difference that we make both within and outwith is more important now than ever.

In an increasingly disconnected and fragmented world, my vision is for a family of Schools that is recognised and valued not just for the calibre of the pupils that leave our school gates, but also for the social good that we bring to the wider local, national and even international community. I want our pupils to learn the necessary philanthropic skills, behaviours and attributes that they need to ensure that as our next generation of alumni, they will become responsible, active and engaged citizens of the future.

In this report, you will find stories of the incredible and indeed lifelong difference that we are making as a community to children's lives through our bursary programme – something that is fundamental to who we are. Since 1694, when Mary Erskine with the Merchant Company established a Hospital School for the 'lasses', we have continued to remember our philanthropic roots and ensure that we can widen access to an ESMS education. However, this is not something that we can achieve alone, especially with the challenging times that we are facing ahead. So I am all the more grateful to every one of you in our community, who has kindly chosen to support our mission to ensure more children are able to receive a transformational education. Thank you.

You will also read wonderful examples from across our family of Schools about our charitable and volunteering work, from our smallest Snowdrops right through to our S6 pupils. Whether it be the inspirational work that has been happening to increase access to sport for children with disabilities in the Edinburgh community or our extensive Duke of Edinburgh programme, donating nearly 7000 hours of volunteering, valued at over £30,000.

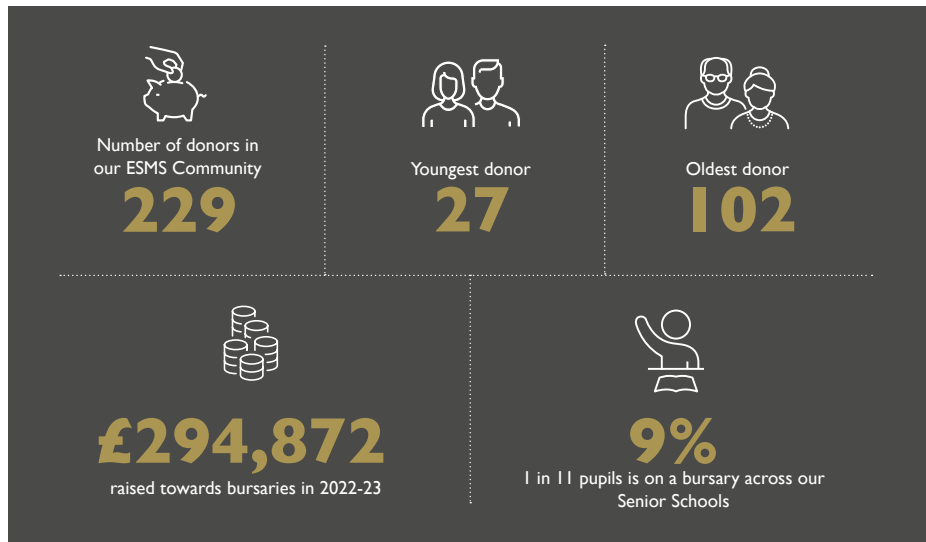
I hope that you enjoy reading this and thank you once again for the vital role you play in supporting us and ensuring that we can continue to make a positive and crucially, meaningful difference in our local, national and international community.

UPDATE ON OUR BURSARY PROGRAMME AUGUST 2022 – JULY 2023:

Since our last report, with your kind support, we have continued to provide life-changing opportunities to children through our bursary programme.

Thank you so much to everyone who has kindly given over the last year, whether it was through a single or regular gift through our annual appeal in the summer, choosing to generously gift annual school fees for a pupil on a Transformational Bursary or for those who left a gift in their will.

Every gift, no matter the size, is greatly appreciated and makes a life-changing difference for children at ESMS, who are in need of financial support.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

We continue to work towards our goal of raising a capital sum of £15 million to generate an annual income to sustainably fund bursaries for children at ESMS. As at 31 December 2023, the value of the Endowment Fund was £6,062,727.

FAMILIES OF CURRENT PUPILS

We are also very appreciative of all the families that give to our bursary programme through Extras. Your dedicated support plays a key role in enabling us to provide transformational opportunities to children, who otherwise would not be able to access an ESMS education.



MELVILLE COLLEGE TRUST

We are incredibly grateful to Melville College Trust who support the advancement of education at ESMS through the provision of bursaries and grants to perpetuate the memory of those former pupils of Edinburgh Institution and Melville College who lost their lives in the two World Wars.



Over the academic session 2022/23, the Trust funded 23 bursaries across Stewart's Melville College and The Mary Erskine School, at a cost of £231,501. They also gave £10,000 split into a number of smaller grants for a wide range of extracurricular clubs across all three schools, helping purchase items such as virtual reality headsets, a digital piano and mountain bikes.



BURSARY STORIES



David Pope

Daniel Stewart's Melville College, Class of 1986

“Going to Stewart’s Melville changed my life. The school gave me a first-class education, of course. It also gave me some wonderful experiences and some good friends. But perhaps most importantly, it introduced me to debating.

Under the expert guidance of Cameron Wyllie, Stewart’s Melville became a debating powerhouse in the 1980s and I was lucky enough to be part of it. I still remember my first meeting of the middle-school debaters, in a classroom on the first floor of the main building. It must have been about late 1982. At any rate, within half an hour I was hooked.

Debating would go on to dominate the rest of my school days, inspire me to read law at Edinburgh University, help me win a place at Harvard Law School, and lead me to a career as a barrister in London. The course of my adult life can, in a sense, be traced back to that first-floor classroom.

Yet without the help of a bursary, I would never even have been at Stewart’s Melville. When I started at the school in 1980, my mother was a part-time primary school teacher and the single parent of two boys. (My younger brother, Rob, was a couple of years below me at school.) Keeping Rob and me fed, watered, and clothed was hard enough. School fees? Not a chance.

Rob and I were always conscious of the generosity of the people who had funded our bursaries and of our obligation to repay it by making the most of the opportunities it had afforded us. I hope we did so. He would go on to become a partner at one of the UK’s largest law firms. Going to Stewart’s Melville changed his life too.

I am now in the fortunate position of being able to contribute to the ESMS bursary programme. I will do so gladly. It is a privilege to help the school change young lives for the better, just as the school once changed mine.”

Kirsty Hall

The Mary Erskine School, Class of 2016
(Melville College Trust Bursary Recipient)



Can you share a bit of your background and how you came to The Mary Erskine School?

“I grew up on a small farm in West Lothian. Whilst growing up on a farm is idyllic in ways, it was also difficult to reach anything without driving and so meeting friends was difficult. Getting the opportunity to attend the Mary Erskine School, I suddenly found myself in a school of thousands of pupils where everyone received individual support and attention. From Primary 1 all the way through to Sixth Form, I was lucky to make a close group of friends, who are still a large part of my life and helped ensure that I had a strong support network as I embarked upon my adult life.”

What was your experience like, did you have any favourite subjects or teachers?

“Throughout my school career I always had small classes, especially towards the end of secondary school, which allowed for lots of individual support and guidance from teaching staff. By 6th year I had focused on Maths, Biology and Art to study at Advanced Higher & A Level, and took music lessons right the way through school. I loved my classes because everyone was encouraged to participate and become confident in contributing to discussions. If my classes had been larger, it would have been easier for me to blend into the background. I learned that it’s okay to be wrong and, more often than not, the most important question you can ask is “why?”

What opportunities did you have at School that you might not have had access to otherwise and what difference did they make?

“When I started school, staying away from home was difficult for me. I certainly never considered going on a school exchange. This changed when one of my friends was involved in the Australian Exchange and encouraged me to apply for the following year. Having the opportunity to live in Australia for 2 months exposed me to people from cultures, with different lifestyles and to social issues which I had little exposure to growing up in rural Scotland. The exchange fundamentally changed my perspective on what opportunities are available and truly how global the world is.

I also went on a trip to Switzerland to visit The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), whose research is defining the cutting edge of particle physics. While I can’t claim to completely understand the research we witnessed, it was magical to discover that the world of science still has so much that is unknown.”

On reflection back, what impact did your education have for what you have gone on to do?

“After leaving school I took a gap year, after which I took a leap of faith and decided to enrol in Minerva University. Through my degree, I studied in San Francisco, Buenos Aires, Seoul, Hyderabad, London and Berlin, and latterly I have worked in the Bay Area, Mexico City, Istanbul and Madagascar on projects on climate change, biology and sustainability. I could never have imagined such a trajectory before participating in MES’s Australian Exchange.

Simultaneous to my work in the climate field, I am co-founding two software companies based in Silicon Valley and learning how to support myself through that as an entrepreneur. Central to this is surrounding yourself with trusted mentors and advisors who can be fully honest with you - something that I learned the value of while in school.”

How did your education shape you?

“Definitely the greatest thing I learned is that education does not simply happen in the classroom. Extra-curricular clubs, outdoor education and social activities provided through the school helped me to develop valuable life skills that cannot simply be taught in a curriculum. School helped me develop into a confident and conscientious person, who is willing to try new things without the fear of failing.

Thank you so much to everyone that has given – I would not change it for anything and I am very grateful for the opportunity that I was gifted.”

CHARITY WORK AT THE JUNIOR SCHOOL AND NURSERY

The Junior School and Nursery continued to strengthen the sense of community engagement and social responsibility among its children and staff throughout the academic session. Through various initiatives and partnerships, the school actively contributed to the well-being and support of the local community, national and international community.



FUNDRAISING HIGHLIGHTS:

- The children in Primary 1 partnered with The Yard, organising visits, fundraising activities, and educational sessions for the children. The children designed a tea towel, collected weekly charity pennies and raised £1,225.
- The Junior School at Ravelston contributed to the Chesney Trust via a Christmas jumper day helping towards the total of £1,718. The Chesney Trust supports the education of girls in Malawi and one of our teachers is a trustee.
- Primary 3 raised £2,626 for Simpsons' Special Care Babies unit through weekly charity pennies, a collection at Christmas and a special Teddy Bear picnic with parents.
- Primary 7 pupils took on the West Highland Way and raised an amazing £14,926 for My Name's Doddie Foundation.

DONATIONS OF GOODS:

- The school collected food items through a reverse advent calendar initiative and donated them to the food bank at Sighthill, supporting local families in need.

- Over 600 toys were collected and donated to Mission Christmas, spreading joy to children during the holiday season.
- Surplus nappies were collected and sent to the charity Nappi Runz, supporting families in need.
- Lost property from the school's Nursery was reused for disadvantaged families through Kids Love Clothes, promoting sustainability and community support.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES:

- The Junior School at Ravelston and ESMS Nursery actively welcomed several members of the community into the school, helping the children to understand more about specific festivals which the visitor's celebrated, their jobs, food, interests and cultural events. These were very popular with both children and adults.
- Florence, an elderly resident, visited the nursery weekly to read to the children, fostering intergenerational connections and promoting literacy.
- Primary 3 children at ESMS created and sent over 100 Christmas cards to local care homes, spreading joy and companionship to elderly residents during the holiday season.



JUNIOR AWARD SCHEME FOR SCHOOLS (JASS)

JASS is a fully inclusive, holistic and progressive award scheme for our pupils in the Junior School. The programme is flexible and can be tailored to the interests and abilities of individuals, with one section Me and My World involving working for the greater good of the community or environment.

The Junior School children, with their boundless curiosity and empathy, contributed to their communities in myriad ways. The huge variety of incredible targets they set themselves have included watering planters installed in a local village by their local community group, advocating for Home Start by fundraising to make Christmas special, through to donating to and tidying 'Little Local Libraries' within Edinburgh. Some chose to pick up litter in local beaches and parks, to help in the Water of Leith clear ups, and others knitted hats for premature babies in the Royal Infirmary. Their small acts of kindness ripple through society, teaching valuable lessons of compassion and responsibility to all.



CHARITY SPOTLIGHT: ROYAL NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION

"One girl helped out with the raffle, cake and candy stall. We raise money for RNLI (the local Fife branch) who do an amazing job saving lives at sea. She was full of enthusiasm and energy explaining the charity and event to everyone and following up with a thank you letter to the raffle donors with a report of the event. Hugely helpful, we raised over £700 from the raffle and cakes."

Andrew Simpson Elie Triathlon event organiser



YOUTH PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE (YPI)

YPI is an international programme designed to support young people in developing both community awareness and important employability skills. Pupils are taught about philanthropy and charity through a hands-on experience of giving that highlights the positive impact they can have on the community.

In groups, 123 MES pupils researched the needs of the local community and identified a local charity they believed was best placed to make a positive change, supported by 16 members of staff. They analysed their chosen charity's management, budget, strategy, staffing arrangements and programmes, along with a visit to the charity or virtual contact to discover more about the challenges the charity faces.

Following skills training in advocacy and public speaking, pupils used their research to make presentations about their charity to compete for a space in the Showcase Final, where they could win a £3,000 award for their charity. This was partly funded by The Wood Foundation and Partners and £500 of the prize money was provided by the school.

The winning charity for 2022-23 was The Welcoming, which supports asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Edinburgh. In a surprising turn of events, a member of the audience at the showcase final was so moved by all six of the finalist presentations that they generously donated £1,000 to each of the runner-up groups.



CHARITY SPOTLIGHT: THE WELCOMING

“The £3,000 prize money was used to help fund a year's supply of food for twelve families. The Welcoming's community fridge is a fridge located in a public, accessible space, filled with donated food and is freely available to anyone who is struggling to cope with the increased cost of living these days. Thirty different families use the fridge every week on a rotational basis.”

Jenni Flett, Communications and Campaigns Co-ordinator



CHARITY WORK AT STEWART'S MELVILLE COLLEGE

The session 2022-23 was another busy year for charitable activities across Stewart's Melville College, with pupils and staff from across the year groups, getting involved in a wide variety of local, national and international causes.



2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Non-uniform day and lunch time stall for Finlay's Friends, to help families in need when children are taken ill and rushed to the hospital, raising c.£1,850.
- Easter Egg sale for the Tailor Ed Foundation who support children with autism, raising c. £200.
- Lunchtime stall for LGBT Youth Scotland, who support the young LGBTQ+ community in Scotland, raising c. £180.

DONATIONS OF GOODS:

- Food donations for the North East Edinburgh foodbank were collected by pupils and given to families facing financial need.
- Spare outdoor education kit including trousers, jackets and boots from the Thrift Shop were donated to the Wester Hailes Community Centre to allow children in more deprived areas to experience outdoor activities.

CHARITY SPOTLIGHT: FINLAY'S FRIENDS

“ESMS has been a terrific and constant support over the past 6 years since we were founded. The children and staff from all three schools have fundraised, packed comfort kits and raised awareness of our small charity. Fundraising from S6 military fitness challenges, bake sales, Junior School book sales, Senior Schools awareness stalls and non-uniform days has provided comfort kits, phone chargers and insulated bottles for over 30 families who have had their child rushed to either the RHCYP in Edinburgh or RHC Glasgow in an emergency. The hard work and commitment of the community has enabled us to support families in their toughest moments. The kindness and goodwill of staff and pupils has been a lifeline for us as a small charity and for the families we support in a crisis. We are hugely grateful.”



CHARITY WORK AT THE MARY ERSKINE SCHOOL

Students across MES were involved in community service programmes organised both within and outside of school with fund-raising activities raising almost £10,000 for numerous charities.



2022-23 HIGHLIGHTS:

- In October we held a successful Harvest Collection for NW Foodbank. This collection was more important than ever this year as so many more people were struggling and using foodbanks.
- In November our non-uniform day raised £1,491 for our nominated charities, The Chesney Trust, SSPCA and Edinburgh Women's Aid.
- A whole school lunch time event organised by students helped MES celebrate Diwali and raised £271 for Shakti Women's Aid.
- Our Christmas Fair, where form classes had various stalls, raised £611.

- In December we also supported Social Bite's Festival of Kindness. We helped collect presents for people who are homeless and vulnerable. The presents were delivered to the Christmas tree in St Andrew's Square and Social Bite then distributed these gifts throughout Scotland.
- In February we sold Valentine's sweets which could be delivered, along with a loving message, to someone in the school. We also helped Spartans by collecting Easter Eggs – we wanted to ensure that all children in our community would receive a visit from the Easter Bunny.
- In March our second non-uniform day raised £1,423 for our nominated charities. Students and staff felt that they wanted to do something to help the victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, so we held an extra non-uniform day which raised £1,018 for DEC humanitarian appeal.



CHARITY SPOTLIGHT: CHESNEY TRUST

"We were delighted to receive the magnificent donation of £1,549.18 and we are most grateful to you for organising these events. We can now approve the Edinburgh Girls' High School's proposal for a new borehole close to the hostels to provide additional water required for the increased numbers of pupils (now 190), and for a 5,000 litre tank for storage. Please pass on our thanks and best wishes to all involved."
John Dymond, Chesney Trust



INCLUSIVE SPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

MES has been working in partnership with Stewart's Melville FP Rugby Club (SMRFC) to provide inclusive sport activity sessions and events for children and young adults with learning and physical disabilities in Edinburgh and beyond.

Through our 'Leadership through Sport' programme, over 70 pupils have been trained by Scottish Disability Sport on how to plan and lead inclusive, fun and adaptable multisport activities. These sessions are appropriate for people with learning disabilities, hearing and visual impairments, special educational needs and various physical disabilities.

In partnership with SMRFC, our pupils have run quarterly community disability sport events for children from the Yard and Carronrange High School – this caters for pupils with moderate, severe and complex additional support needs. Sports are not changed, simply altered. After a full morning of activity, everyone came together – children, sports leaders, parents/carers, brothers/sisters, teachers – to enjoy a hearty lunch with new friends. Going forward into next session, we plan to continue to provide the much sought after fun, free, consistent and inclusive sport opportunities for young people with disabilities in our community.



TESTIMONIALS FROM PARENTS:

"We are so grateful for the inclusion you provide, wonderful opportunity for kids with complex needs. Thank you to all that are giving up time to make this possible."

"Thank you for accepting our children the way that they are. It's so hard to get them into places. They either don't get accepted, they get rejected, or kicked out. Thank you again."

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD



As is the case every year, ESMS has a huge impact upon the local and wider community through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) volunteering section. ESMS is the 8th biggest contributor to volunteering hours in Scotland, with a total equivalent financial value higher than that of several local authorities and the highest of any independent school in Scotland.

Pupils from across all levels of the Award engage with community groups, charities, clubs and societies to benefit our wider community. These organisations offer a range of local services from riding for the disabled to shopping deliveries and food banks, to sports coaching and development to care for the elderly and a whole host more.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH IN NUMBERS 2022/23



“For my Gold DofE volunteering, I volunteered as a ward helper at the Western General Hospital. Volunteering on a general surgery and urology ward for the past year has proven an invaluable experience and has given me a great insight into the realities of working on a hospital ward. Every week, I did the tea and coffee round and helped out with dinners, and seeing the small but positive impact I made on the patients was very rewarding.”

Lauren Doney



“Having volunteered at Cubs every Friday for the past three years, my DofE volunteering journey has been one filled with learning, growth and joy. This experience has not only allowed me to contribute to the community (by assisting in leading activities and my own sessions) but has also gifted me with valuable insights and skills, such as leadership, patience and adaptability. However, above all, it has been incredibly rewarding as I have learned to connect with each individual cub on a personal level and so will always be immensely grateful for DofE for this wonderful opportunity to act as a positive role model for them.”

Noor Hassanien

DEVELOPMENT OFFICE TEAM



Angela Alexander
Director of Development
asvalexander@esms.org.uk

I hope that you have enjoyed reading about the difference that we are collectively making not only in our school community, through life-changing bursaries, but also through our charitable and voluntary work in the wider community. It has been a privilege and a pleasure getting to know so many of you over the last year and I look forward to many more opportunities to connect and to strengthen what we can achieve together – thank you for all you do to support ESMS.



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Thank you.



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