



ESMS | Community

IMPACT REPORT

2023/2024



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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 becoming Principal, I have been continually inspired by the strength of our diverse community and the lasting impact we can collectively create, both within our Schools and in the wider local, national and even international community.

In an era of increasing economic and political uncertainty, the role of independent schools has never been more vital, or indeed, more challenged. Over the last academic year, we have had to grapple with new pressures such as rising costs and policy changes with the introduction of VAT on school fees, threatening access to high-quality education. Despite these obstacles, our commitment remains unwavering: to provide our students with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

At the heart of this commitment is our bursary programme, which continues to transform children's lives, through the gift of education. We follow in our founders' philanthropic footsteps, from our first school in the Cowgate that was Mary Erskine's Merchant Maiden Hospital to the School we are today at Ravelston and Queensferry. Today, the need for financial support is greater than ever, and we are deeply grateful to those who have helped us keep the doors of opportunity open. Your generosity ensures that we can continue to offer life-changing opportunities to children through our bursary programme.

In this report, you can read about the difference we are making across our community, through the many ways our pupils, from our youngest Snowdrops to our S6 leavers, are giving their time and energy to support others. Whether it is championing inclusive sports for children with disabilities in Edinburgh, fundraising for local, national and global causes, or contributing over 8,000 hours of volunteering (a social value of £42,485) to local causes through our Duke of Edinburgh scheme. All this work reflects our commitment as a school to shape the next generation, creating a culture of philanthropy, so that they understand the power of giving back.

Looking ahead, we know that the landscape for independent education will continue to evolve. But what remains constant is our belief that an ESMS education is not just about academic achievement, it is about building character, fostering resilience, and making a difference in the world. None of this would be possible without your support, and I want to personally thank you for being part of our journey.

I hope you enjoy reading this report and take pride in the collective impact we are making together.

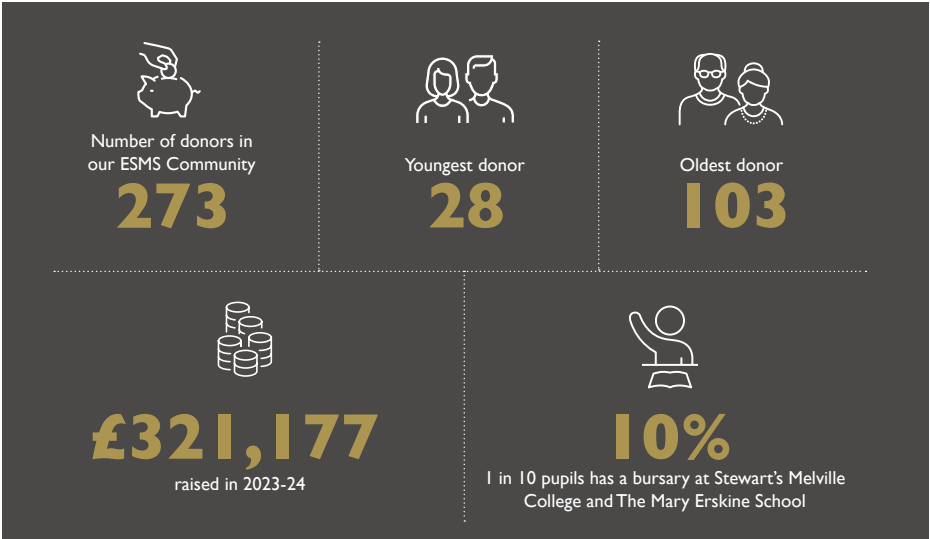
UPDATE ON OUR BURSARY PROGRAMME

AUGUST 2023 – JULY 2024

Since our last report, thanks to your generous support, we have continued to make a meaningful difference in children's lives 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 generously gifting annual school fees for a pupil on a Transformational Bursary or for those of you who have left a gift to the School 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 in the Senior Schools. As at 31 December 2024, the value of the Endowment Fund was £5,761,437.

FAMILIES OF CURRENT PUPILS

We are hugely grateful to all the families, who kindly give to our bursary programme through Extras. Your dedicated support helps to provide bursaries and financial assistance to change children's lives through access to an ESMS education.



MELVILLE COLLEGE TRUST

We are deeply appreciative of the Governors of The Melville College Trust, who kindly provide essential support for our school through a generous, annual grant for bursaries and smaller grants for extra-curricular activities, 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 2023/24, The Trust funded 24 bursaries across The Junior School, Stewart's Melville College and The Mary Erskine School, at a cost of £257,808. They also gave grants for a wide range of extracurricular clubs across all three schools, including new kit for the War Games Club, 4 new bikes and helmets for PE, new compasses and timing chips for the Orienteering Club and support with facilities for our Inclusive Sport Initiative Events.



BURSARY STORIES

Kheredine Idessane

Daniel Stewart's and Melville College, Class of 1987

"Without that support, I wouldn't have had access to the incredible education, opportunities, and encouragement I received. Stewart's Melville didn't just teach me academics; it fostered values of perseverance, ambition, and confidence that have defined who I am today.

The culture at Stewart's Melville was one where you were constantly encouraged to do your best, to get stuck in, and to believe in your potential. It opened doors I wouldn't even have seen otherwise—leading me to Cambridge, then to BBC Scotland, and eventually to three Olympic Games, multiple Commonwealth Games, and covering Andy Murray's rise to world number one.

The school's impact on my life extends beyond academics and sports—it was the values instilled, the lifelong confidence built, and the sense of community that propelled me forward. Today, as a donor to the bursary fund, I am committed to passing on that opportunity.

Even a small contribution can make a difference. All some kids need is a chance—a door that would otherwise remain shut. If we can help a deserving young person access the same opportunities, it's a privilege to be part of that journey.

By supporting the bursary fund, you're not just giving a child an education—you're opening doors to a future they might never have imagined."



Nour Abdel-Fattah

The Mary Erskine School for Girls, Class of 2014

"I joined the ESMS junior school in 2007. Having done a lot of to-ing and fro-ing between Egypt and the UK in previous years, I was very excited by the prospect that this could perhaps be the last time I would have to move schools, or rather countries. I was here for the long-run.

As I moved on to each academic year, I grew more familiar with the school routine, and genuinely enjoyed most subjects (Music never truly naturally came to me). Unfortunately, my father, who had worked hard to ensure my sister and I could benefit from private school education from our early years, passed away in a car accident in 2010. I was in S2 and my sister in S4 at the time. In addition to the monumental loss of a generous, wise, and charismatic father figure, my sister and I were distinctly aware of the possible impending upheaval from our previously stable lives at school or home. My mother had suddenly acquired the roles of both parents; forced to become an amalgamation of the provider, the emotional support, and all the rest.

The school bursary was offered at a time when my family could not be more thankful for it. I was extremely grateful that it sustained my school career for a further 4 years. I put sincere effort into each of my subjects, and took advantage of all the unmissable opportunities that school could offer; whether it was partaking in international European Youth Parliament sessions, the

Germany/UK student exchange, Army Cadet Force camps, or continuing my singing lessons. Although I had a great appreciation for the languages (and loved that I could study Latin, or join the Ancient Greek club), it became clear to me that I had a passion for Maths and the Sciences. I set my sights on a career in Medicine, and my teachers and Careers Counsellor helped guide me towards my goal. I savoured every step of the way and have immense nostalgia looking back at all the fun and emotional moments I had throughout my time at school. I was given the 'School Dux' prize in my final prizegiving ceremony and could not be more proud to have my name engraved on the school walls; feeling as if I am a part of school, like its motto 'mitis et fortis' is a part of me.

Following school, I studied Medicine at the University of Aberdeen, graduating in 2019. I studied a part-time Masters in Surgical Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, while working as a junior doctor, and graduated in 2022. I have completed my Core Surgical Training and look forward to my career in Surgery. I can say with all certainty that my successes at school, university, and current career are owed at least in part to the bursarial support that I received while at school. It is for this reason, I felt it only natural to donate to the bursary fund following my graduation. I have first-hand experience of its impact."



CHARITY WORK AT THE JUNIOR SCHOOL AND NURSERY

The Junior School and Nursery remained committed to fostering a strong sense of community engagement and social responsibility among pupils and staff. Throughout the year, the Schools played an active role in supporting local, national, and international communities through a range of initiatives and partnerships.



Money raised for charity in
2023/24

£29,962

FUNDRAISING HIGHLIGHTS:

- Primary 1 once again partnered with The Yard, a charity that supports disabled children and their families. As well as welcoming visitors from the charity to the school, the children raised £2,820 through Charity Pennies and a Christmas collection.
- Primary 3 enjoyed a Teddy Bears' Picnic with families and raised £240 for Simpson's Special Care Babies.
- Primary 5 took part in a Readathon and raised £2,199 for Read for Good, helping to provide books and stories for children in hospitals across Scotland.
- By taking on the legendary West Highland Way, our intrepid Primary 7 pupils raised an incredible £18,444 for Children's Hospices Across Scotland (CHAS).

- Alongside their fundraising efforts, Primary School pupils responded to requests from local and national charities by encouraging donations of essential items. With enthusiasm and a strong sense of community spirit, they helped gather much-needed supplies for organisations such as Social Bite, Edinburgh Food Bank, Mission Christmas, and Food Share, ensuring support reached those who needed it most.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES:

- Our Primrose Nursery children enjoyed intergenerational learning with residents at Murrayfield Care Home during fortnightly visits.
- Capital Carers ran a workshop for our Primary 6 pupils, helping them understand young carers' experiences and the importance of empathy and support in their community.
- The Junior School girls' football team hosted St David's Primary for a day of coaching and friendly matches.



JUNIOR AWARD SCHEME FOR SCHOOLS (JASS)

JASS is an inclusive, flexible, and progressive award scheme that encourages Junior School pupils to develop new skills, take on challenges, and contribute to their communities. The programme includes the 'Me and My World' section, which focuses on helping others and making a positive impact on the environment.

Throughout the year, junior school children have taken part in a variety of activities that demonstrate their growing awareness of the world around them. Many have cared for public spaces by watering planters in their local areas, tidying 'Little Local Libraries' across Edinburgh, and collecting litter in parks and on beaches.

Through these experiences, pupils have not only contributed to their communities but have also developed a sense of responsibility, teamwork, and confidence in their ability to make a difference. JASS provides them with opportunities to engage with the world beyond the classroom, helping them to understand that even small actions can have a meaningful impact.



CHARITY SPOTLIGHT: WATER OF LEITH CONSERVATION TRUST

"Two JS pupils have been volunteering with the Water of Leith Conservation Trust for the past 6 months getting involved in our work to enhance and conserve the river. They have taken part in volunteer sessions that have included tasks such as litter picking to keep the river healthy and free of plastic waste, painting railings to protect the infrastructure along the walkway and trimming back vegetation to make it as accessible as possible for users. During the sessions they have both been motivated to get stuck into a range of tasks and have worked hard during the sessions. Thanks for the help."

Johnny Wells, Ranger, Water of Leith Conservation Trust



95 Bronze
123 Silver
120 Gold

338

Children completed a JASS
Award



ESMS S4 COMMUNITY DAYS

2023/24 saw the launch of the S4 Community Days programme, bringing together pupils from The Mary Erskine School and Stewart's Melville College to volunteer with local charities. Held over two days in June, the initiative gave students the opportunity to work together and contribute to meaningful community projects.

Pupils gave over 1,000 volunteering hours to charities including Pilton Youth & Children's Project, Water of Leith Conservation Trust and Kids Love Clothes. Their efforts ranged from environmental conservation to sorting and distributing essential items for those in need, giving them hands-on experience of community work.

The programme not only supported local charities, but also helped pupils develop teamwork, empathy and a shared sense of social responsibility. Following its success, this programme will now become a permanent fixture in our S4 calendar, strengthening pupils' connections to the wider community.

"It was good fun and rewarding at the same time because we got to help out our community but also have fun with our friends."

S4 student

"Having the S4 students from ESMS work with us at PYCP in our community garden in June 2024 was a great two days. It was an opportunity for the young people to see our facilities at the centre and find out about the great work of our charity supporting some of the most excluded and vulnerable children and young people in Scotland."

The students worked really hard in the community garden clearing the raised beds for future planting, clearing weeds, laying bark, cutting back the orchard and filling the compost piles. Thanks to ESMS pupils and the staff at the school for giving the time to PYCP for the volunteer days it made a huge difference!!!"

**Lesley Ross, Project Manager,
Pilton Youth and Children's Project**



CHARITY WORK AT STEWART'S MELVILLE COLLEGE

The session 2023-24 was another wonderful year for charitable activities across Stewart's Melville College, with pupils and staff from across all the year groups, taking part in charitable events and activities and fundraising for a wide variety of local, national and international causes.



Senior Schools together raised

£27,854



FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES:

- Non-uniform day and lunch time stall for Steps to Hope, to support the homeless and those suffering from addiction, raising over £1,600.
- The Stew Mel Mudder raised a fantastic £2860 for the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity.
- Lunchtime stall for The Rock Trust, who support young people facing social exclusion in Scotland, raising £180.

DONATIONS OF GOODS:

- In response to growing demand, pupils collected and donated food to North East Edinburgh Foodbank, helping to support families experiencing financial hardship.
- Following requests from community organisations, spare outdoor education kit including trousers, jackets, and boots from the Thrift Shop was donated to help young people access outdoor activities without financial barriers.

CHARITY SPOTLIGHT: STEPS TO HOPE

"We are so grateful to have received support from Stewart's Melville College. The funding we have received has enabled us to support our running costs at Hope House. Our residential recovery programme has 10 residents that fully engage in our daily schedule, supporting them into a clean and sober life. Since August last year, we have completed 13 graduations which has not only been lifesaving, but also life-changing."

Richie Roncero, Founder, Steps to Hope



CHARITY WORK AT THE MARY ERSKINE SCHOOL

Students across The Mary Erskine School (MES) again took active roles in community service programmes, as well as arranging a variety of fundraising activities for causes local to the city, as well as national and international causes.



Senior Schools together raised

£27,854

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES:

- The Kaleidoscope dance event raised an incredible £5,000 for The Chesney Trust, supporting educational opportunities for girls in Malawi.
- Over £800 was raised for the charity Nappirunz, helping to redistribute unused nappies for families in need.
- Our Christmas Carol Service collection at St Mary's Cathedral raised more than £1,000 for Disability Scotland.



CHARITY SPOTLIGHT: NORTH EDINBURGH DEMENTIA CARE

"We are extremely grateful to the MES group who won the £3000 YPI award. It helped us start the 'Seagrove Singers' choir, which ran for six weeks leading up to Christmas, supporting our members in learning new songs. We invited the local primary school to join us, along with the carers of all our members."

Music therapy is especially important for people with dementia, as it has been shown to improve thinking, perception, mood, and behaviour. It is also great fun, and everyone was able to take part."

Nicola Whyte, Deputy Manager North Edinburgh Dementia Care

YOUTH PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE

The Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) gives young people the chance to develop community awareness, teamwork, and key life skills while supporting local charities. Through research, advocacy, and public speaking, pupils gain a hands-on understanding of philanthropy and social impact.

This year, S2 pupils at MES explored local social issues and selected charities they felt were making a real difference. Most groups visited their chosen organisation, meeting staff and seeing their work first-hand. They also took fundraising into their own hands, organising creative ways to support their causes. One group from 2A completed the Supernova Kelpies 5K fun run, raising £2,511 for Children First, while others held sponsored events, raising vital funds for their chosen charities.

At the MES YPI Final Showcase, groups competed for a £3,000 grant, funded by The Wood Foundation and Partners. The winning team from 2G, representing North Edinburgh Dementia Care, had already raised £1,256 through a sponsored walk across Edinburgh and added their prize money to further support the charity's work with those living with dementia.

YPI in numbers



Number of pupils that participated

128



Number of staff involved

17



Number of years the school has supported

14



Money raised

£6,000+



INCLUSIVE SPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

This year, MES and Stewart's Melville FP Rugby Club (SMRFC) have expanded their partnership, increasing opportunities for children with learning and physical disabilities to experience the joy of sport in a supportive and welcoming environment.

Through the Leadership through Sport programme, over 100 pupils have been trained by Scottish Disability Sport to plan and lead fun, adaptable multisport activities, ensuring sport is accessible to individuals with learning disabilities, sensory impairments, additional support needs, and physical disabilities.

With the programme growing, more events have been offered throughout the year. These sessions focus on creating a safe, welcoming environment where everyone can take part. After a morning of activity, families, teachers, and volunteers come together to share lunch, reinforcing a sense of belonging and community.

The impact of these sessions has been deeply felt by families:

"We've had a rotten month, with two hospital visits totalling six nights. We barely slept last night but dragged ourselves along because we know our son loves coming and it's such a great community. To see him excited, having fun, burning his energy safely, and to have a chance to sit and relax for an hour was amazing. Please pass on our thanks to all who kept him entertained—you're all amazing."

"That is the best thing I have ever taken my son to! It was absolutely brilliant and so well planned. The staff and the SS sports leaders were fantastic with him. I've tried other clubs and activities, but they never work out. This morning, for the first time ever, I was able to leave him in another room and just watch from the side as he played, completely comfortable. It means the world to parents like me to know our kids aren't forgotten, that they are included and given these opportunities."



DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD



The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) remains a key part of life at ESMS, giving students the opportunity to develop resilience, teamwork, and a strong sense of social responsibility. Through volunteering, expeditions, and skill-building, pupils push themselves beyond their comfort zones and gain experiences that stay with them long after they leave school.

In 2023/24, ESMS was the second most successful independent school in Scotland for Award completions, highlighting the exceptional support pupils receive in reaching their goals.

Beyond personal achievement, the programme has had a real impact on the wider community, with ESMS students contributing 8,047 hours of volunteering to local causes. This equates to a social value of £42,485, a testament to the dedication of our young people.

"For my gold DofE volunteering, I have been volunteering at a charity shop every Monday. This was something new and out of my comfort zone, but (...) it allowed me to understand how much commitment it takes to run a business and allowed me to make friendships and gain new skills such as communication, patience and teamwork which will benefit me greatly in the future. This experience has not only allowed me to contribute to the community but also the money was used for an amazing cause for those in need giving me a sense of fulfilment. So, I will always be grateful for DofE for the memories and lessons I have learnt along the way."

Gabriella, DofE volunteer





Thank you.



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