

Friargate Meeting

Children and Young Peoples' Committee

Report on Activity during 2016

Children and Young Peoples' Committee met on four occasions this year, and have organised a Children's Meeting each week. Attendance has varied quite widely – we have occasionally had about 14 children and young people, but usually see around 6 children. There is a quite a large pool of children who all attend at times, so the group will be different most weeks. Nevertheless, the children have established good friendly relationships, and are willing to join in together with our activities.

At the start of the year the restrictions from the building work meant that we were running the group all together, in place of our previous separate groups for different ages. We decided to continue this into the year as it appeared to work well, and there has been a single group throughout the year. This has presented challenges to our Volunteers, who may be working with a group aged between 3 and 16, and can find it hard to provide a suitable range of activities in the one group. The exception to this has been that the arrival of some children of crèche age (up to aged 3) has caused us to reinstate a rota of volunteers to look after these young children alongside the main group.

We have been using Fox Room for our meetings most of the time. We find both the children and their parents like the feeling of ownership that room allows, and the fact that they can socialise after their meeting without being interrupted by the rest of the Meeting. In addition, it gives the Volunteers a chance to clear up without feeling in the way. Nevertheless, we do occasionally hold the Children's Meeting in the Penn room, and hope that the Meeting will continue to support us in making use of whatever parts of the Meeting House seem most appropriate to the needs of the Children and their Meeting.

At the end of the year we noted that several of the children are moving into secondary school age, and that it is increasingly difficult to offer activities which keep the attention of this wide age range. Accordingly, we are trialling the reinstatement of a second group for secondary school age children, initially on a monthly basis.

We have found it useful to plan our activities around some quite broad topic areas. This year we have looked at Homes and Homelessness; Varieties of Spiritual Experience; Sport and Activity; and Quakers around the world. In addition, we focus on the major festivals as they occur. You will occasionally have seen some of the children's work posted up in the Penn Room – and I hope you have had the experience of children leading all-age worship, which takes place at Easter, Harvest, and at Christmas.

The decision to run just one meeting for the children coincided with a tightening up of our policy about Volunteers, in line with the developing AM Safeguarding Policy. We now require two adult Volunteers to be with the group of children, one of whom (the 'First Volunteer') has been recruited in line with the Policy and including a DBS check. We have agreed that the second Volunteer does not need to have been through this process, but that they should be known to the Meeting and involved with CYPC. We believe this allows us to be assured of the safety of the children, and of the protection of Volunteers. We welcome occasional input from others from the Meeting to bring particular aspects of their experience or skills – this will always be arranged and overseen by a regular Volunteer.

We continue to review the numbers of our Volunteers, and have over the year had to let some very long-standing members of the group move on. We are pleased to have new people coming forward to help with the children, and are hopeful we can continue to maintain an adequate pool of people.

I am very grateful to the commitment and energy of all our Volunteers. They have worked with a very wide age range and, at times, large numbers of children. It is a testament to their success that the children continue to attend and appear to enjoy their time together. I hope that we are offering a stimulating and enjoyable experience to the Children of the Meeting.

Chris Holman
Convenor CYPC

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