



# Vranch House

Annual Report & Accounts 2019 - 2020



# Vranch House

School, Clinical Centre and Registered Office:  
Pinhoe Road, Exeter, EX4 8AD  
Telephone: 01392 468333 Fax: 01392 463818  
[www.vranchhouse.org](http://www.vranchhouse.org)

Officers & Principal Staff 2019 - 2020

## Board of the Society

<b>Chairman:</b>	Julia Tolman-May
<b>Vice Chairman:</b>	Mrs R Neary
	Mrs M Williams
	Miss P Hale
	Mrs R Pavitt
	Mr C Rendle
	Dr R Tomlinson
	Miss S Williams
	Mr A Griffin
	Col. G Wheeler <sup>++</sup>
	Ms K Moss <sup>+</sup>
	Mr I Norton <sup>+</sup>

<sup>+</sup>Ex Officio Members  
<sup>++</sup>Secretary

The persons listed above, less the ex-officio members, were the appointed Trustees and Directors of the Society for the 2019 - 2020 Financial Year

## Board of Governors

<b>Chairman:</b>	Julia Tolman-May
<b>Vice Chairman:</b>	Mrs R Neary
<b>Secretary:</b>	Col G Wheeler

Mr I Norton<sup>+</sup>  
Ms K Moss<sup>++</sup>  
Mrs V Lye<sup>..</sup>  
Miss S Tutinas<sup>...</sup>  
Mrs S Atkinson (until Jan 2020)<sup>...</sup>  
Mr A Griffin

<sup>..</sup> Staff Representative  
<sup>...</sup> Parent Governors  
<sup>+</sup> Head of Education  
<sup>++</sup> Head of Therapies

## Management Committee

<b>Chairman:</b>	Mrs J Tolman-May
	Mr I Norton
	Col G Wheeler
	Ms K Moss
	Ms R Wheeler (from Jan 2020)

## Principal Staff

### Chief Executive

Colonel G F Wheeler MPhil., CGIA  
Kate Moss BSc (Phys) (from July 2020)

### Head of Education

Mr I Norton BEng(Hons), BPhil, QTVI

### Head of Therapies

Ms K Moss BSc (Hons), MCSP

### Consulting Physicians

Mr P J A Cox MS FRCS (Orth) FRCS (Ed)  
*Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon*

Dr R J Tomlinson BMed Sci BMBS MRCP MRCPC  
*Consultant Paediatrician*

Dr H Brewer MB Ch.B MRCPC PgDip  
*Consultant Paediatrician*

Dr E Thomas MB BS BSc MRCP  
*Consultant Paediatrician*

### Orthotist

Louise Mitchell  
Exeter Mobility Centre

### Vranch House School and Centre is:

Registered under the Charities Act 1960  
Registered number 1002700

### A Company Limited by Guarantee

Registered Number 2599511

### Vranch House School is:

An Independent School approved  
under the Education Act 1981

*Front cover pictures:*

*Left to Right*

James	- Elm Class
Reuben C	- Maple Class
Rosie	- Maple Class

Printed by **Hedgerow Print Ltd**

**01363 777595**

**[www.hedgerowprint.co.uk](http://www.hedgerowprint.co.uk)**



# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



**Julia Tolman-May**  
Chairman

Welcome to the 2020 Annual General Meeting, held virtually for the first time this year. The financial year under audit ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2019 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March this year. It has been a year of change and challenge for the charity as we ended the financial year at the beginning of national lockdown, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

May I take this opportunity to welcome Mrs Kate Moss to her first A.G.M. as our Chief Executive Officer. As you may recall from our last meeting, Colonel Wheeler was due to retire at the end of July. The staff and children enjoyed an informal gathering in the gardens with Graeme, where he was presented with cards, gifts and a beautiful celebration cake to mark the occasion. Graeme's steadfast leadership over the past twenty-seven years leaves the charity in a robust position, able to offer thirty-three school places to children with complex physical difficulties aged two to eighteen, as well as providing a first-class unrivalled therapy service to some two thousand outpatients.

It is with pleasure that I can report that the charity was able to begin building work alongside the school hall, on the purpose-built wing to house the three Innwalk machines – a type of complex cross-trainer for children with physical difficulties. This work was completed over the summer and we are delighted with the light and airy space that has been created.

The work within School continues at a fast pace, with some exciting developments over the summer which enabled us to expand the number of available classrooms. Each child continues to receive a personalised programme of learning, integrating their individual therapy targets. It is always a delight to attend school events and see how much the children enjoy education. The Therapy department continues to provide the highest level of services to a large number of children. Throughout the pandemic, Vranck House has remained open, providing schooling and services to support the children and families who rely upon it.

It is genuinely difficult to find the words to convey enough thanks to the management team for all they have done to make Vranck House a safe environment for the staff and children. Furthermore, may I offer heartfelt thanks to each and every member of staff for your continuing dedication, handwork, resilience and commitment in ensuring that the important work of this charity continues on a daily basis. You are exceptional people and it truly is a privilege for me to support you as your chairman.

**Julia Tolman-May**  
Chairman



# Annual Trustees' Report

## Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2020

The Board of the Society presents its report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020..

### Reference and Administrative Information

Registered Charity Name	The Devon & Exeter Spastics Society
(Working Title):	<b>Vranch House</b>
Charity Registration Number:	1002700
Company Registration Number:	02599511
Registered Office and Operational Address:	Vranch House School & Centre, Pinhoe Road EXETER, DEVON EX4 8AD
Auditors:	Kirk Hills, 5 Barnfield Crescent, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1RF
Bankers:	NatWest, St Thomas Branch, Exeter, Devon, EX4 1DB
Solicitors:	Foot Anstey, Senate Court, Exeter, EX1 1NT

### Board of the Society

Mrs J Tolman-May	Chairman
Mr A J Griffin	Vice Chairman ( <i>until 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019, subsequently remained as a Trustee</i> )
Mrs R. Neary	Vice Chairman ( <i>from 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019, previously a Trustee</i> )
Mrs M Williams	
Miss P Hale	
Mrs R Pavitt	
Mr C Rendle	
Dr R Tomlinson	
Miss S Williams	

Col G Wheeler (*Secretary, ex officio as Chief Executive with no vote*)  
Mrs Kate Moss (*ex officio as Head of Therapies with no vote*)  
Mr I Norton (*ex officio as Head of Education*)

### Company Secretary & Chief Executive

Colonel G Wheeler

### Board of Governors

Mrs J Tolman-May	Chairman
Mr A J Griffin	Vice Chairman ( <i>until 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019, subsequently remained as a Governor</i> )
Mrs R Neary	Vice Chairman ( <i>from 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019, previously a Parent Governor</i> )
Col G Wheeler	Secretary
Mr I Norton	Head of Education
Mrs K Moss	Head of Therapies
Mrs V Lye	Staff member ( <i>re-elected Jan 2020</i> )
Miss S Tutinas	Parent Governor
Mrs S Atkinson	Parent Governor ( <i>until 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020</i> )
Mr B Kambashi	Parent Governor ( <i>until 25<sup>th</sup> Nov 2019</i> )

### Management Committee

Mrs J Tolman-May	Chairman
Col G Wheeler	
Mrs K Moss	
Mr I Norton	

### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

#### Objectives and Aims

The charity's objects and principal activities continue to be those of:

- Promoting and providing facilities for the care, education, training, treatment and welfare in their respective aspects of people with physical difficulties.
- Advising, helping or catering for the needs of the parents or others having the care of people with physical difficulties.

The core activities arising from these aims are the education of children with physical difficulties from the age of two to nineteen at Vranch House School and the provision of paediatric therapies and clinical treatment to children as outpatients at locations throughout Devon. The charity has also developed Opportunity Technology, a not-for-profit service which designs, installs and maintains assisted mobility tracks and robotic vehicles throughout England and Wales.

### STRATEGIC REPORT

#### Achievement and performance

##### Public Benefit - Aims and strategies

In order to direct the activities of the charity in such a way that Public Benefit can be identified clearly, the Trustees have set out the following Aims and Strategies;

**School Aim** The school is to be organised, equipped, staffed, managed and operated to the highest national standards.

- **Strategy to Achieve Aim** The Governing Body will monitor the established Continuous Improvement Programme and the School Audit Cycle with the intention of maintaining the high OFSTED gradings of "outstanding" or "good" achieved in 1996, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018.

**Clinic Aim** The charity's clinical activities are to be organised, equipped, staffed, managed and operated to the highest national standards.

- **Strategy to Achieve Aim** The Trustees will monitor clinical operations with the intention of maintaining its unbroken record of meeting the targets set by the NHS and for satisfying its clients. In order to do this, the Trustees will use tools such as reports and standards set by the National Service Framework, and quality audits conducted in alliance with our statutory partners.

**Financial Performance Aim** The charity's financial affairs are to be conducted to the highest levels of public probity and according to the policies and procedures established for service and capital development consistent with the need to demonstrate Public Benefit.



**- Strategy to Achieve Aim** The Trustees will consider financial Performance Indicators, other financial records and Risk Assessments at all their meetings, to ensure that all our financial processes meet the requirements of both the Statements of Recommended Practice of the Charity Commission and Companies House. The Trustees will look at the record of expenditure to ensure that public monies are used exclusively for the Public Benefit.

### **Public Benefit - Achievements and Performance**

The Trustees are pleased to note that the record of operations for the year under review complied with the aims and strategies set out by the Board and, in all respects, have exceeded expectations. The Trustees approved an investment program for the year that will provide for normal maintenance and some improvement of the main Vranth House building. During July and August 2019 new access to the toilets/changing facilities in class three was developed from the old playroom in order that this could be used as a separate classroom. In total two toilets/changing facilities were upgraded at this time, and the school library was developed to provide a new clinical assessment space. In the secondary school the classroom doorways were widened to improve the ease of access for wheelchairs. In January 2020 building work started on a new extension to provide space for a dedicated Innowalk room, a two-storey equipment store and an atrium with space for seating and work stations (the build was time-tabled to be completed in the summer of 2020).

The high quality of service delivery has been maintained despite significant increases in the number of out patient referrals, and in the number of school pupils placed in the school with complex needs. Towards the end of the financial year changes started to be made to the operational practices of the outpatient service to allow it to continue to function during the COVID-19 pandemic. Logistical and practical adaptations were also made within the school to protect the pupils and staff. There was an average of thirty-three children on the school roll and just over 2,000 children on the clinical list. Engagement with the range of outpatient services has continued to be positive, with growth in every area of activity particularly the Fun Fit and High Five training programmes which train school staff to recognise and use intervention techniques for Gross and Fine Motor Developmental Coordination Disorder. The Fun Fit and High Five programmes also contribute to the charity's income.

## **STRATEGIC REPORT**

### **Achievement and performance**

The Trustees are pleased to report the effectiveness of the charity's ongoing and significant investment in Continuous Professional Development for its staff. All the therapists, teachers and support staff are engaged in, or have access to, programmes of learning some of which will lead to first or second degrees. All of the staff with contact with children are trained to the

very highest Safeguarding level (Level 3) and our two Safeguarding Leads are trained to level 6.

Optech is a non-profit making service run by the charity which designs, manufactures and installs guided mobility equipment throughout England and Wales. Whilst demand for the installation of the tracking system developed by Optech has fallen, the service continues to maintain and repair the current installations nationally. The contribution made by the Mobility Project Manager to many of the other Vranth House projects is both invaluable and financially prudent as it avoids the requirement to engage the services of multiple specialist trades which would be very costly. In particular the Mobility Project Manager has taken on the technical development and subsequent management and operation of the hydrotherapy pool.

Median waiting times for this year across all services was 10.4 weeks against a national target of 18 weeks, all service development targets were met in the year under review. The charity's record of no formal complaints has continued, facilitated by the policy to allow and encourage families to speak directly to the Chief Executive, Head of Therapies and Head of Education if they wish. The thorough training of staff in how to interact with and support patients and their families also aids patient satisfaction and engagement with the service.

### **Financial review**

The Statement of Financial Activities shows total income for the year ending the 31st of March 2020 of £2,386,253 (£2,106,554 in 2019), an increase of £279,699 largely due to the increased number of school pupils. The Society's Net Current Assets stand at £1,846,069 (£1,639,684 in 2019). This increase of £206,385 is the result of the corresponding increase in income in relation to expenditure. The Society has Net Assets amounting to £6,952,408 (£6,554,036 in 2019) - an increase mainly generated by higher capital spend.

The net income and net movement in funds for the year is £398,372 (£205,525 in 2019). Adding back depreciation of £158,337 (a non-monetary expense) to this net income, the Society made a cash surplus in the year of £556,709 (£365,778 in 2019).

Total income from Charitable activities of £2,251,359 (£1,952,278 in 2019) includes the contract income from the combined contract for clinical and educational services. Total income from donations and all other sources is £114,668, which is slightly lower than the previous year's total of £135,199. The capital and revenue costs not charged to our contract partners remain in excess of £700,000 which forms a substantial part of our charitable benefit. The strong financial performance of the charity is remarkable considering that the contract sums for the original clinical work has not changed at all since 2008.

The Trustees are content that all expenditure made



in the accounting period met with the Public Benefit aims and strategies as set out in an earlier section of this report.

#### *Investment policy*

The Memorandum and Articles provide the Trustees with the power to make investments as they choose but consonant with current Charity Commission advice. The charity's cash assets are invested in a state-owned Business Reserve but we would consider utilising opportunities for low-risk investment if interest rates improve.

#### *Reserves & going concern*

The Trustees have established a liquid reserves policy so that it is consonant with the revenue interests of a service charity. By setting the development of liquid reserves to the equivalent of annual operating costs, revenue will be developed from interest which will enable further development in our services. The forecast level of funding is such that an operating surplus is expected for the current year and the maintained reserve is such to provide a cushion in the event that either of the largest sources of income is threatened. The current fiscal retrenchment and unprecedented low interest rates have proved the wisdom of establishing and maintaining this policy. The Trustees are unanimous in the opinion that the Charity remains a going concern.

#### **Pay and Emolument Policy for All Staff**

The Trustees serve as volunteers and eschew reward and expenses.

The policy established by the Trustees for setting and reviewing the pay for all employed staff is;

- 1 As the charity exists to provide services and these services are delivered by trained personnel, expenditure on pay is the largest part of all revenue spending. The rates and costs of staff expenditure are thus reviewed and approved by the Trustees at all their meetings.
- 2 Pay rates for all staff are set on the principal that the rates must be competitive within the local charitable and statutory sectors so that the charity can continue to recruit high quality staff.
- 3 As the charity employs and relies on the services provided by a number of personnel without professional qualifications, pay at the lower level must exceed national benchmarks. The charity pays in excess of the national living wage to all staff.
- 4 The multiple between the lowest and the highest paid should not exceed a factor of five.
- 5 All staff must have access to appropriate pension schemes and these, again, must be competitive within the local charitable sector.
- 6 The Chief Executive is responsible for providing the Management Committee and the Board of Trustees with information on the annual pay and emoluments budget.

#### **Income & service risks**

Notwithstanding the strategies for maintaining Public Benefit (q.v. Public Benefit Aims & Strategies above) the Trustees, having reviewed the strategic objectives of the charity in the light of possible obstructions to achieving them, have determined that;

- 1 Income Growth: The next five years are likely to include a period of between two and three years in which national fiscal disciplines and retrenchment in public service investment continues. Despite this the charity is in discussion with its statutory partners to develop income commensurate with the service improvements we have demonstrated over the last twelve years. We have defined a Core Offer for the school which reflects the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) process, allows for use of the Devon Assessment Framework and enables Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This has facilitated an adjustment of the education component of the Agreement to meet the needs of the children in the school. As a result of these initiatives the Trustees believe that the charity will avoid structural imbalances between its service commitments and the funding it receives for them.
- 2 Income Security: The combined contract is non-competitive because of the high amount of public benefit developed by it (now over 60% of the true costs of the statutory services provided by the charity is funded by the charity). The contract has a twenty-five year life (until 2036) and the only threat to it is a sustained or existential failure to meet the service quality standards. The charity contribution is largely met from the capital charges and revenue it waives, principally for the use of capital facilities which the charity owns and the running costs of these facilities; there is a very low risk of this not continuing.
- 3 Quality Standards: the Chief Executive is tasked with maintaining a continuous cycle of Risk Assessment reviews assisted and advised by the Heads of Department in the Senior Management Team (the Head of Therapies and the Head of Education). Principal amongst these are those relating to Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Financial Probity. The on-going review and development of these risk assessments and the policies and procedures that flow from them is of the highest priority as essential elements of the charity's strategic interest.

#### **Plans for future periods**

The new Service Led Agreement with Devon County Council and NEW CCG has operated since the 1st of April 2011. The Agreement set a target for charitable investment in these statutory services of no more than 30% of the total cost. The total contract value has not increased for twelve years despite considerable inflation in both the numbers and complexity of referrals made to the charity so that our contribution is now more than 60%. We have defined a new Core Offer for the school



which has been agreed by Devon County Council. It offers significant value for money for the authority, and yet will make the future of the school sustainable at the increased level of service provision required by the cohort of children educated in the school. A new contract with DCC has been negotiated to remove the educational component from the existing combined contract.

With developments to the Vranck House buildings we have increased capacity for pupil numbers, so we are discussing with Devon County Council the possibility of future expansion of the school.

With the completion of the new extension we aim to increase out patient activity and access to the revolutionary Innwalk equipment that we have invested in. Research has shown that regular Innwalk sessions can reduce hospital admissions and the requirement for surgical intervention.

The charity continues to establish benchmarks in clinical and educational practice in order to meet its goal of not just meeting but exceeding service delivery standards. Preparations for the new OFSTED regime have been implemented, and the continuous professional development of our clinical services is ongoing.

The Trustees have established a conservative policy for future capital spend, and for the revenue development of all the charity services. Whilst our statutory partners are actively engaged in establishing new ways of delivering services, in which this charity will play a significant part, there will be a continuation of the need for retrenchment and for adopting new methods of working in order to sustain current activity levels at less cost.

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT**

### **Governing document**

The organisation is a Company Limited by Guarantee (Registered Number 2599511), incorporated on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1991, and an independent charity (Registered Number 1002700) registered with the Charity Commission on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1991. It is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Instrument of Management. Any person over the age of eighteen can become a member of the charity on payment of an annual fee of £2 (for those not in work) or £5 (for those in employment). There are currently sixty-six members each of whom are liable to the extent of their membership fee in the event of the company being wound up. All members have the right to vote at General Meetings.

### **Appointment of trustees**

The number of Trustees can be set at any General Meeting but has rarely varied from a mean of twelve between the minimum of eight and maximum of sixteen stated in the Governing Document. Invitations to nominate Trustees are circulated every year to the membership and these nominations are ratified at the Annual General Meeting. The senior officers (Chairman

and Vice Chairman) are elected every year and the Chief Executive acts as Company Secretary. Employees of the charity may be members of the charity and the four senior employees are ex officio members of the Board of Trustees but no employee is entitled to vote at any meeting of the Trustees. The Executive Committee of the charity is known as the Board of the Society and the Board may co-opt any member of the charity to fill a specialist role.

### **Organisation**

The Board of the Society has strategic oversight of the charity and meets three times a year. The Board establishes all policy for the general direction and operation of the charity and meets to review those policies and to hear a record of operations. The Board employs a Chief Executive to work with a Head of Therapies and a Head of Education to oversee, direct and drive forward the Board's policies for the Clinic and the School (the principal operations of the charity). The Chief Executive has delegated powers for the day-to-day operation of the Board's policies for employment, finance, contracts, legal compliance (including Equal Opportunities), buildings and acquisitions, risk assessment and mitigation, Health and Safety and business development. To assist the Head of Education and meet statutory obligations for maintained schools, the Board has established a Board of Governors for the school. The Board of Governors has direct control of those matters bearing on the delivery of educational services; matters relating to finance, employment and resources, if not within the competence of the Governors, are referred to the Board of Trustees. The Head of Therapies is responsible to the Trustees for the full delivery of the clinical contract which includes professional and service delivery standards. In this she is assisted by the Chief Executive who retains direct control of all matters relating to the contract.

### **Induction and training of new trustees**

Trustees are briefed frequently on their obligations under charity and company law, the structure of the charity and its operating procedures as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association and in those changes in statute which bear directly on the work of the charity (principally legislation in the areas of Education and Health). A briefing document has been prepared alongside a more formal induction and training process. Trustees are usually appointed because of specialist skills but the charity will meet any identified need for specialist training.

### **Related parties**

The Society has formal and informal arrangements and relationships with many other statutory and voluntary bodies. Principal amongst these is the twenty-five year Strategic Partnership Agreement with NHS Devon and Devon County Council under which the charity is joint-funded for a proportion of the costs of the statutory educational and clinical services it provides. These services include the assessment of potential pupils, the



education of pupils at Vranth House School, the review of pupil development and the delivery of clinical therapies at Vranth House and in the community all over Devon.

The network of national and local charities and voluntary bodies is too complex and numerous to describe fully but the Society retains active links with The Exeter Foundation, DreamAway, Whizz Kids, Children in Need, CEDA, A Brighter Tomorrow and a number of County and National grant-making Trusts. A similar network of local groups and individuals continues to assist the Society in raising funds for children at Vranth House and this incredibly generous and loyal support provides a much-needed and indispensable resource. The charity has also forged close links with the NHS funded Children's Specialist Children's Assessment Centre which it hosts in a purpose-built facility on the Vranth House site. It is worth noting that the children at Vranth House School raise money each year for other charities which have included Little Bridge House (the local children's hospice), Young Minds, Comic Relief and the Royal British Legion.

### **Risk management**

As a normal part of the annual business cycle the Society reviews its Risk Assessments. These include financial management, accounting, security of cash and removable assets, insurances, fire and Health & Safety. The outcome of these assessments is reported to the Trustees by the Chief Executive. The Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Cash Handling, Legionella and Fire Risk Assessments are translated into operating policies which are available to all employees, together with all the other policy documents, on the Charity's website. Employees at every level are encouraged to contribute to the continuous business of risk assessment through the Staff Meetings held every month.

### **Public Benefit - General Statement**

The Trustees have established a policy to review continuously all the charity's activities and the development of services to ensure that they remain consonant with the requirements of the 2006 Charities Act, and particularly with Section 4 of the Act, (the need to demonstrate Public Benefit). The charity operates in partnership with statutory bodies in order to provide expertise, treatment and enhanced services to children with physical disabilities. It does not charge fees but receives about 40% of the total cost of the services it provides to the North, East & West Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (NEW CCG) and approximately 80% of the service costs provided to Devon County Council. Referrals to the service are made by Local Authorities and all referrals are seen for assessment and the majority of assessed referrals are retained for treatment or given a place in the school. The referral process, whether as a therapy outpatient or potential school pupil, is not controlled by the charity but by NEW CCG and Devon County Council. A school placement or therapy intervention might be deemed inappropriate at the assessment stage but only for reasons that are cogent, demonstrable and compliant with benchmarked national practice. The charity is as public a

body as its statutory partners and enters into no private arrangements for individual treatment. No member of the public is denied the services provided by the charity provided those services are assessed to be suitable and appropriate for the individual concerned.

### **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

As shown on page 1.

### **STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES RESPONSIBILITIES**

The trustees (who are also the directors of Devon & Exeter Spastics Society for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources including the income and expenditure of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

### **AUDITORS**

The auditors, Kirk Hills, will be proposed for reappointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

Report of the trustees, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the board of trustees, as the company directors, on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and signed on the board's behalf by:

J Tolman-May  
Trustee





**Kate Moss**  
Chief Executive  
Joined 2000

## Chief Executive's Report - Financial Information

### Financial Information abstracted from the Audited Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2020

The figures used in this article are taken from the Auditor's Report for the 2019 – 2020 Financial Year. The headline financial news is included in the report of the Directors and Trustees but the following financial information is worth highlighting:

- Income increased by **£279,699** from £2,106,554 to £2,386,253 largely as a consequence of the significant increase in the pupil population in Vranth House school.
- Net Current Assets, one of our most important Performance Indicators, increased by **£206,385** from £1,639,684 to £1,846,069 as a result of increased income and, despite the increase in employed staff, and increase in Expenditure of £86,852. Total Net Assets increased by **£398,372** from £6,554,036 to £6,952,408.
- With Depreciation of £158,337 carried as a non-monetary expense the charity made an operating surplus of £47,387 (the cash surplus of minus depreciation). The surplus was significantly impacted on by the start of the building of the Innwalk suite during this financial year.
- The number of pupils in the school has increased and the number of outpatients seen by the clinic has been maintained. The charity continues its program of capital investment in the buildings at Vranth House and in the services hosted by it.

The Trustees agreed a programme of capital investments for the Financial Year which provided for continuing maintenance of the Vranth House estate (mostly for rebuilding interior rooms at Vranth House) and we commenced building an additional space called the Innwalk suite and replaced a single storey wooden store with a brick built two storey store with lift to be fitted for access.

### Future Plans

Our short term plan is to follow local and national guidelines, and work with local authorities and other children's services, to work to support the children and families whom we provide a service during the current pandemic.

The charity's strategic objective remains the same for the next five years is to embody and develop the contract partnership with Devon County Council and the NHS North, East & West Devon Clinical Commissioning Group.

The immediate objective is to continue to demonstrate performance compliance with the requirements of our contracts and to continue to fund service objectives so that all the benchmarks are exceeded (as they were in 2019/20). In the longer term, the Charity aims to continue development of its services, continue the investment programme by further developing charitable income and work with its partners to respond to financial retrenchment by adaptive working practises.

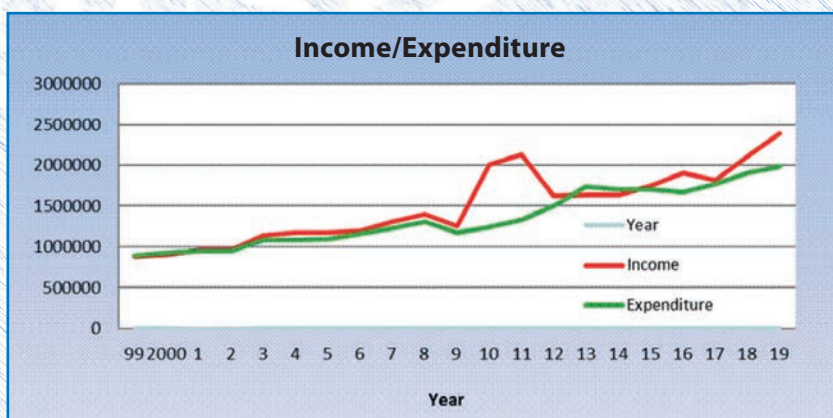
Our long established financial policy of holding reserves amounting to no less than a year's operating costs has proved its worth on many occasions. Given the uncertainty and instability of the financial markets and the continued imperative of national fiscal discipline, we intend to maintain and further develop this reserve.

The policy of not charging capital costs in any of our contracts forms the basis of our charitable benefit by contributing significantly to the 59% of the costs of the statutory services we provide. It should be noted that our NHS income has been frozen at 2008 levels so that in 2020/21 we will embark on what will be a thirteenth year without any provision for inflation. This inevitably means that the level of contribution this charity makes to statutory services must increase or the high standard of the services we provide to the Public on behalf of the State will suffer. It is, however, highly unlikely that this can continue and work is in hand to redress the imbalance.

The Trustees have authorised investment to continue the programme of buildings and equipment development and maintenance in 2020.

Kate Moss  
(current Chief Executive)  
on behalf of Graeme Wheeler,  
Chief Executive until July 2020.

Profit & Loss Account	2020	2019	2018
Gross Income	£2,386,253	£2,106,554	£1,817,082
Gross Expenditure	£1,987,881	£1,901,029	£1,766,973
Cash Gain/Loss for the Year	£47,387	£249,717	£50,109
Gain/Loss less Depreciation	£205,724	£365,778	£194,549



**Notes:** 1. Expenditure is unadjusted and includes the non-monetary expenditure of depreciation.  
2. The Auditor's Report for 2019/20 is available on request at a cost of £2.00 per copy but may be viewed at no cost but by prior arrangement at Vranth House or on the Charity Commission website at [www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk).





*Ian Norton  
Head of Education  
Joined 2016*

## 1. What have been the significant changes this year?

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- Class and Staff changes
- Development of the VIEW and EYFS Curriculum within Earwig

### 1a. Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)

This academic year started as it always does, with a busy Autumn term and our welcoming new staff and pupils. From February 2020 onward, the speed of spread and severity of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic created an extremely difficult time for the school, all of our pupils and their families this year. The Management Team took the decision to remain open throughout the national lockdown in March 2020, despite the majority of other Special settings in Devon closing their doors to pupils and staff. Vbranch House School maintained the full Core Offer to the reduced number of pupils who continued to attend the school, whilst simultaneously creating and delivering (via our online platform, Earwig Academic) key education and therapy inputs to those isolating with their families. The feedback we received from our families in receipt of this 'home-schooling' and support, particularly those contending with working from home and 'home-schooling' multiple children at the same time, was resoundingly positive.

Each day saw many of our education and therapy staff going the extra mile (at times literally) to deliver teaching resources and therapy equipment to all those in isolation, wherever they lived in Devon. The mammoth effort put in every day by all staff in that difficult period, and the months that followed, truly saw Vbranch House 'Making a difference' to the children and families we serve.

### 1b. Class Changes

Since the last annual report, Vbranch House School has continued to buck the local trend in specialist education and has continued to grow in number of classes and pupils on roll; there have been corresponding changes to teachers and support staff in each of our classes this year.

Each class still has a high staff to pupil ratio, with each class team being led by a designated teacher with experience and knowledge of Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND). Support staff teams typically comprise a Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) and at least one Teaching Assistant (TA), as well as part-time support from our Meal Time Assistants (MTA).

Where a pupil has particularly acute medical needs, these teams may also have a Special Watch Teaching Assistant. HLTAs are able to cover individual sessions in cover for the class teachers and will hold at least a Level 3 qualification. This allocation of support staff continues to ensure the delivery of best practice and high-quality education in all classes.

The current planned staff allocation for each class is as follows:

Nursery	Reception
Nursery Nurse: <b>Adele Gale</b> HLTA: <b>Ronnie Lye (P/T)</b> TA: <b>Victoria Priddle</b> TA: <b>Kerstie Davies (P/T)</b> MTAs: <b>Michelle Bennett</b> <b>Jasmine Wright</b>	EYFS Practitioner: <b>Chelsea Armstrong</b> HLTA: <b>Sam Woodcock</b> TA: <b>Adrian Jackson</b> MTAs: <b>Samantha Mount</b> <b>Helen McDonald</b>
Number of pupils: <b>5</b>	Number of pupils: <b>5</b>

Class 1	Class 2
Teacher: <b>Dee Bradshaw</b> HLTA: <b>Helen House</b> TA: <b>Sandra Selley</b> MTAs: <b>Michala Smith</b> <b>Adelle Jeffs</b>	Teacher: <b>Chloe Moore</b> HLTA: <b>Debbie Prout</b> TA: <b>Kimberley Morgan</b> MTA: <b>Kay Dennis</b>
Number of pupils: <b>4</b>	Number of pupils: <b>7</b>

Class 3
Teacher: <b>Evelyn Gawen</b> (Acting) HLTA: <b>Laura Madden</b> TA: <b>Teresa Sprague</b> Special Watch TAs: <b>Kerry White, Ricardo Pacheco</b> MTAs: <b>Victoria Kerr, Coleen Kelly,</b> <b>Mel Lynch (P/T), Kerstie Davies (P/T),</b>
Number of pupils: <b>6</b>

Class 4	Class 5
Teacher: <b>Zoe Gilbert</b>	
(Acting) HLTA: <b>Lauren Millington</b> AAC TA: <b>Cathy Morris</b> MTA: <b>Elanor Sheriff</b>	HLTA: <b>Becky Blaker</b> TA: <b>Charlotte Davey</b> TA: <b>Rhiannon Hegarty</b> 1:1 TA: <b>Charlotte Watkinson</b> MTAs: <b>Kim Rushton,</b> <b>Rachel Hine</b>
Number of pupils: <b>4</b>	Number of pupils: <b>5</b>

**NB:** All staff allocations and pupil numbers were correct at time of printing and may be subject to change.

### 1c. Development of the VIEW and EYFS Curriculum within Earwig

In order to achieve the wide spectrum of aims and aspirations for our pupils at Vbranch House, as set out in our 'Curriculum Policy', we have continued to develop the 'Vbranch Individual Education and Wellbeing (VIEW)' Curriculum. The domain 'Experience & Expression' has been expanded with over sixty new objective level statements to include more small-step achievements in the development of hearing, vision, tactile awareness/skill, sensory integration and creativity.

The assessment tools previously used for the national Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS) have been the subject of extensive review between the Head of Education and the EYFS practitioners. There were a number of statements in the EYFS target cache within Earwig that were simply too advanced for many of our pupils to achieve by the end of the EYFS and so end-of-EYFS reports would often need to state a rather defeatist 'working towards Early Learning Goal (ELG)' as an outcome. The Head of Education re-structured



the EYFS 'Areas of Learning' target caches and re-developed the assessment tool for these EYFS objectives. This now matches the structure used in assessing progress against the VIEW curriculum.

This significant development in our use of Earwig as our assessment tool will give a far clearer picture of pupil's often small-step progress against the EYFS and will give a more pupil-centred picture of development beyond stating simply 'working towards' the ELGs. This move also ensures pupil assessment between the VIEW curriculum and the EYFS will be more fluid, whilst still tallying with other nationally used assessment criteria so that we can continue to work harmoniously with other settings when transitioning pupils.

For further details on the VIEW Curriculum and how this relates to the Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS) and National Curriculum, please see our Curriculum Policy at <http://www.vranchhouse.org/about-vranch-house/downloads/curriculum-policies/> or contact me directly for a hard copy of this policy.

2. School Development Plan

The School Development Plan (SDP) is written by the Head of Education each year after evaluating the successes, challenges and areas for improvement within the school and agreed with the Management Team. The HoE used the feedback from the Pilot Ofsted Inspection in July 2019 to revise the School Development plan to reflect the new key judgement headings from the new Ofsted EIF for 2019/20. The Areas for Development and our continual improvement the coming academic year are as follows:

Area for development	Action for development
A. Quality of Education	<b>A1</b> Review 'Education at Vranch House' under the Core Offer <b>A2</b> Evaluate validity of numerical data analysis of VIEW curriculum generated by Earwig
B. Behaviour and Attitudes	<b>B1</b> Promote pupil Mental Health in working practice at Vranch House
C. Personal Development	<b>C1</b> Develop multi-agency working around careers and adult living Post 16 and Post 19 <b>C2</b> Review intimate care policy and protocols
D. Leadership and Management	<b>D1</b> Develop the leadership roles of all Class Teachers, Superintendent HLTA and Senior Teachers <b>D2</b> Further develop capacity at a middle management level to include Secondary Provision
E. Early Years Foundation Stage	<b>E1</b> Develop joint working and practice across the EYFS <b>E2</b> Earwig Academic to be used to capture EYFS progress

The academic year ahead promises to be another year of continual development for the school, building upon the already strong foundations we have in place. We will meet any and all new challenges head-on and ensure that high quality education and delivery of therapies remain central to the Core Offer at Vranch House.



**REBECCA WHEELER**  
*Business Support Manager - Joined 2012*

I started work in the Vranch House Therapy Department at the beginning of 2012, having had some prior experience of the broad range of services offered by Vranch House as a volunteer.

I became Clinical Administration Team Lead in October 2014, then Practice Manager in 2017 and Business Support Manager in 2018 as my role evolved to encompass more data management and statistical analysis. Interacting daily with the Vranch House School pupils, the Therapy Department outpatients, and the hard working and enthusiastic team of Vranch House staff, makes for an enjoyable and rewarding workplace.



**SUE PHILLIPS**  
*Finance Officer - Joined 1992*

I started work at Vranch House in 1992 and since then have held various positions. In 2003 I became the Finance Officer. I am responsible for all the daily financial functions, salaries and record

keeping.  
I enjoy my work and I also enjoy working in an environment

where there is always something going on, it may be listening to the children having a music session or it could be watching their delight as they take part in a school play. Whatever is happening you can guarantee each day will be different.



**TRACEY WARD**  
*Executive PA to CEO - Joined April 2005*

In June 2020 I took on a slightly different role which included becoming PA to the Head of Education alongside my current position of Executive PA to the CE. I attend daily meetings with the CE and

the HoE to discuss day to day issues and help coordinate staffing and their diaries.

Although I have stepped away from my therapy admin role, I still like to keep abreast of any new systems/ changes so that I am able to cover and help out with any administrative duties when required.

Working at Vranch House is never quiet; I enjoy seeing our children coming into school with big smiles on their faces. Every day offers a new challenge and I can honestly say that it is a privilege to work with a team that pull together so well and make everyone that comes to Vranch, for whatever purpose, feel welcome!





## DEBORAH BRADSHAW BA (Hons), QTS, PGCert

*Senior Teacher - EYFS  
Joined 2002*

I started at Vbranch House in October 2002 as a qualified nursery nurse with a BTEC Certificate in Childhood Studies (July 1998) but have since gained a Diploma in Child Psychology (July 2003) and a BA (Hons) Degree in Early Childhood Studies (June 2008) I then completed a graduate teaching programme with Dorset and gained qualified teacher status with an outstanding grade in June 2010. I have since achieved a Post Graduate Certificate in Education and most recently a National Professional Qualification in Middle Leadership (NPQML). I have a CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Autism and during the summer/autumn of 2020 achieved certificates in Grief & Bereavement, Child Counselling and British Sign Language (BSL) Levels 1 & 2.

Seeing new pupils arrive in our nursery and watching them gain confidence in new surroundings and develop new skills as they move through the school, continues to motivate me in my role as a teacher for children with physical difficulties. I continue to be inspired by the determination shown by our pupils and truly feel honoured to be working with such an amazing multi-disciplinary team here at Vbranch House.



## ADELE JEFFS

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2019*

I have always been interested in education and wellbeing, and made this part of my working life before I had my children. I took a break from full-time work to raise my family, which, for me, was a wonderful time.

When I started working at Vbranch, I was very excited to join the school, and a little nervous. However, the team here were so welcoming and supportive that my nerves soon faded. Like my colleagues, I can easily say that I feel privileged to work here. Every day I am struck by how amazing the children at Vbranch House School are. Every day I feel part of a wonderful team, part of something special. Every day I learn something new. I could not be happier. I am so glad I went back to school.



## DENISE HUTCHINSON

*Nursery Nurse  
Joined 1989*

I started working at Vbranch House as a YTS Student and gained a BTEC Nursery Nurse qualification. I have worked in various roles within the school including Teaching Assistant and Speech & Language Therapy Assistant. I currently have a new role as nursery nurse on a Monday and Tuesday in the Pre-School. It is great to work with all the staff and very rewarding helping the new children settle into school life.



## KERSTIE DAVIES

*Lunchtime & Classroom Support Assistant  
Joined 2015*

I joined Vbranch House in 2015 as a lunch-time support assistant and to help in the hydrotherapy sessions. I now also work as a classroom assistant which I enjoy immensely. Working with the children and staff each day is fun and extremely rewarding.



## TRUDY MILLER

*Teaching & Lunchtime Assistant  
Joined 2020*

My family have been involved with Vbranch House for many years as both my sisters attended when they were younger.

I first worked at Vbranch a few years ago as a lunchtime assistant and now I have come back as a Teaching Assistant. I love every minute of the job getting to know all the children and their unique personalities, the staff have all made me feel so welcome its just a lovely environment to work in I feel very lucky.





## REBECCA BLAKER

*Early Years Practitioner  
Joined 2018*

I joined Vrach House in 2018 as a teaching assistant and have since progressed on to an Early years practitioner having gained level 3 EYFS and teaching award and level 4 EYFS teaching award. I enjoy every aspect of working for Vrach House I can honestly say it is the best job I have ever had. I have had previous experience of working with children with physical difficulties in a mainstream setting. I am a key trainer in Moving and Handling which involves training all staff who currently work at Vrach house. I feel very privileged to be part of the Vrach house family and look forward to spending more time with our amazing students here.



## VICKY PRIDDLE

*Higher Level Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2019*

I joined Vrach House in September 2019 as a teaching assistant in the Nursery after previously working as a teacher and as an assistant in other specialist education provisions. I am now working as a higher level teaching assistant within the early years.

I continue to feel so lucky to be working at Vrach house with an amazing team and wonderful children.



## ADRIAN JACKSON

*1:1 Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2015*

I joined the Vrach House team in September 2015 and am currently a teaching assistant in the nursery. I enjoy supporting the children in their learning.



## JASMINE WRIGHT

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2019*

I started working at Vrach house as a lunchtime assistant in October 2019. I have since become a teaching assistant working in Maple class. I find the job rewarding and enjoyable. I am grateful to be working with such amazing children and supportive team.



Reuben at Hallowe'en



Isla



## CEDAR CLASS



### ADELLE GALE

*EYS Practitioner  
Joined 2017*

I started work at Vbranch House in September 2017 as an MTA in the Secondary School Provision. I also helped with hydro sessions. In January 2018, alongside my MTA role, I started working in Class 1 as an extra TA. In September 2018 I became a full time TA in the Nursery. In May 2019 I completed my Nursery Nurse Level 3 qualification and in September 2019 I began my new role as Nursery Nurse in the Nursery. In November 2019 I achieved my NCFE

CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Autism.



### SAMANTHA WOODCOCK

*Higher Level Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2016*

I started work at Vbranch House in 2016 as a teaching assistant/ lunch-time assistant having previously worked as an enabler/ respite carer helping with life skills. I am epilepsy trained, have BSL signing levels 1 and 2 and in 2019 qualified as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant.

I have been overwhelmed by the kind and friendly atmosphere at Vbranch House and look forward to many years of learning and sharing experiences at the school.



### MEGAN WHITE

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2020*

I have a level 3 BTEC in Health and Social care. I joined Vbranch House in 2020 as a TA in Cedar Class and I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with such amazing children and great staff. I am looking forward to many more years of learning.

## HOME EDUCATOR



### RONNIE LYE

*Superintendent Higher Level Teaching Assistant - Joined 1995*

I really enjoy my time working here at Vbranch; I have recently joined the nursing team as an assistant whilst continuing as a Superintendent HLTA, to provide a bespoke educational package to a child in our local community as requested by the Educational Authority.

I have qualifications in Massage therapy, Makaton and Psychotherapy. Every day the children and staff here teach me amazing new things.

Over the years our school has seen many changes, what remains constant though are the children that are daily inspiring and our multidisciplinary team that are dedicated to the care of our children. Each individual's learning journey is very different but always wonderful to contribute to. I have always found it very rewarding being part of such a caring and intuitive team.





## CHLOE MOORE

*Teacher  
Joined 2011*

I started working at Vbranch House School in February 2011 as the Class 3 teacher. I have been fortunate enough to have experience of working in all three classes within our primary setting.

I trained as a primary teacher, specialising in PE, at the University of Plymouth for four years and graduated in July 2010. Whilst at University I completed my Foundation and enhancement workshops in Makaton sign language.

In my spare time I enjoy cooking, socialising with family and friends and walking with my partner and French bulldog, Claude.



## DEBBIE PROUT

*Higher Level Teaching Assistant  
Joined 1991*

Although I have worked at Vbranch House since 1991 and seen a lot of changes, the one thing that has remained constant is the children.

They continue to delight and surprise me with their achievements. I believe that in this job we never stop learning. I feel very privileged to play a part in that process.



## RHIANON HEGARTY

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2019*

I joined Vbranch House in September 2019 as a Teaching Assistant. I find each day very exciting to come and work with wonderful

staff and pupils.



*Alek and Misia*





## CHELSEA ARMSTRONG

*NQ Teacher  
Joined 2010*

I started at V ranch House as a meal time assistant in 2010 following a period as a volunteer. After three years of studying I have recently completed my BA Hons in Early Childhood Studies.

I am now the reception teacher and am hoping to complete my final year of teacher training here at V ranch House over the next two academic years.



## TAMMY BROWN

*Higher Level Teaching Assistant &  
1:1 Special Watch  
Joined 2008*

I have worked at V ranch House School since 2008. Working with the children is very rewarding.



## MICHELLE BENNETT

*1:1 Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2018*

In September 2018 I joined a friendly, dedicated and supportive team at V ranch House. My role is a Lunchtime Support Assistant and my duties are to assist and support children with their lunch and promote independence. When required I also assist with hydrotherapy sessions. I find both my areas of work extremely rewarding and really enjoy. I pride myself on making the children's day a happy and safe one.



## SAMANTHA MOUNT

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2019*

I joined the team at V ranch House in September 2019, as a mealtime assistant. My main role is to assist the children with their lunch, whilst promoting independence.

I also help out with hydrotherapy sessions when required which is something I really enjoy. It is nice knowing that I am helping to make a difference in the children's lives. I look forward to coming to work every day and spending time with the children and feel very luck to be able to do the work I do.



Pine Class celebrating Halloween



Caitlin enjoying Maths





## EVELYN GAWEN

*Teacher  
Joined 2017*

I started working at Vrch House School as a Teacher in September 2017. I have a degree in Psychology and English Literature. I completed my PGCE training as a Primary School Teacher in 2015 where I specialised in working with children in Primary schools with special educational needs.

I have been working as a special needs teacher with children with a range of multi-sensory impairments. In my spare time I enjoy going for walks and being outdoors.



## HELEN HOUSE

*Higher Level Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2004*

I started working at Vrch House in 2004 as a Lunch Time Support Assistant becoming Part-Time Teaching Assistant in September 2010 and then a Therapy and Learning Assistant in April 2016.

I now work as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant. I have gained my level 3 Diploma for Children and Young People's Workforce and level 1 Makaton signing.



## TERESA SPRAGUE

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2015*

I joined Vrch House as a lunchtime assistant in September 2015. From Oct 2017 to Oct 2018 I had the privilege of working as a special watch 1:1 teaching assistant which was extremely rewarding. In November 2018 I became a full time teaching assistant.

I love working at Vrch as the children are so amazing and inspiring.

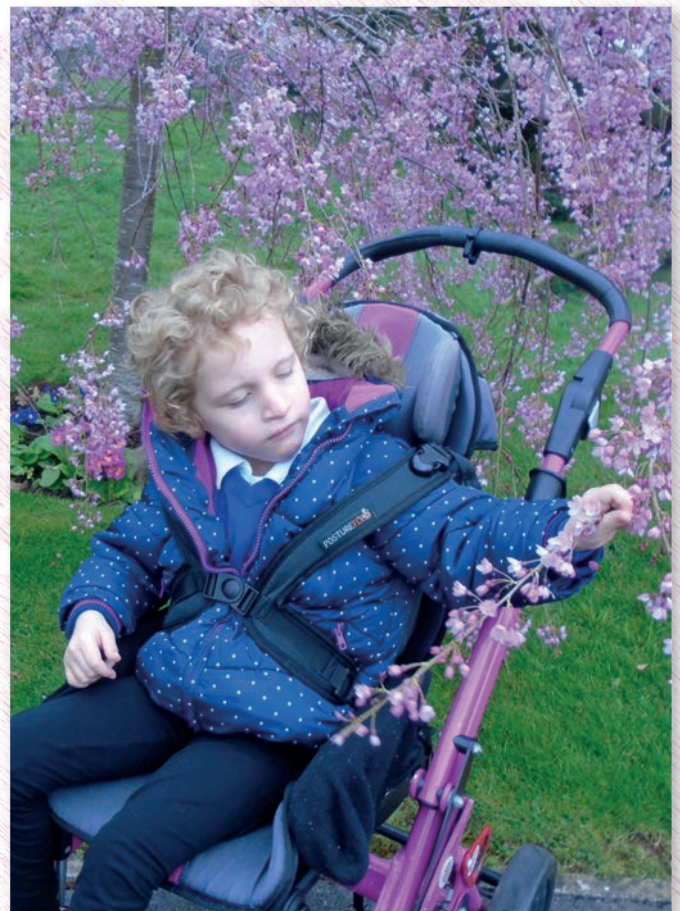


## KERRY WHITE

*1:1 Special Watch Assistant  
Joined 2018*

I started to work at Vrch House in October 2018 as a lunchtime support assistant, I also helped with swimming sessions and other cover where needed. I now work as a 1:1 Special Watch Assistant in Class 3. I have never worked with such friendly staff and wonderful children.

I have a level 3 Diploma for the Children & Young People's Workforce.



Lisa in the sensory garden



James and Reuben playing cars





## LAURA MADDEN

*Group Tutor  
Joined 2016*

I started working at Vbranch House in April 2016 as a lunchtime support assistant. I am now a Teaching Assistant. I enjoy working with the staff and children everyday, the atmosphere here is lovely.



## TYLER MAHY

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2020*

I have recently started at Vbranch House as a teaching assistant. I am going to strive to positively impact on the children's lives to the best of my ability, so they are able to do the best that they can! My aim is to send the children home smiling and giggling everyday not to annoy the bus drivers but so they are excited to come back and learn!

In my spare time I do lots of different types of art and enjoy paddle boarding with family and friends!

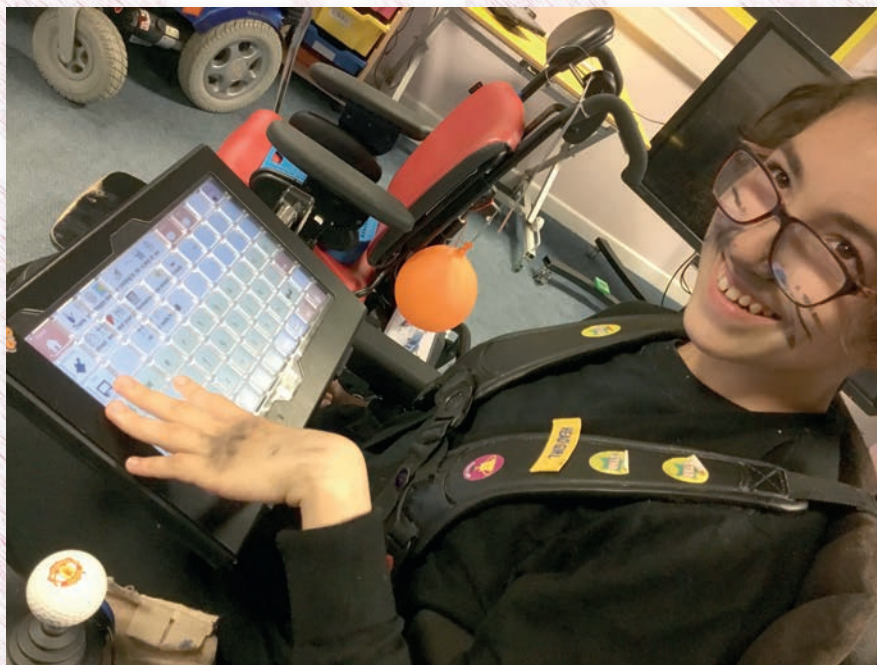
I am excited to be working with these amazing children and also the brilliant staff! Thank you for the opportunity!



## CATHY MORRIS

*AAC Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2019*

I started at Vbranch House in September 2019 fulfilling a new role of AAC TA. I am enjoying learning new skills and new challenges. My previous roles have been in education and care, mainly supporting adults with sensory impairments. Hopefully my previous experience will prove useful in my new role at Vbranch House.



Libby





## ZOE GILBERT

*Senior Teacher  
Joined 2017*

I am a teacher and the Secondary School Coordinator. I qualified from UNL with my undergraduate degree and then completed my PGCE at Plymouth University in 2006.

My teaching career started in a mainstream Secondary school teaching English but I also taught pupils within the Opening Minds programme which focussed on inclusion for SEN pupils within a mainstream environment. Since then I have taught at a number of SEN schools, starting at V ranch House in 2017. It has been great to be part of an outstanding team working within a curriculum which can be truly individualised to meet the needs of all pupils.

In the Secondary provision we continue to work on the fundamentals of the VIEW curriculum: Communication, Physical Therapies and Engaging with Experiences; as well as looking towards needed life skills for adulthood and integrating into the community. We continue to make important links with local groups, centres and colleges to assist pupils transition from children to young adults.



## CHARLOTTE DAVEY

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2012*

I've been at V ranch since 2012 when I started as a lunchtime assistant. Recently I was lucky enough to become a full-time Teaching Assistant which I am really enjoying. The children make me smile everyday and I feel so lucky to be a part of V ranch House.



## KIM RUSHTON

*Teaching Assistant  
Lunchtime Support Assistant  
Joined 2019*

I started working at V ranch House School as a lunch time assistant in September 2019. Since working at V ranch House I have met the most amazing children who make me smile everyday.

In April 2020 I progressed onto becoming a Teaching Assistant which I thoroughly enjoy. The staff are really friendly and helpful and it feels like one massive family with such high levels of care and compassion.

I love all the therapies V ranch House has to offer including Innwalk, music therapy and hydro therapy and how the children really enjoy doing them. I hope to one day progress onto becoming a HLTA .

Working at V ranch House School really is the best feeling ever and I feel so privileged to work with an amazing team of people and children.



## CHARLOTTE WATKINSON

*Teaching Assistant  
Joined 2019*

I joined V ranch House in Nov 2019 as a Teaching Assistant in Class 5. Prior to this I worked for twelve years as a Community Healthcare Assistant caring for children with complex medical needs. I am an NNEB Qualified Nursery Nurse and have a NVQ Level 3 in Clinical Healthcare Support. I am really enjoying my new role and feel incredibly lucky to work alongside all the fantastic staff and children at V ranch House.



*Libby and Bethany*





**Kate Moss**

Head of Therapies  
Joined 2000

## Clinical Report

The outpatient Therapy Department at Vranth House strives to provide a fast and efficient service for the children referred for physiotherapy, occupational therapy and to the AAC Service. The staffing and working processes are constantly reassessed to ensure that the department is evolving, and to ensure that the changing needs of the growing referral population can be met in the optimal way. As part of our drive to deliver an excellent service we have further developed our data analysis methods to enable us to identify trends, and to deploy our workforce in the most effective manner. For example, we are able to redeploy staff at relatively short notice to address areas in which the workload or waiting list has increased. Keeping a close eye on the constantly changing referral trends also plays a key part in the department maintaining low waiting times.

The Therapy Department strives to deliver a patient-focussed service, listening to the desires as well as the clinical needs of the children and their families, as well as working closely with other medical professionals who may be involved in an individual child's care.

The work of the Therapy Department covers a wide remit, including providing:

- Physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy for the Vranth House School pupils, via

Therapists and Therapy Assistants.

- Hydrotherapy and Innowalk sessions for the Vranth House School pupils where appropriate as part of their Therapy needs.
- Daily outpatient physiotherapy and occupational therapy assessments and review appointments.
- Hydrotherapy and Innowalk sessions for outpatients where clinically indicated.
- Outpatient speech and language therapy assessments and appointments for children accessing our specialist AAC service.
- Physiotherapy work on the neonatal unit at the RD&E Hospital, and on the Special Care Baby Unit at North Devon District Hospital.
- Delivering Fun Fit training (for gross motor skills) and High Five training (for fine motor skills) to staff in mainstream schools throughout Devon.
- Vranth House runs the Paediatric Physiotherapy Service in North Devon.
- The Therapy Department works closely with professionals in the wider multi-disciplinary paediatric team to ensure that patients receive a child-centred, individually appropriate, and effective episode of care.
- Holding regular training days for professionals at Vranth House and within children's services.

We aim for the service to remain flexible to the needs of the children referred to us, and to continue to be able to provide prompt assessments and care.

## INNOWALK SUITE







## KATHRYN ESAU

*Specialist Children's Physiotherapist  
Joined 1990*

I work part-time with children who present with a variety of physical conditions. These conditions include cerebral palsy, idiopathic toe-walking, hypermobility syndrome, motor coordination difficulties, developmental difficulties, and problems with posture and walking. I also cover the physiotherapy needs of the students who attend Southbrook School in Exeter. It continues to be a privilege and pleasure working with the children, their families, support staff and my colleagues.



## CHARLOTTE MEARING

*Children's Specialist Physiotherapist  
Joined 2012*

I joined the Therapy Team in 2012 following completion of core rotations before specialising in Paediatrics. My current role is split between Vranth House Therapy Team where I cover several clinics and Honeyland's Children's Assessment Centre 0-5 team. Within this role I also recently started working on the Neonatal unit and cover neuro-developmental clinics at the RD&E. This enhances the importance of early intervention and continuation of care. In 2017 I also completed two master modules in Paediatric Physiotherapy which has further enhanced my knowledge in this specialist area. I enjoy how diverse and different my role is and how rewarding it can be.



## LOUISA HETHERINGTON

*Specialist Children's Physiotherapist - Joined 2004*

I have been working with the Vranth House Therapy team since 2004. Since January 2012 I have been seconded to work at the Honeylands Specialist Child Assessment Centre. This involves working as part of a large multidisciplinary team, assessing and treating children aged 0-5. As part of my role, I have also recently started working on the Neonatal Unit at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. These are definitely the tiniest children I have had the privilege to be involved with...and is an example of just how early 'early intervention' Physiotherapy can begin!



## LUCY WILLS

*Specialist Children's Physiotherapist  
Joined November 2009*

After qualifying in 1999, I gained experience working as a physiotherapist in a variety of specialist areas and settings in Ipswich and Middlesex. In 2002, I started my paediatric career in West Hertfordshire, working with children and young people aged 0-19 years in the community, in schools, on the children's ward and in the neonatal unit. In 2007 I returned to Devon with my family, where I grew up. I worked for several months at Honeylands Children's Centre in Exeter in 2008, before joining the team at Vranth House in 2009. In October 2018 I was given the opportunity to be the Team Lead in North Devon for three days a week, whilst continuing to work in Exeter two days a week.

I work with children aged 0-19 years, splitting my time between the outpatients department and the community, where I visit children with physical difficulties in their mainstream schools to support school staff and children in their physical management. I work closely with a number of professionals and services, including school staff, paediatricians, orthopaedic consultants, orthotics and wheelchair services, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and advisory teachers, as well as the individual children and their families.

I continue to enjoy the variety of work my caseload involves, and helping children to reach their full potential, which is very rewarding.



## NICKY WHITE

*Specialist Children's Physiotherapist - Joined 2010*

I qualified from Nottingham School of Physiotherapy in 1992. I worked at Airedale General Hospital, then St James' University Hospital in Leeds where I had the opportunity to specialise in Paediatrics. After a career break and four children, I returned to work at Vranth House. I have had a varied caseload since returning to practice. I love working with children and their families and enjoy being part of the supportive therapy team at Vranth.



## GEMMA BRANDON

*Specialist Children's Physiotherapist  
Joined 2017*

I currently work at the Exeter Deaf Academy providing physiotherapy support to students from primary school age up to college-age young adults. I enjoy working as part of a dynamic and multi-disciplinary team.



**REBECCA STARLING***Specialist Children's Physiotherapist - Joined 2017*

I qualified as a physiotherapist from the University of Liverpool in 1998. Following this I began working at Derriford Hospital in a variety of specialist areas, including the children's wards and neonatal unit. As part of this role I also spent some time working at Dame Hannah Rogers School in Ivybridge. From 2000 to 2002 I worked at Torbay and Newton Abbot hospitals on the surgical, respiratory and neurology wards.

I started at Honeylands Specialist Child Assessment Centre in 2002 working with 0-5 year olds with neuromuscular conditions and developmental difficulties, in the specialist nursery groups and outpatient settings. As part of this role I help to provide the physiotherapy service to the neonatal unit at the RD&E Hospital.

I became a member of the Vrach House team in September 2017 and I am continuing to work within the 0-5 service based in Honeylands at present.

**KATIE BIRD***Specialist Children's Physiotherapist - Joined 2019*

Having graduated from the University of The West of England in July 2019, my position at Vrach House as an out patient physiotherapist is my first post-graduate role. Throughout my studies and in previous work experience/voluntary roles, I have gained experience in working with both children and adults and am now excited to further my knowledge and skills in the speciality of paediatrics.

I am delighted to be working with the team and service users at Vrach House and thoroughly enjoy the variation in my caseload with the outpatients as well as occasionally popping into the school to work with the school pupils.

**HANNA McFADDEN***Specialist Children's Physiotherapist - Joined 2012*

I joined Vrach House School in January 2011 and having spent some time working in the Vrach House School I moved to work at Honeylands Specialist Assessment Centre, where I work with children aged 0-5. Following my Bobath neurodevelopmental training in 2013 I have sought out opportunities to work with children in this field, and I have a particular interest in early brain development and early intervention. I work on the neonatal unit where myself and my colleagues treat children born prematurely, or who have had birth complications. We then run a variety of clinics, outpatient assessments and groups for any children aged 0-5 that need support with their physical development.

In 2015, I was given an amazing opportunity to join a team of engineers, neurologists and medics to design and build a dynamic seat for children with dystonic Cerebral Palsy. This group of children find it particularly hard to sit in conventional specialist seating, which subsequently affects their ability to play, explore and learn and so this work is extremely important to our team.

My secondment has been fully supported by Vrach House, and through this collaboration we have built strong relationships with specialist movement disorder centres and hospitals across the country. Over the past two years, we have worked closely with children with dystonic Cerebral Palsy and their families, and it is wonderful to have children from Honeylands and Vrach House involved in this project. We hope that in the not too distant future, our work will help to improve quality of life for many children living with this condition.

**RACHEL CURTIS***Therapy Admin Assistant - Joined 2018*

I recently joined the Vrach House therapy department in an administrative position on a part time basis.

Having worked within mortgages for the last fifteen years, I am very excited to have joined the hard working and enthusiastic team at Vrach house and I am excited about the challenges and opportunities it will bring.

**LYDIA KINGDOM***Therapy Admin Assistant - Joined 2016*

I started at Vrach House in August 2016 and I work on Monday, Wed-nesday and Friday. Prior to this, I worked for the NHS for over seven years in various administrative roles and I hope to bring my experience to my role at Vrach.





## HELEN HICKS

*Technical Instructor - Joined 2006*

I was working as a Therapy assistant at Ellen Tinkham school from 2005 and then came over to work in school and in outpatient hydrotherapy in 2013. I am looking forward to taking on my new role as Technical Instructor to support the physiotherapist in school.



## GEORGINA HERBERT

*Therapy Assistant - Joined 2008*

I have worked at Vranth House since 2008. I started as a meal-time assistant but now work in the therapy department as a therapy assistant covering out patient hydro.

I am also part of the team that works with the school children and out patients on our new piece of equipment the Innwalk which we have had since 2018. I have level 1 makaton and completed my first aid.

Each day provides a new challenge and I really enjoy my job as it is so rewarding watching the progress of all the children on their individual journeys.



## JULIE LOBB

*Therapy Assistant - Joined 2005*

I joined Vranth House School in 2005 as a lunch-time support assistant, helped in hydrotherapy and ran a crèche. In 2010 I became a Teaching Assistant and gained a level 3 diploma in Children & Young People Workforce. I have always been interested in visual impairment and have done a little training in this as well as doing a small group session each week. I have worked in all three classes and learnt so much about the children, no two days were the same.

Following this I became a Therapy & Learning Assistant which meant I worked in the class as per normal but also acted as a go-between the Therapy and Class ensuring the children had the postural management they needed.

In September 2018 I joined the therapy team as a therapy assistant. I do lots of different tasks from assisting in speech and language therapy, hydro, work in the classes, rebound, Innwalk, etc. as required. This is a completely different role and I am enjoying this new challenge.



## BEKKI MILLS

*Specialist Children's Physiotherapist - Joined 2018*

I qualified as a Physiotherapist from Southampton University in 1999 and began my Physiotherapy Career at Southampton General Hospital. I moved into Paediatrics in 2001, initially covering the acute inpatients and out-patients in Southampton, where I had experience of Neurology, Respiratory and Orthopaedics specialities.

I then moved on to Community Paediatric Physiotherapy in North Hampshire, where I worked in Special schools, Mainstream schools, Early intervention and pre-school service, Neonatal follow up and Gait Clinic. I am Bobath trained and have a wide variety of experience treating children, and families, with neurodevelopmental, respiratory and musculoskeletal conditions.

Now having moved back to lovely Devon with my family I am enjoying being part of the Vranth House team and enjoying seeing children and young people with a wide variety of issues in Honeylands, Vranth House School and as Out-patients.



## KIRSTY SCALES

*Specialist Children's Physiotherapist - Joined 2019*

I studied at St Marys University College in Twickenham and completed a BSc Hons degree in Sport Rehabilitation. Shortly after this I went to Northumbria University in Newcastle and completed an MSc degree in Physiotherapy.

On completion of my degree I started working at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Gateshead and at Heel and Toe Children's Charity in the North East for children with physical and neurological conditions. In 2018 I moved to Devon and started working at Derriford Hospital where I spent time on the children's wards and intensive care units. I am very proud to be the school physiotherapist at Vranth House. I have a passion for providing physiotherapy for children with physical and neurological conditions and have a great interest in implementing research in to practise, in order to provide a high level of care and support for children and families.

I have a specialist interest in animal assisted therapy and am in the process of completing my Hippotherapy qualification. Hippotherapy utilises equine movement to help develop cognitive, sensory and neuro-motor function.





*Alek enjoying the Innowalk*



*Faith half high kneeling*

## Vranch House (North Devon)

The Vranch House (North Devon) physiotherapy team is based at Barnstaple Health Centre. There are currently three Vranch House physiotherapists permanently based in Barnstaple (Lucy Wills, Rhiannon Powell and Victoria Brunton), and a dedicated administrator (Kathryn McDine); a fourth physiotherapist, Charlotte Westlake joined the team at the end of this financial year, but due to the Coronavirus pandemic was unable to start until later in 2020.

The North Devon team work closely with other professionals including

orthotists and with paediatric staff at North Devon District Hospital; our physiotherapists support the Special Care Baby Unit at NDDH, and attend neurodevelopment clinics with the Paediatricians. Wheelchair clinics are regularly held within our North Devon department, with physiotherapists working alongside staff from Exeter Mobility Centre to assess children's postural and mobility needs.

We provide physiotherapy for the pupils at Pathfield School, with Rhiannon Powell spending part of her week on-site at the school. The outpatient appointments mainly take part at the Health Centre, but visits are also made to children at home/school/hospital when necessary due to the child's



health needs. We see children with a range of conditions and needs including neurological, neuromuscular, congenital and developmental conditions.

The North Devon team regularly gets together with the Exeter team for training and professional development, and the two teams work together to provide a cohesive, professional and child-centred physiotherapy service across the North, East and Mid Devon areas.

## THE ELLEN TINKHAM AND MILL WATER PHYSIOTHERAPY TEAMS

**GILL SCOTT – Physiotherapist**

**CLAIRE HARRADINE – Technical Instructor**

**HANNAH CHARLES – Physiotherapy Assistant**

**CARLY BUDD – Physiotherapy Assistant**

**JANET ACKFORD – Physiotherapy Assistant**

We work as part of the wider team of Vranch House based at Ellen Tinkham School and College and Mill Water School. These are special schools for children aged 3-19 years with severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and complex needs.

We provide rebound therapy, hydrotherapy, group work or individual programmes depending on the therapeutic needs of each child. We assess and give advice on specialist equipment needed and review this on a regular basis. We support fortnightly orthotic clinics and termly wheelchair clinics in school, these are run by Exeter Mobility Centre. We liaise closely with families, educational staff and other professionals.



*(left to right) Gill Scott, Claire Harradine, Hannah Charles, Carly Budd, Janet Ackford.*





**Sue Pratt**

*Music Therapist  
Joined 2020*

## Music Therapist

I qualified as a music therapist (University of Bristol) in 1995 following a music degree, PGCE (early years) and several years teaching in mainstream schools. I have worked as a music therapist in a variety of settings for over twenty years including special schools, Honeylands Child Assessment Centre, CAIRB unit, adult and child palliative services and independent family work. I am HCPC registered and a member of the BAMT.

I currently work part time as a member of the Vbranch House

therapy team, both in school and running a music therapy under five's outpatient service. I run individual and group music therapy sessions dependent on need.

Through music therapy children are able to express their emotions and develop communication and social skills through musical play. Music Therapy can also allow children with limited physical skills to experience the sensation of movement through music and vibration. Sessions also support children's physiotherapy programmes. Music Therapy is an extremely positive therapy for children, parents and staff, as it focuses on what the child can already do, the child taking the lead, and can interpret even the smallest responses through music. Each session brings something new – which is why I love it!

## Orthotics

Orthotics is a speciality involving using external devices ('orthoses') to support the body. The aims can be to improve posture, function and mobility, or to manage pain or deformity. The orthoses most commonly used for children are insoles, splints, footwear, spinal jackets and helmets.

An appointment with an Orthotist will involve discussing what needs the child has, what they have tried in the past and if an orthosis might be helpful. If an orthosis is prescribed, measurements and sometimes a plaster cast, will be taken. The finished item will then either be supplied by the Orthotist at a further appointment or by the child's Physiotherapist.

## Specialist Wheelchair Service



**HENRY BOOTH**

*Occupational Therapist - Joined 2020*

I graduated from the University of Southampton in 2018 with a BSc (Hons) in Occupational Therapy and following this I worked for two years within forensic mental health. Throughout my time working with adults I discovered my strong interest in providing rehabilitation to those with neurological and sensory issues. As part of ongoing voluntary work I had the opportunity to support children with brain injuries helping them to engage in outdoor pursuits. I find this very rewarding and it prompted me to make the switch to paediatrics. I joined Vbranch House in September 2020 and I look forward to working within both the school and outpatient service with a diverse group of children.

Alongside the above I am also the therapist for the Specialist Wheelchair Service run by Vbranch House on behalf of the Commissioners. This service enhances the existing service for children and young people, where it has been agreed that their needs cannot be fully met by the mainstream (NHS) service. The criteria for application are:

1. There is a clearly identified need for a specialist wheelchair to facilitate access to the educational curriculum appropriate to the pupil concerned;

2. The request cannot be met by SEN funding for the school pupil concerned;

**And one of the following two criteria also applies;**

3. There is an identified need for a powered and a specialist manual wheelchair but the NHS will only fund one wheelchair;

4. There is a difference of opinion between parents and mobility centres regarding the model of wheelchair that best meets the "identified need".

All referrals are through the Specialist Wheelchair Panel, via the child or young person's therapist.

I will contact the family, assess the child's needs and abilities at home and at school, and consider their mobility requirements for education, leisure and social activities. I then work with the child, the family, the school and the child's community therapists to find the most appropriate wheelchair to meet the needs. I liaise with the statutory wheelchair services (often the child will have a 'wheelchair voucher' from them) as well as local and national charities to agree funding. All funding offered by the Specialist Wheelchair Service is agreed by the Panel.

Parents' and children's feedback is invited, and I hope that this service will continue to develop alongside statutory services to provide children with wheelchairs which will enhance their participation in all aspects of their lives.



## Occupational Therapy



**JANELLE PENFOLD**

*Lead Senior Occupational Therapist, Joined 2020*

I qualified as an occupational therapist in July 2000, having studied at Cardiff University. I originally started my career working in mental health on various psychiatric wards which I really enjoyed.

In 2002 I had the opportunity to specialise in Paediatrics which is an area I had always been keen to pursue. I joined the Vrch House team in 2012 where I worked until 2018. I have recently had two years experience working within an autism assessment team assessing and diagnosing young people which gave me a wealth of experience and an opportunity to develop my knowledge.

I was extremely pleased to be given the chance to return to Vrch House in June 2020 as the lead occupational therapist, working in the outpatient service. I am fortunate

that we have recently employed two new fantastic occupational therapists who will help me to cover both outpatients and Vrch House School.

I am thoroughly enjoying being back at Vrch House, it is a pleasure to work with a great team and with such a diverse mix of children and their families.



**EVIE KENISTON**

*Occupational Therapist, Joined 2020*

I qualified as an occupational therapist (BSc Hons) from Plymouth University in July 2020 and I am excited to have begun my first post-graduate role at Vrch House. During my studies I completed various placements in both child and adult services in Devon, along with volunteering within a paediatric ABI adventure group. I look forward to working with a highly knowledgeable and skilled team, predominantly outpatient based, which will contribute to enhancing my knowledge and experience within this remit.

## SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY REPORT



**ELEANOR SPARK**

*Speech and  
Language  
Therapist  
Joined 2020*

I qualified from the University of St Mark and St John in March 2020, with a BSc (Hons) degree in Speech and Language Therapy. While on clinical placement during my studies, I worked as part of a diverse team, combining robotics and artificial intelligence, to pioneer new, high-tech communication equipment to support people who do not use verbal speech.

I have a passion for providing therapy to children and young people, and as a newly qualified therapist, I am delighted to be able to utilise my experience in AAC with my new client group, as well as continuously expand my knowledge in this field. I am now leading the Speech and Language Therapy service at **Vrch House School**, as well as outpatients referred to the **NEW Devon Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Intervention Service**, which supports children who use high-tech AAC devices across North, East and West Devon.

### Vrch House School

A Total Communication approach and environment is embedded into daily life at Vrch House School. This means that communication methods such as: verbal speech, gesture, Makaton signing, symbols and Voice-Output Communication Aids (VOCAs) are used by pupils to communicate, and by staff to enhance pupils' understanding.

In addition, the school-wide 'Play Programme' continues to receive speech and language therapy support, in

collaboration with physiotherapy and occupational therapy. This programme focuses on key communication skills, such as peer interaction, and building the duration of children's attention. Eleanor works closely with other therapy staff, class teachers, support staff and families to create an individualised communication programme for each child. These communication programmes outline each child's communication needs, alongside short-term communication goals agreed by the child's wider team. The communication programmes also include information, advice and resources to ensure each child has access to continuous and consistent support to reach their communication potential.

Should there be urgent concerns regarding the safety of a pupil's swallow at Vrch House School, any eating, drinking and swallowing (dysphagia) queries will be referred to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital by the school nursing team, as Eleanor does not currently hold qualification in assessing dysphagia needs.

### NEW Devon AAC Intervention Service

Individuals who are eligible for the NEW Devon AAC Intervention Service receive SLT assessment, support and intervention in relation to high-tech AAC use. This can include: guidance in obtaining charitable funding for a device, support to access the NHS AAC Specialist Assessment Service (AAC West of England Specialist Team [AAC WEST]). An individualised communication programme, which includes information, advice and resources to the AAC user, their family and their support team, is provided to ensure the introduction to high-tech AAC is successful.



## The Nurses

Nurse's at Vranh House School aim to support attendance of our pupils.

Our service includes;

- Annual updates for staff involved in delivering care and advice and information regarding;
- Infection Control and avoidance of cross contamination,
- Safe medicine storage and administration,
- Epilepsy awareness and rescue medication administration,
- Policy and Protocol Adherence and accurate documentation,
- Recording and understanding observations,
- Naso-gastric feeding
- Gastrostomy care and feeding competencies,
- Jejunostomy feeding,
- Blended Feeding,
- Suction technique of natural airways,
- Mouth and Stoma care,
- Oxygen Administration,
- Continence,
- Health promotion, updates regarding child related conditions and any other

issues!

Nurses contribute to the Educational Health Care Plans and Annual Reviews. Safeguarding is at the forefront of our work with guidance from the Devon Children and Families Partnership.

Nurses undertake regulatory training as part of their professional development and invite feedback from parents and colleagues to include in the Revalidation process.

We follow and are guided by the NMC The Code (of Nursing Practice) This contains professional standards that Nurses must;

- Prioritise People
- Practise Effectively
- Preserve Safety
- Promote Professionalism and Trust

Nurse's office is located next to the foyer, opposite reception at the main entrance to school.

We provide a friendly point of contact for parents and carers with any concerns or queries regarding the health and wellbeing of their child and welcome parents to drop in. We can also signpost and refer children and families to other organisations and agencies when appropriate, for example the Child and Adolescent

Mental Health Service, The Heavitree Specialist Dental Access Service and The Bladder and Bowel Service.

We want to reassure parents and children they will always be treated with respect and dignity.

We are working alongside visiting multi- disciplinary professionals including;

Paediatric Consultants, Orthopaedic Consultant, Dieticians, Community Dentist and Therapists, Epilepsy Nurse Specialist, Community Nurses and Continence Nurse Specialist, Audiologist, Ophthalmologist, The Immunisation Team and our own team of Physiotherapists, Music Therapist, OT's and Speech and Language Therapist.

We welcome year four Medical Students and Nursing students to Vranh House School. This visit provides them with a valuable insight of the children, outside of the hospital setting and a greater understanding of the everyday difficulties and achievements of our amazing children, quite an inspiring and humbling experience.

The nurse's love to see the children enjoying the varied activities and are always happy to accompany the classes on exciting outings!



**Marie Brown**  
Nurse  
Joined 2014



**Lucy Leyman**  
Nurse  
Joined 2018



**Ronnie Lye**  
Nursing Assistant  
Joined 1995

## LUNCHTIME STAFF



**KERSTIE DAVIES**

*Lunchtime & Classroom Support Assistant - Joined 2015*

I joined Vranh House in 2015 as a lunchtime support assistant and to help in the hydrotherapy sessions. I now also work as a classroom assistant which I enjoy immensely. Working with the children and staff each day is fun and extremely rewarding.



**KAY DENNIS**

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2016*

I started working at Vranh House in Sept 2016. Having a son with cerebral palsy inspired me to want to work with children with additional needs. I currently work as a lunchtime support assistant/classroom assistant and help with the hydrotherapy sessions. The job is very rewarding and the children are a pleasure to be with.



**ELANOR SHERRIFF**

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2018*

I have always worked in Health and Social Care, in a wide range of settings. Vranh House is the first time I have worked in a School and I could not predict how much joy the children bring. They are amazing. All the staff are really friendly and it is a pleasure to come to work. Vranh House is a happy place to be.



# LUNCHTIME STAFF



## MELANIE LYNCH

*Lunchtime Support Assistant*

I was a student here at Vbranch many years ago from the age of two to twelve years which I enjoyed! I have been volunteering at Vbranch for over ten years and I am now also a permanent lunch-time support assistant two days a week. I have lots of fun and love spending time doing different activities with the children and staff.



## COLEEN KELLY

*Lunchtime Assistant - Joined 2017*

I started working at Vbranch House in December 2017 as a lunch-time support assistant. The staff and children have made me feel extremely welcome and the staff have all been very supportive and helpful. I feel honoured and privileged to be working with such amazing children and staff.



## REBECCA WAKEHAM

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2020*

I am a Mum of four children, my two youngest are Autistic and have a profound Learning disability. I joined Vbranch House in September 2020 as a lunchtime assistant.

In the short time I have been working here, I have really enjoyed working with the children to aid in their lunchtime meal and independence. I have also helped with Hydrotherapy sessions which I have also enjoy very much. I'm looking forward to my future here at Vbranch House with these amazing young people.



## VICTORIA KERR

*Lunchtime Assistant - Joined 2018*

I started work at Vbranch House in December 2018 as an MTA; I also take part in hydro sessions with the children each week.

I feel privileged and extremely lucky to be involved in the children's lives at Vbranch.



## MICHAELA VINE

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2020*

I started working at Vbranch House in September 2020 as a lunchtime assistant. Although I have only been at Vbranch House a short time, I am absolutely loving it. The staff and the children are all incredible



## NICOLA MUDGE

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2020*

I look forward to work each day as an MTA and supporting children in the hydrotherapy pool twice a week. I am always learning new practices about respectful care, dignity and safety. The children are a delight and working with other staff in a team is a pleasure.



## KRISSI VINNECOMBE

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2020*

I started working at Vbranch House in September 2020 as an MTA. As a new member of staff at Vbranch. I am happy to say all the staff have been incredibly welcoming and the children are all uniquely amazing. I feel it is a privilege to spend time with them all each day.



## REBECCA GABRIEL

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2020*

I started in November as a meal time assistant in the Upper School. I've been made so welcome and part of the family. The young people are amazing and make me laugh everyday.



## MICHALA SMITH

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2010*

I started working at Vbranch House in September 2020 as a lunchtime assistant. Although I have only been at Vbranch House a short time, I am absolutely loving it. The staff and the children are all incredible.



## HELEN McDONALD

*Lunchtime Support Assistant - Joined 2020*

I started at Vbranch House in 2020, my first year has been great getting to know all the children and have gained a lot of knowledge. The staff are very supportive.

## Kitchen Staff



## JEAN PENN & DAWN STREET

Our lunches are delivered from the hospital. We sort the meals out i.e. mash/cut them up as required or sort special diets in time for when the children come into the hall.

Our work is very rewarding. To see a child who has difficulty eating enjoy their tasters is priceless.



## Relief Staff



### DI STAVES

*Relief Teaching Assistant, Joined 1987*

I started work at Vbranch House as a Lunchtime Assistant in 1987. During this time I also volunteered my help in the Hydrotherapy pool, which resulted with the first of several Halliwick Swimming Courses. I moved to the Therapy Department when a position became available providing cover for hydrotherapy sessions and other therapy activities, gaining experience with school pupils and outpatients. Since retiring in the Spring of 2013 I have maintained my contact with the children and staff by providing relief cover when required as a lunch-time or hydrotherapy assistant.



### CAYLA WARD

*Relief MTA, Joined 2016*

I came to Vbranch as a Volunteer in 2014 whilst I was completing my degree in Health and Social Care. I have since qualified as a Nursery Practitioner and work four days a week in this role at a Nursery in Exeter. As I have Fridays off I have stayed on the relief bank at Vbranch and help out when needed.



### DI BROOKING

*Relief Teaching Assistant, Joined 1982*

I decided to retire from work at Vbranch House in July 2008 but be available as a voluntary swimming helper and as a relief if required. It is lovely seeing all the children from Class 1, when they are learning to adapt to school and all the changes, right through to the secondary school when they are experienced in school life and all its opportunities. I will continue to help Vbranch in all capacities whenever I can.



### KIMBERLEY MORGAN

*Relief Teaching Assistant - Joined 2018*

I started at Vbranch House in September 2018 as an MTA, prior to that I worked at the RD&E Maternity Hospital as an auxiliary nurse. I have four children one of whom has additional needs. In September 2019 I became a TA in Class 2. I love working with all the lovely children at Vbranch House and feel very lucky to be part of their day.

## VARIOUS ROLES



### SIMON BATSTONE

*Groundsman/Technician - Joined 2011*

Having spent twenty-eight years at Vbranch House as a sub-contractor groundsman, I had the pleasure of being offered a full time job as Groundsman Technician at the School. Having been here since 2011 now as part of the maintenance team we have accomplished many projects and refurbishments inside and out and it remains a pleasure to work in such a caring environment with dedicated staff with the children's needs at heart.

**TOM WARREN** - *Mobility Project Manager and resident Engineer - Joined 2005*



I have run the Guided Mobility Project for twenty-one years now, working at Vbranch House since 1999. This project has designed and developed a 'robotic' wheelchair system which has now been installed in over a hundred educational and healthcare establishments in the UK. This 'tracking system' primarily allows an adapted powered wheelchair or custom built platform to automatically follow a safe, predetermined route controlled by a single switch, which allows a child to experience independence and potentially develop mobility

skills, and has proven to provide a powerful motivation for learning in many cases.

In recent years my role at Vbranch House has changed significantly. In the simplest terms this has involved taking technical work that has historically been done for us by outside companies and developing the capacity to manage as much as possible 'in-house'. This includes the website, network, IT support, environmental control, hydrotherapy support and plant, signage, mobility, communication, electronic hardware repair, manufacturing of custom parts, switching, software and programming, and security. I work in conjunction and co-operation with my colleagues' similar support work and hopefully our efforts much benefit the smooth operation of Vbranch House.



### PHIL GATER - *Technical Assistant*

I have been involved with Vbranch House since 1972 when I started organising the PA system for the annual fêtes and fayres.

My role now is that of technical assistant doing electric repairs, installations and IT work (including trouble shooting problems with computers, installing software, etc.)



## Marketing Report



*Col. Wheeler retirement celebration in July 2020*



*We are very grateful to Thrifty Car Rental for their continued support of Vbranch House in providing us with a constant supply of a rental car which helps us provide services to the children we serve in the community.*

2019/2020 saw the beginning of our build of the new Innwalk suite, so much of our fundraising and donations went towards this exciting development. We were exceptionally lucky to receive a very generous donation for the cost of the Innwalk machines from relatives (who wish to remain anonymous) of a child known to Vbranch House services.

Vbranch House could not continue to provide the range and high level of services that it currently does, and in such well-appointed premises, if it wasn't for the continuing kindness and generosity of our many supporters. Some of the many kind people and organisations that supported us over 2019/2020 included (but is not limited to):

- The Exeter Foundation and Exeter Chiefs Rugby Club for their continued support and generosity.
- J Wippell and Co for their continued support.
- Moto in the Community Trust for their continued support.
- The Martin family for their continued support.
- The Exeter Angling Association for their continued support.
- Loxbeare Church for their continued support.
- Whoops a Daisy Florist for their continued support.
- The kind donations received from:
  - The Norman Trust
  - Parochial Church Council of Great Dunmow
  - Exeter Family Welfare Association
  - Mole Valley Farmers
  - Cameo Hair Design
- The very kind supporters of Vbranch House who have left the charity money in legacies.
- The staff and parents/families who have supported various in-house fundraising efforts over the year.
- Our wonderful pupils and patients who feature in so many of our photographs that you see in this publication and around the school.
- The staff who have initiated their own fundraising projects, such as cake sales, sponsored runs and Christmas 'Bingo', etc.
- The companies and trusts who respond so generously to our appeals.
- The local media for their coverage and help with awareness raising.

Many thanks to all who have made donations of any size to Vbranch House, and we apologise that we can't thank you all here by name. We also extend our thanks to those donors who have expressed a wish to remain anonymous.

***Thank you to all the supporters of Vbranch House!***



## Fact Sheet

### What is Vranth House?

An Independent Day School in Exeter for children with significant physical difficulties, mostly with cerebral palsy.

A Centre for the treatment of outpatients with *all* forms of physical difficulties.

A provider of various therapies in other schools in Devon.

In North and East Devon we are the principal provider of paediatric therapy to all children with physical difficulties and the major provider of therapies for children with cerebral palsy.

### Who owns and runs it?

Vranth House School, a registered charity, number 1002700, which started in 1960. The school opened in 1969.

### How many children do you help?

We have day places for up to twenty-eight children and treat over 2,000 outpatients each year.

### What ages are they?

Pupils are aged from two to eighteen years, outpatients are mostly under seventeen years.

### What problems do they have?

Pupils all have significant physical difficulties, most have cerebral palsy (spasticity). Outpatients have a wider range of conditions, some comparatively mild.

### What causes cerebral palsy?

It is caused by an injury or malformation to the part of the brain that controls movement, this injury often occurs at the time of birth.

### What are its effects?

Messages from the brain get jumbled up on route to the muscles, causing stiffness, jerky or unwanted movements. This makes it hard, sometimes impossible for children to walk, use their hands and speak.

### Can cerebral palsy be cured?

No, but its effects can be greatly reduced by appropriate treatment at an early age.

### Do the children have other problems?

Yes, many do. They include:

- \* Learning difficulties
- \* Speech & language difficulties
- \* Problems with sight & hearing
- \* Feeding & swallowing difficulties
- \* Emotional & behavioural difficulties

### What treatment do you provide?

Teaching is integrated with intensive yet sensitive physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, occupational therapy and speech & language therapy.

### What services do you provide outside the school?

Our physiotherapists treat pupils with disabilities in mainstream schools and specific special schools in Devon. A team of four physiotherapists operate exclusively in North Devon.

We have a growing number of innovative projects in the community, many in partnership with bodies such as schools, universities, Community Trusts and Health, Education and Social Services.

### Opportunity Technology Centre

Optech is a new centre to provide assessment, review and training programmes for computer access to the curriculum, early mobility, multi-sensory activities, communication and toys and play.

### Who provides funds?

No fees are charged to parents. The Local Education Authority provides funds for basic schooling and the Health Authorities provide core funding for salaries for our professional staff.

We supplement this funding by nearly 60% of the total cost to give the finest education and treatment possible. The buildings, contents, running costs and equipment of the school are our responsibility.

### What does Ofsted think of you?

Our most recent Ofsted report, from the Material Change Inspection (increase of pupil numbers), Nov 2020 said:

*"Leaders promote pupils wellbeing. For instance, some older pupils have benefited from the redesign of an outdoor area, explicitly intended to let pupils exercise and learn to regulate their anxieties. This space is directly linked to a newly adapted classroom, enabling a straightforward transition from one area to another when required. The school buildings are clean, modern and well maintained. Classrooms are spacious, appropriately lit and well equipped."*

*Staff are well equipped to undertake tailored responsibilities when supporting individual pupils. Pupils use a range of augmentative communication systems throughout the school, including eye gaze technology. Leaders understand the challenges that growth may bring but they have planned carefully and are well prepared to welcome additional pupils and staff."*

*The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements."*



*Beverley Simcox retired in October 2020  
after thirty-two years of service -  
we will all miss her.*





**Vranch House**

**Pinhoe Road, Exeter, EX4 8AD**

**Telephone: 01392 468333**

**[www.vranchhouse.org](http://www.vranchhouse.org)**