



**SABRE
EDUCATION:
giving children the
best possible early
years education**

IMPACT REPORT 2020-2022



UK registered charity 1105489
Ghana registered NGO DSW/4852

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Message from our CEO and Executive Director



Susan Place Everhart and Tony Dziedzinyo Kwesi Dogbe

We are delighted to introduce you to Sabre Education's 2020-2022 Impact Report. When we both joined Sabre in 2020, it was a time of great uncertainty for the education sector in Ghana, and the world. Schools in Ghana closed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and did not re-open until January 2021. All of Sabre's project activity came to an abrupt halt and millions of young children and their families faced significant challenges as they attempted to continue learning at home.

Sabre showed considerable resilience and creativity as we quickly adapted our work to ensure that children - and their parents - were supported to learn at home throughout this period. Our early education team expertly curated a series of educational radio programmes and provided call-in radio programming for parents to learn more about play-based learning and how to support child learning with a stimulating environment at home.

We are incredibly proud that Sabre was able to provide such crucial support to children and their families during this challenging time and an enormous thank you must go out to Sabre's funder community. With their deep generosity, our funders enabled us to not only survive in 2020 but then start to thrive again as schools emerged from the worst stages of the pandemic.

Following COVID delays, Sabre has since been able to complete the delivery of our largest teacher training project to date, training every kindergarten teacher in quality play-based learning in 6 districts of the Eastern Region over three years. This large project is ideal in terms of testing concepts of scalability and reach.

During this period, Sabre has also constructed two kindergarten schools in communities in the Western Region, providing those kindergarten children with a safe and inspiring environment in which to begin their education.

Whilst our direct work continues in teacher training and transforming schools, we are also committed to supporting the Ghanaian Government to reach all 1.6 million kindergarten children across Ghana with our quality play-based approach to teacher training. We are therefore delighted that in partnership with another leading organisation, **Right To Play**, we have co-developed a unified play-based teacher training approach to be used nationally, supported by the Ghanaian Government, with a vision to see it scaled up nationally.

As we extend the reach and impact of our projects, it has been important that we also strengthen our own team and organisational capabilities. We have welcomed new members to our Senior Leadership Team who bring many years of valuable charity sector experience to the organisation in this exciting phase of growth for Sabre.

We had the great privilege of taking part in several capacity development programmes, with support from our funders and pro bono partners, including the **Bridgespan Leadership Accelerator Programme**, the **Deloitte D2i International Fellowship**, and strategic Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) support from **Innovations for Poverty Action**. These initiatives have enabled us to develop our internal capabilities, nurture leadership talent and tackle key business challenges.

There is so much to look forward to as we continue our direct work alongside our support for national scaling of quality play-based kindergarten in Ghana. As ever, we would not be able to carry out this important work without the critical support of our donors, partners and collaborators, so on behalf of the entire Sabre Education team, thank you for your continued generosity and engagement.

Together, we can achieve our mission of providing all kindergarten children with a quality start to their education.

Why Play-based Early Years Education?



Early childhood experiences have a profound impact on brain development- affecting learning, health, behaviour and, ultimately, productivity and income
(World Bank, 2022)

90% of a child's brain has already developed by five years old
(Theirworld, 2017)

Play-based kindergarten learning is seen as the most effective for a child's brain development
(Mendenhall et al., 2021)

The need in Ghana

1.6 million kindergarten children in Ghana
(UNICEF, 2019)

61,751 kindergarten teachers in Ghana
(Education Management Information Service - Ghana, 2018/19)

4,197 Ghanaian kindergarten classrooms in need of major repair
(Ministry of Education, 2018/19)

40% of pupils need access to desks and seats in public basic schools
(Ghana Centre for Democratic Development, 2022)

Just 2% of pupils attaining the desired standards for literacy after the first four years of formal education
(Ghana Education Service, 2015)

About us

Sabre's vision is to help all children succeed, by giving them the best possible early education.

Our approach is simple. Through the provision of quality **teacher training and support, transforming schools** to create play-based learning environments, and **advocacy for quality early childhood policies and practices**, we can support Ghana to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 - **universal access to quality kindergarten education for all children.**



Sabre's Reach

We are a small charity with a big impact.

Our impact Since 2008, we estimate that our projects have benefitted at least **140,000 people** directly in Ghana - children enrolled at Kindergarten when their teachers received Sabre training, their parents and the teachers themselves.

As teachers go on to transform the lives of more children with each new school year, an estimated **240,030** Ghanaian children will have benefitted

from play-based learning assuming our teachers continue to work in the classroom for 5 years following Sabre's training.

Our advocacy work for national scaling spreads our impact still further as we help to transform early childhood education policy and curriculum for the benefit of all Kindergarten children in Ghana and beyond.



Teacher Training Achievements 2020-2022

Sabre in Numbers 2008 - 2022



Teachers...

- **2,286 in-service practising teachers** trained in play-based learning
- **1,113 student teachers** on placements in play-based kindergartens
- **570 head teachers** trained in play-based teaching, classroom coaching and monitoring

Schools...

- **19 model kindergarten schools** built
- **566 Government Kindergarten schools** have received training in **18 districts in 3 regions** (Western, Central and Eastern)

Trainers and Monitors...

- **594 Ghana Education Service officers** have received training and support to monitor and maintain teaching standards
- **109 trainers** have been trained, now able to deliver transformational teacher training
- **47 College of Education tutors** trained in play-based learning

COVID-19 Response Work

In June 2020 during the COVID-19 school closures in Ghana and to complement the Ghanaian Government's radio and television programmes supporting kindergarten children in rural communities, we launched our **Say, Sing, Shine** radio programme in partnership with the Ghana Education Service. The programme broadcast fun and creative kindergarten sessions over local radio stations and community public address systems, reaching families without access to their own radio. We also broadcast sessions for parents, to ensure they were guided on how to support their children's learning at home.

The radio programme proved so popular that parents requested that broadcasts continue once schools reopened.

Whilst a challenging time, the COVID-19 school closures provided valuable insight into the world of hybrid learning and we began to deliver online teacher training workshops and training videos to support online learning.

Despite difficulties at times with internet connectivity and delivering some activities remotely, working online greatly increased the geographic reach of our training. As a result, we are looking forward to increasingly using hybrid learning in our teacher training projects, and the potential it brings to support the play-based training of thousands of kindergarten teachers across the country.

SABRE'S WORK DURING COVID-19

Over 2020/21, the following were supported by our radio programmes:

- **21,831 children**
- **10,072 parents**
- **3,887 in-service teachers**
- **517 head teachers**

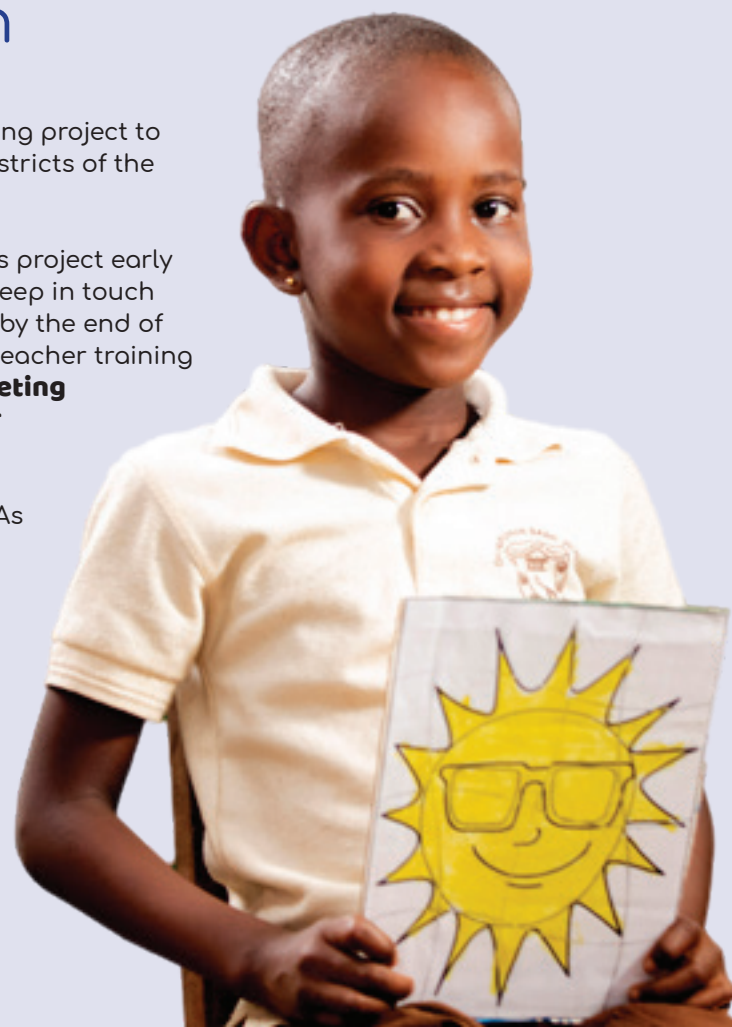


Districtwide Teacher Training in Ghana's Eastern Region

In September 2019, we launched our biggest teacher training project to date, training all 1,145 kindergarten teachers across six districts of the Eastern Region.

Although COVID-19 temporarily halted the progress of this project early on, the development of our online training allowed us to keep in touch with the teachers through online refresher trainings and, by the end of 2021, we had successfully delivered our transformational teacher training to all teachers. **83% of teachers monitored after completing their training met the target competency level in their teacher assessment.**

This is a really pivotal point in our teacher training work. As we begin to move from small to medium-scale delivery we are stepping closer to achieving our vision of providing a quality kindergarten education to all children in Ghana.



Kindergarten teacher Margaret Boahemaah Quaye shared her experience of this Districtwide Transformational Teacher Training in the Eastern Region:



"Prior to Sabre Education's intervention, I employed the rote method of lesson delivery which is more teacher-centred. Most of the time I did all the talking and only a few times would I involve children in other activities.

There was a tremendous change in my classroom as a result of the training on the play-based approach. With this new training I realised that children learn more effectively when they are involved in playful activities, so I gave them the opportunity to explore and do things on their own to help them learn better. I made lots of engaging learning materials to decorate the classroom and I set-up learning centres for the children to explore.

I can confidently say that the children in my classroom are learning better and are always

excited to come to school because of all of the playful activities they take part in every day. This has served as a great motivation for me to continue transforming my classroom.

My learners were able to perform certain tasks on their own without relying on the teachers. My learners became confident, they communicated freely without fear, they became more curious as they always wanted to know the next thing I was going to do with them. Indeed, my children became very happy learners."



Working with Universities and Colleges of Education

Supporting the next generation of teachers is an important part of our strategy and a key focus of the Ghana government.

To ensure that student teachers graduate from college as confident and capable kindergarten teachers, we work with our partner university and college lecturers to share play-based teaching expertise and strengthen how they educate the students.

We develop Centres of Excellence on or near college/university campuses which are model play-based kindergarten classrooms, where student teachers can observe and practice play-based kindergarten teaching. Our partner colleges ensure that student teachers put their skills into action through providing term-long placements in model classrooms with kindergarten teachers who have been trained in the play-based teaching approach.

Partnerships for the next teaching generation

- 5 College of Education Partners
- University of Education, Winneba partner
- 3 Centres of Excellence

In December 2020, we were delighted to partner with our fifth tertiary institution, the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), one of the leading early childhood education academic institutions in Ghana. Together we can significantly influence early childhood education best practice nationally.

There are five universities and 23 colleges delivering early years education degrees in Ghana. Our ambition is for students at these institutions to have lecturers who have been exposed to play-based teaching, and access to a model kindergarten classroom to complete their practical placements. We will therefore continue rolling out our programme over the coming years to an increasing number of tertiary institutions.

The Impact of our Work on Kindergarten Children

The children at Dompooase Kokoado MA Basic in the Central Region tell us how learning through play has impacted them!



"I become happy anytime I come to school and when we close, I do not want to go home. My classroom is beautiful and my teacher plays with us. I like my teacher because she is nice and helps us to learn well. We do outdoor and indoor learning. We move from one activity to the other. My classroom is different from the primary classroom because it has lots of learning materials."

Precious Awortwe, KG2 Pupil



"My classroom is full of playing materials. We buy and sell at the shopping centre. We build and arrange shapes at the construction centre. Madam Regina often takes us out to play, we play with letters on card, we run and dance. I am happy when I come to school because I know my friends and I will play. My teacher Madam Regina makes us play and we learn."

Nana Semewu Ansah, KG2 Pupil



"I am now in primary class one and my current classroom is different from my kindergarten classroom. At kindergarten, I remember we go to centres where we do a lot of activities such as cooking, arranging materials, building houses with shapes. In my current class, we sit most of the time and our teacher teaches us. I miss my kindergarten classroom and sometimes feel like coming back."

Juliet Mensah, Primary 1 Pupil

Striving for Inclusive Education

33% of children with a disability in Ghana are out of school (chanceforchildhood.org)

An absence of disability-friendly classrooms means that many children with disabilities simply cannot go to school.

We believe all children have the right to a quality kindergarten education. In 2021, we teamed up with **Chance for Childhood**, an organisation that works with children with disabilities and special educational needs, to create a bespoke teacher training workshop on inclusion. This helps teachers make their classrooms more accessible and shows them how to best identify and support children with dis-

abilities or special educational needs so that they can learn too.

This one-day workshop will now be included in all of our training going forward, and as we begin to scale this teacher training nationally we are excited to see the impact that it will have for so many young learners.

Transforming Schools

Achievements 2020-2022

How can we expect teachers to deliver play-based learning in classrooms that have no roof, minimal furniture or learning resources? Since 2004, Sabre has been building and renovating kindergarten schools, ensuring that classrooms are inspirational and effective spaces to learn through play. We have built 19 in total!



The shaded outside teaching space allows children to learn outside of the classroom

Large classroom, providing space for play-based activities

Pivoting windows and doors provide natural light and ventilation throughout the day

Office space to store teaching and learning materials safely

Water harvesting system for hand washing and cooking

Playground for free play

The insulated roof stops the roof from getting too hot, and absorbs the noise from the rain during the rainy season.

Did you know that southern Ghana is in a seismic zone? The concrete structure skeletons of the schools are designed to provide protection from earthquake forces.

We are thrilled to have constructed two of these amazing schools in 2020-22 with the support of Tullow Ghana in the communities of Abuesi and Nkotompo in the Western Region. The kindergarten classrooms were in a very poor state, with structural cracks, poor sanitation and a bare earth floor.

The new schools constructed are a world away from the old classrooms. A big thank you to Tullow, as these schools will now be able to provide inspirational spaces for up to 160 kindergarten children to learn every year.

To discover the true impact of the schools that Sabre constructs we spoke to teachers and children that have had the opportunity to teach and learn in these buildings. Teacher Millicent Yedaw has noticed a difference in her learners as a result of her new classroom:

"I feel so motivated and inspired in this classroom, especially when I see the children going about their activities in a playful way with no hindrance. I think these children are at a different level when it comes to playful activities. When I look at the different learning centres with playful materials and the outdoor learning environment that is child friendly, what child wouldn't want to come to school and enjoy this facility? I noticed that children here are more punctual and active throughout the school day. I wish every school in the district had this facility to boost playful learning."



Teacher Ernestina Sam shared her experience of teaching in both a traditional classroom and a Sabre constructed classroom:

"My previous traditional kindergarten classrooms were cramped, hot and dark. There was not enough space for play-based learning. We made resources to try and make the classroom more interesting but they would often get stolen and damaged as there was no safe space to store them. These challenges made it almost impossible to deliver the play-based learning we knew our pupils needed."

"When Sabre built our new kindergarten school we had the opportunity to teach in a classroom that is different from any other structure in this district. This new classroom is spacious so that children can move around the classroom freely between the different activities. I now have kindergarten appropriate furniture for my class. The colourful windows ensure that my classroom is cool throughout the day and the outside teaching area allows my children to get outside and play during the school day."



As well as benefitting teachers, it is clear that these playful learning environments have created a joyful learning experience for young Ghanaians. Berikisu Abakah Johnson, who is now in Primary 2, shared her kindergarten experience with us:

"The difference between my kindergarten classroom and my current primary school classrooms is that the kindergarten classroom had lots of learning resources to play with. The classroom was big and beautiful and we played with resources a lot. Sometimes my friends and I come back to our kindergarten classroom to play."





Advocacy and Policy Achievements 2020-2022

Our work over the last 18 years has contributed towards Ghana having key early childhood education policies in place. However, we need to make sure these policies are implemented effectively for all children across Ghana.

Our vision is to support government to scale our teacher training work to all 40,076 kindergarten teachers across the country, helping to ensure that

all kindergarten children receive a quality play-based education.

Our advocacy work with the Ghana government and other key early years education stakeholders is key to making this vision a reality, ensuring that the strong early childhood education policies are increasingly implemented.



Patty Assan, Ghana Education Service Director for Schools and Instructions, shares the Ghana Education Service's view of a child's formative early years, their hopes for our partnership and kindergarten education across Ghana in the future.

"Early years education is the foundation on which we build all educational experiences. To build a house, you need a good foundation so the house will not collapse. So, if early years education is done well, the child's education will be properly and permanently grounded."

"When I visited the schools that Sabre has supported, I was impressed with the teaching and learning resources that the teachers had produced themselves, as they made

teaching and learning interesting and captivating. Children were learning through play. Every child was involved and active with indoor and outdoor activities. I also noticed how the teachers were enjoying the teaching."

"My vision for kindergarten education in Ghana is that the play-based concept that I saw in the Sabre-supported schools is practiced in every school. Sabre should seek to go beyond implementing the play-based approach on a small-scale and upscale it, and work with the Ghana Education Service to get the funding to replicate it across the country."



With the play-based kindergarten curriculum in place, we are now working with the Ghana government to scale play-based teacher training across the country.

In 2021, we partnered with another leading play-based NGO, **Right To Play (RTP)**, and monitoring and evaluation experts, **Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)**, to create and test a unified national teacher kindergarten training programme that can be rolled out across Ghana, with support from IPA to test its impact. We are delighted that the Ghana government is in full support of the national training content and are ready to adopt it as their own and see it scaled out.

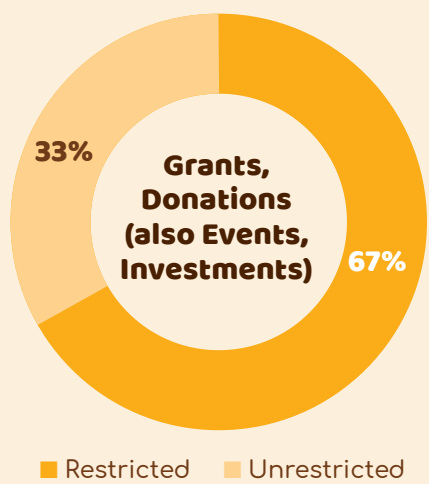
In preparation for this roll-out, at the invitation of the Ghana Education Service and together with RTP, we trained 73 Master Trainers from across the country using the new unified national teacher training content. These trainers are now prepared to deliver the teacher training in any district and region around the country as we progress our goal of providing all 4 and 5 year old children in Ghana with a quality play-based kindergarten education.

The collaboration between Sabre, our partners and the government is critical in allowing us to address together the systemic issues impacting early years education. We value these strong partnerships and the mutual commitment to improving kindergarten education in Ghana over the years and we are excited to continue working side by side to transform young children's lives.

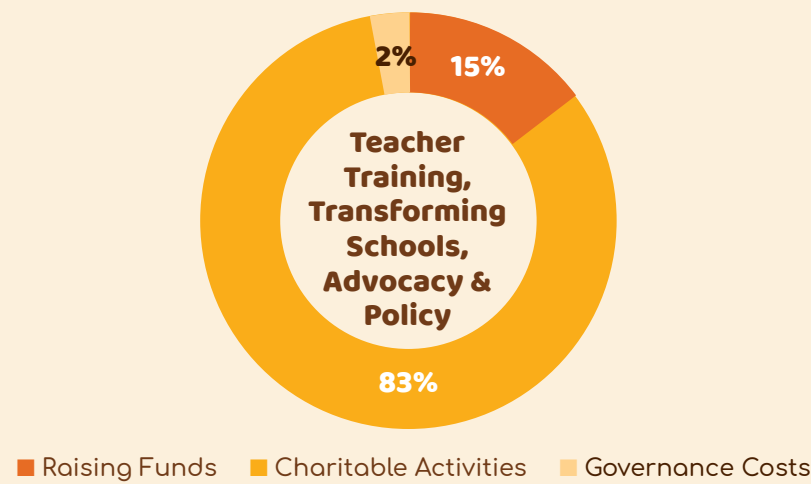
Finances

2020-2022

2020-22 Income: £2,335,134



2020-22 Expenditure: £1,795,860



For further detail on each financial year (20/21 and 21/22) please see our full Annual Trustees' Reports and Accounts. NB: Accounts for 21/22 not yet audited.

What's Next for Sabre?



As we reflect on the last two years, and the challenges faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we look to build on our achievements and goal of supporting Ghana to ensure universal access to quality kindergarten education for all children. Our key areas of focus for 2022/23 and beyond are:

Teacher Training

Continuing our direct teacher training work is crucial, as it allows us to continue to test and iterate our approach, ensuring that we provide the best possible model for the training of kindergarten teachers across Ghana. Key areas of focus for the next year are as follows:

- Complete our Transformational Teacher Training project in six districts in the Eastern Region.
- Work with the University of Education Winneba to deliver our districtwide training across two districts surrounding the university.
- Work closely with low cost private schools to ensure their teachers are also trained to implement quality play-based education for kindergarten
- Develop our hybrid online and face to face teacher training work

Transforming Schools

Our focus will be on scaling the impact of this work, to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn in an inspiring early years environment in the future.

- Launch our Transforming Classrooms Project, which will make low cost, high impact improvements to existing classroom infrastructure.
- Continue our work with the Funds & Procurement Management Unit of the Ministry of Education to co-create a new cost effective, child-friendly kindergarten school design that can be available for new school construction nationally.

Advocacy and Policy

Our continued engagement with government and key early childhood education stakeholders is key if we are to achieve our vision of providing a quality early years education to all children in Ghana, and beyond. We will:

- Roll out the unified national teacher training content in selected districts, enabling us to further test and refine the model.
- Develop further our Early Childhood Education (ECE) expertise, to ensure that our work continues to be underpinned by global ECE best practice and evidence.
- Share our experience of play-based early years education on national and international platforms, to support others in the sector implement quality play-based ECE
- Continue to engage with key education stakeholders including the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, the National Schools Inspectorate Authority, National Council of Private Schools, National Teaching Council, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, and NGOs in the education sector in order to further strengthen the ECE agenda in Ghana.



Thank you

We'd like to say a big thank you to all our donors, volunteers, partners and supporters from 2020-2022, with a special mention to:

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- David Main, Chair (UK)
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- UK Aid Direct
- Vitol Foundation
- The Waterloo Foundation

Ghana Government Partners

- Funds & Procurement Management Unit of MoE (FPMU)
- Ghana Education Service – National and Partner Districts
- Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC)
- Holy Child College of Education, Takoradi
- Ministry of Education (MoE)

- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA)
- National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NaSIA)
- National Teaching Council (NTC)
- OLA College of Education, Cape Coast
- Presbyterian Women's College of Education, Aburi
- Pre-tertiary Division of MoE
- SDA College of Education, Asokore
- University of Education, Winneba (UEW)

NGO/CSO & Programmatic Partners

- Chance for Childhood
- Innovations for Poverty Action
- Instill Education
- Right To Play

Corporate Supporters

- AECOM
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- Arup
- Bluefin Resources
- Book Aid International
- B1G1
- Deloitte D2international
- Oil Spill Response Limited (Ghana)
- Pelican Post
- Standard Chartered Bank Ghana
- ThirdWay Group/Tribe
- Tullow Ghana Limited

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- Ian & Betsy Coles
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- Jacqui Main
- Mayer Brown
- Sonya & Terry Hinton

Community Fundraisers

- Batavia High School Interact Club
- Hedia Henriette Mansah Dickson
- WMP Creative



We are proud to be one of the leading play-based early years education organisations in Ghana, working in partnership with the Government to show that a better education is possible for young Ghanaians.

A big thank you for the support from the Government and people of Ghana, our donors, partners, volunteers and friends.



You can find out more and make a donation on our website
www.sabre.education/get-involved

Or contact us at **info@sabre.education** | **+44 (0) 7443 677256**

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