

St Thomas' Catholic Primary School PTA AGM - 15th October 2019

Chairperson's Report

Thank you for coming to the PTA Annual General Meeting.

I would like to start by giving a quick overview of what we considered our main aims in this PTA over the past few years, and our successes and lessons learned. Tonight, we will be ending our term as PTA and handing over the reins to the next team that has kindly stepped up to the plate.

Main Aims

- to continue to raise funds to support the children in their learning, but also
- host fun events for children and parents
- build on the great community spirit of this school and work to share it amongst new families joining the school so the tradition is continued, encouraging the participation of families in the school.

We have raised more than £28,000 over our team tenure, which is a fantastic amount and so valuable in a time when school budgets are increasingly under great pressure. The core team as you see here are obviously essential in raising this amount of money, but the team are really only the tip of the iceberg. There is a whole army of people just below the surface who consistently supported us and the school in our endeavours.

There are many parents who have supported the PTA, by sponsoring ads in our brochures, offering prizes for raffles, baking for events, helped behind the scenes setting up stalls or clearing up afterwards or offered their time to run the stalls, sold raffle tickets, and of course attended the events. These events simply wouldn't happen without all these people.

We would especially like to thank Ms Stangroome & Mrs Loomes in the office for their endless patience collecting money, forms and pictures for the various events and activities as well as coordinating the distribution of raffle tickets/flyers to the children. Thank you to Mr Cowell for helping us set up/clear up and lug things up and down to the PTA shed for events. Fiona Sanday-Myers did such a wonderful job on all our posters & flyers over the past two years, and her professional talent was definitely a bonus when it came to selling ad-space in our various event brochures.

Of course, a big thank you to the two teams of reps we have had for the past two years. It has been a pleasure to work with you all!

Things that didn't work

- We were disappointed to cancel the Music Quiz which had been scheduled for May last year. Having completed a lot of prep, we then discovered we had only sold two tables! Some possible reasons suggested for the lack of interest was the fact that May was a busy month with bank holidays and First Holy Communions. Also, some parents in the school feel that not having English as their first language is a barrier to enjoying a quiz. The quiz is usually a popular and well attended event, but perhaps other social ideas could be explored too.

- At the end of September, the PTA hosted a welcome picnic for the new reception class. It had been agreed at Mrs Aquilina's suggestion, that we would invite the whole school this year. Due to inclement weather this event which had been scheduled for Longspring was moved to the school hall. The event was very poorly attended, with only four families outside the PTA coming. It has been suggested that perhaps the venue was the main cause of the low response, as some children are not keen to attend the school on a weekend. We would like to say a special thank you to Mrs Steyn and Mrs O'Keefe for providing all the entertainment for the children who were delighted to be making beaded bracelets and playing with Lego.

New this year

- As Katie mentioned, the Christmas card project worked really well last year, and will be happening again this year, using the same online process. The pre-school will also be taking part in this project for the first time this year. We always welcome feedback, and it has been suggested that the Christmas cards should be religiously themed. Also raised was the opportunity for two siblings to complete one template. We have passed this feedback on to Mrs Aquilina.
- Silent Auction at the Christmas party - Kat Farmer kindly organised the Christmas party once again last December and for the first time we ran a silent auction which raised £780, thanks to some leg work from the team to gather a small number of great prizes, and generosity of the parents on the evening itself.
- As we have mentioned before, fundraising is not the sole purpose of the PTA. There is not always a direct ratio between the effort required for certain events and the money they raise – this year, for example, we ran a welly & football boot sale which took a lot of organising and did not raise a large amount, but is a way to give back to parents who have the opportunity to buy these things at a very reasonable price. The school garden was another project, which in the past Mrs Steyn has done an amazing job with and in her absence this year we decided to recruit a team of volunteers and ask people to donate plants. It was great to see new parents joining in this initiative and the end result was lovely for the children, who were involved in watering and caring for the plants.

Recommendations for further fund raising

Increasingly corporate companies are offering charity donation matching schemes. Some companies offer pre-tax donations meaning depending on your tax bracket you could potentially increase your donation by 40% without spending anything extra or companies will match whatever donation you make within a limit they have set. As an example, we have a generous parent whose company donates £250 each year if she can demonstrate she has contributed to charity work, e.g. supporting the PTA which is a registered charity. There is definitely scope to explore this more and provide this information to parents in the school so they can become aware of this way to support their school, which can sometimes cost them nothing. The increase in funds raised via EasyFundraising demonstrates how effective communicating this information regularly to parents can be.

One of the largest areas of gain for us this year with through advertising sponsorship and really it was very positive how many local companies are willing to support our school, given the chance. Companies offer sponsorship money for ads, donate prizes for raffles and the supermarkets support local charities, including schools, in their token collections.

It just remains for me to say a personal thank you to my team, who have been amazing. Not just the support on a practical level; planning events, writing endless comms and counting all the money, but also keeping us sane & laughing through the tough bits. We wish the next team every success & hope they have lots of fun too.

Maeve Dunderdale

Chair of St Thomas PTA