

Chair's Report 2019-2020

This has definitely been a unique year and nothing could have prepared us for what 2020 would bring!

We started off strong, with a team of newly appointed Officers, launching immediately into the planning of the Christmas Fair 2019. This must have felt incredibly daunting for our new officers, especially as Clair and Sarah were reception parents, new to the school, the PTA and had never attended a Christmas Fair let alone, organise one!

However, the new team rose to the challenge and the Fair was a well-attended and organised event, with a great festive atmosphere! I will leave the details with regards to exactly how much money we made for Clair, our Treasurer, to provide in her Report, but the Fair raised an impressive amount of money!

We also organised the sale of Primary School Christmas cards, which is another lovely school tradition. We are grateful to Sabrina Whinnett, who organised this once again. We received good feedback about the ease of ordering and the fact that the orders were returned so quickly. We are hoping to do the same again this year, with the card packs due to go out later this week.

We also held a quiz night in the Spring term, which was organised and run by Veryan Whitworth and Eleri Salter. It was a really fun evening and everyone got into the competitive spirit – the winner's prize was a much coveted Covid Survival Hamper, although the losing team seemed equally delighted with their wooden spoon. What we didn't know then, was that this would be our last event for the foreseeable future, so I am glad that it went so well! We are hoping that Veryan will organise a virtual quiz night for us soon.

The Primary School Disco was another favourite event, which was enjoyed by the pupils – always a crazy afternoon – three discos from 3.30pm until 9.00pm and a lot of very sweaty, happy children! It's also an event which is good for people dipping their toes into the volunteering pool, as we need a lot of volunteers to adhere with the adult/children ratios required to safely run the Disco.

We booked the Odyssey Cinema in St Albans for our exclusive use on the February Inset day, however whilst those who came had a wonderful time, it was an event which generated a loss for us this year. Unfortunately, we think that ticket sales suffered by the fact that our choice of movie, Toy Story 4, came out on NOW TV and Sky as free movies! This has never been an event which generated significant profit for us, but is organised to be a great idea for something to do on a cold inset day and special to have the school community together. However, we cannot hold events that run into a loss either, so we will need to think about whether we will book to do this again in future. We will look at some alternatives we can run instead for next year.

Sarah Corpe organised the Mother's Day Flower Day Sale and we also hoped to hold a Krispy Kreme Donut sale in the playground, however, Covid 19 had other ideas, and both events had to be cancelled.

We were also looking forward to holding the Secondary Easter Egg Tombola, which is one of our favourite events, but again, due to lockdown, we had to cancel it.

Other popular events that were cancelled this year were the St Albans Half Marathon Marshalling and the Alban Arena Christmas Panto 2020.

Our focus had to move on from fundraising to supporting our school community at this difficult and worrying time. Sarah pulled out the stops to set up the Match Box Challenge, a free event, open to the primary phase, with a class prize of a £50 Amazon voucher to the class who collected the highest number of items in their matchboxes.

We thought that this would be a welcome activity for the children whilst in lockdown, although we had no idea then how long it would be before school could re-open fully. We are due to collect in the completed Matchboxes this week and are looking forward to seeing the designs and contents of the Boxes! Thank you Sarah, for such a fantastic idea and organising this for everyone! Sarah has also donated a brilliant prize to be awarded to the most unique design - a giant Percy Pig soft toy and huge jar of Percy Pig sweets!

We also used our Facebook page to push out some free activities for the children to complete whilst at home, and we found that the engagement with our Facebook page did grow over the lockdown period.

We are conscious that Covid 19 has had a financial impact on a lot of families. We also have to operate within the same restrictions that are imposed on the school presently, to minimise the risk of passing on the virus and to keep our community safe.

This has forced us to look at other fundraising ideas and change the focus of the PTA. This year we lost the opportunity to run our two most successful events in terms of fundraising, the Summer Fair and the Christmas Fair. These events usually generate approximately £10,000. We are fortunate to have money in our account to be able to meet some spending requests but we will need to run some smaller events if we are to maintain a steady income stream to allow us to continue to meet future requests. We also feel that more than ever, our focus needs to be on keeping our profile up and raising the school community spirit.

We have come up with some alternative fun events, which we hope will meet both of these goals. We have a virtual balloon race, a 20-4-20 Sponsored event for the whole Academy to participate in, a primary school calendar, a Christmas Hamper raffle, Bags to school collections, Virtual Quiz night, and a Christmas Tree competition.

As I am sure, Clair will elaborate more on, we are extremely proud of the investments that we were able to make into the school over the past year. The resources we are able to purchase for the school are the "icing on the cake" items – the things that bring wonder and excitement to the classroom. We have invested in almost every department of the school, and we are grateful to the teachers who have taken the time to attend our meetings to present their requests for funding. We enjoy hearing their bids, and it's a privilege for us to hear the passion which the teachers have in wanting to give our children an exceptional

education. Please keep your requests coming – this is the reason we work hard to raise the money! We also love seeing the equipment and resources we have paid for being used by the pupils, so please keep posting photos and tagging us in! It also really helps us to raise our profile with parents and encourage more involvement!

As with any Organisation, our success does not stem from the few, but by the very many helping hands we receive along the way.

Thank you to Ben Davies, a parent, who kindly offered to carry out an independent review of the PTA accounts, as required by the Charity Commission for the last financial year. This was due to the amount of money we raised that year. We are extremely grateful to him for donating his time to carry this task out! I think it took much longer than he initially expected!

We have a Second Uniform Shop which is run by parents for us. The Secondary School Uniform is organised by Sam Butcher and the Primary Second hand uniform sales are run by Nilima Padwardhan. Being able to purchase second hand uniform is an essential resource for many of us!

Thank you, Mr Gauthier for your continued support and trust in us! We enjoy a very good relationship with the school, who are incredibly supportive and grateful. I promise that we do not take this for granted and we appreciate it greatly!

Thank you, Mr Barry, who is our SLT link. You have been amazing! Despite how busy you are, you take the time to respond to our requests quickly and with good humour! We are very lucky to have you on our Team!

We are, as always, grateful to the Site Team – Nicky, Gary, Phil, and Liam. You work incredibly hard maintaining the school estate, and we know that we add to your work load, but we hope you know how much we appreciate everything you do for us and that we could not manage without you.

The Admin office help us with letters, printing, collecting in forms and donations. We appreciate that help enormously!

We are also extremely lucky to have an enthusiastic team of Class reps, who work hard pushing out our PTA comms to class groups, co-ordinating class collections and organising class stalls! I think that we all agree that the class stalls at the Fairs are always very impressive!

We are also very lucky to have parents and teachers who step up and give up their valuable time, to volunteer. We could not run events without you! We appreciate how busy everyone is, so we are very humbled when you give us your precious time.

As well as volunteers , we are also grateful for the support shown by parents and staff members– whether it is liking our social media posts, attending events and spending your money, your generous donations, buying those donations back, baking, making, stuffing

envelopes, chopping onions or sharing words of thanks and encouragement – it all helps and means such a lot! Together we are all building an incredible school community and enabling our children to enjoy the very best educational experience.

Lastly, I would like to thank you Clair, Sarah, Faith and Eleri! You have been an incredible team of Officers. I admire each of you for sacrificing your time and energy into the PTA.- Juggling work, young children, family life and the PTA. You always deliver, with good humour and great passion! We have worked well together as a team and I appreciate all your support, wisdom and hard work.

Marina McGee
Chair of the PTA
12th October 2020