

PTA Chair Report October 2018

I really can't believe that a year has passed since I sat here reading the last chair report, a busy year which has delivered far more than I ever dared to imagine. We have continued to develop as a team, welcoming our fabulous new treasurer Leena and have taken the PTA to another new level through an increased programme of events, delivering staggering profits.

In my report I am not going to talk about any financials in detail as Leena will present these to you after my attempted summary! I am going to start by looking back to the end of the 2016/2017 academic year. Marina and I were approached by the Academy Senior Leadership Team about raising money for the new 3G Astro Turf pitch planned for the Academy field, an exciting prospect which we both felt very strongly about supporting.

At the beginning of this academic year our first committee meeting focussed on just how we were going to raise the £10,000 requested for the pitch (an amount which interestingly increased over the months, didn't it Matt?!) as well as supporting other departments within the Academy. Following this meeting we launched our 'Pitch in 4 Pitches' campaign, our main fundraising focus of the year, with the agreed plan being to commit all of our funds raised from the Christmas Fair, Spring Fair and Colour Fun Run to this project as well as launching another initiative to specifically raise funds for this campaign. Importantly we also took the decision that all profits from events outside of these would go to other projects within the Academy.

Knowing that this year would need to be one of heightened activity we committed to running an increased number of events and trying new things. We ran our first Table Top Sale in October with the aim of testing the water to see if we could go on to relaunch the historic car boot sales, we didn't have the customers that we had hoped for on this occasion but do believe that it could go on to bigger and better things if the PTA organised the sales on a regular basis.

Music Bingo was our new event for November and what a success it turned out to be! It raised a healthy profit but more importantly pulled the SRA parent community together for a night of real unexpected fun.

My favourite event of the year, the Christmas Fair, took place on a gloriously cold but sunny December day. We had lots of parent and teacher volunteers and welcomed over 600 people through the door. The event had a lovely community feel and with the addition of an auction, grand draw and hamper raffle we delivered a profit of close to 50% greater than for the fair the previous year.

Just a few days later 250 people from Samuel Ryder Academy headed to the Alban Arena to see Aladdin in the panto that became our new event for December. My hands down PTA moment of the year came at this event, when the cast did a shout out for SRA, the cheer just went on and on and on, Marina and I stood arms around each other emotional after the Christmas Fair success and thought this is what it's all about. I was so proud to be a part of our school and to have delivered this for our community.

Leena has brought many fabulous things to this PTA, the most significant of which came from the fact that she couldn't quite tolerate the bureaucracy and inefficiencies of Natwest in the same way that Marina does. Although even Marina was pushed to the edge this year having tried to collect a float with a cheque payment from one small window being informed that the process had changed and being told she had to wait in the very long queue to counter service to cash the cheque, collect her £1,000 notes and take it back to the initial window a mere 2 metres away to exchange for her coinage!

So the start of 2018 saw us introduce a new PTA management system (PTA events) which without doubt has moved the PTA on to bigger and better things. It allows us to sell tickets for events online, significantly reducing our cash handling for the transparency and protection of our officers. It also enables us to manage and engage volunteers in a more organised manner. I also write and send newsletters through this platform on a weekly basis, giving us another method of reaching out to our community, with the introduction of GDPR we did take a hit on the number of customers that we can mail however this has steadily begun to increase again over recent months.

In February we held our inaugural Valentines Flower Sale for the secondary phase of the Academy, which made a small profit but more importantly gave us the opportunity to focus specifically on secondary students. We pulled out all of the stops but even Eleri donned with a suitably romantic heart shaped head piece didn't result in a huge number of sales! We hope that an event of this kind will remain in the PTA calendar going forward, perhaps with chocolates or cupcakes instead of flowers.

Later in February we used the PTA Events platform for the first time when our focus moved to primary students, we held the annual disco which was as popular as ever and the following day hired out the Odyssey cinema for a family inset day activity.

The start of March brought Mother's Day and the chance for all students across the academy to buy a plant for their Mums to say thank you for all that they do. Although some secondary phase students did buy flowers many of them did not have cash with them (or at least that's what they told us en route to the dining hall!), this got us thinking as to how we could integrate with the Academy system going forward. Following discussions with finance we have secured the ability to use the school payment system, whereby students will be able to purchase tickets for items at the school shop, moving forward this will hopefully allow students to participate in any events that they choose.

In the Spring we launched a programme to boost funds for 'Pitch in 4 Pitches', an initiative whereby families could sponsor a metre of Astro. Depending on the amount sponsored the participants name would feature on a bronze, silver, gold or platinum list on a plaque next to the Astro pitch to recognise their contribution and thank them for their support. This board is now being developed and will be sited over the coming weeks.

We celebrated Easter by running an Easter egg tombola for secondary students, an event which saw the hall packed for the whole one and a half hour lunch break and the students very excited at the prospect of winning chocolate eggs! For primary students we decided to trial the Silver Smarties initiative whereby all students were given a tube of smarties and asked to enjoy them but return the tubes after the Easter break filled with 20 pences, we received only 146 tubes back. All students

were entered into a prize draw no matter how few 20ps they donated, but still many didn't get on board with the scheme, and we even had a tube back filled with plastic money, just think how much this could have raised if everyone had got involved.

In May we proudly ran our most profitable Samuel Ryder Academy PTA event to date, the Spring Fair raised a staggering amount which simply would have not been possible without the help of dedicated committee members and a significant number of volunteers. In spite of the pouring rain it was a lovely community afternoon and feedback on the new layout and activities at the event has been incredibly positive. At this event, and for the first time, we had many more staff volunteers than parents, leading us to believe that once again we need to reach out to our internal community to further engage them.

We have begun the process of engagement of parents, particularly in the primary phase, by targeting some of our spending. We invested the money raised from the Silver Smarties initiative back into the primary school by purchasing two lovely round tables with attached benches. We also purchased some visible storage for outdoor play equipment. In addition we committed £1,000 to primary WOW moments, some of this has already been used to put on a lovely Royal Wedding Party for the children, to purchase ice lollies for the EYFS beach party, to engage an external company to put on an Egyptian Workshop for Year 5 students and to book a great fire of London experience for Year 2 students.

We have also had discussions with staff members around promoting PTA spend not only within the Academy but to parents as well. The more our community can see where we spend the money raised and how valuable it is to staff and students alike the more positive input we tend to have. A great example of this was the investment in the eggs / chicks earlier in the year which got the whole school community talking thanks to some excellent streaming of the hatching! We have also attended new to Year 7 events and new to reception events to reach out to the newer members of our community. I do not wish to dwell on it now but this year for the first time we have had to cancel three events, the spring ball and two world cup match screenings because of lack of interest, this highlights even further the importance of driving engagement with the PTA going forward.

Another highlight for me this year was the Colour Fun Run which we held in June, those close to me will no doubt laugh at this as they were also the ones to see the stress levels I experienced on the run up to this event even suggesting headlines for the Herts Ad newspaper article such as 'Colour Fun Run Finishes Off PTA Chair'. The event in which 135 people took part was another first for our PTA. Paint was ordered, medals sourced and arches hired and it shaped up to be another fun family event for our growing school.

Through all of these fun and engaging fundraising events and activities for students and families alike we have generated an income of £27,725 during this academic year, an approximate, however simply staggering 46% increase on the last academic year.

I am incredibly proud of this achievement. This extraordinary amount would not have been possible without all of our volunteers whose support, time and effort we are hugely appreciative of. Over the course of the next year it would be amazing to encourage even more people to volunteer for us, the sky then really would be the limit!

We have gone on to invest £23,377 back into the Academy. I will leave Leena to disclose the final figure but a significant portion of this money has been committed to the 3G Astro pitch. At this stage I would like to extend our thanks to Matt Pope, Ben Pike & Chris Walker from the SRA PE Department who ran the St Albans half marathon to support our fundraising for the 3G Astro pitch. The remainder of the funds have been committed to various projects within the Academy including funding of robots for the Maths Department, microphones for the Drama and Music Departments, investment in sixth form learning resources and the purchase of a high tech drum kit for the music department.

It is all very well me talking of all that we have achieved but without a certain few dedicated people none of this would have been possible.

Starting with our Academy staff, thank you to every single one of you, of which there have been many, who have given up your time to support us this year. Special thanks go to Steven Finn, once again you have embraced our craziness and in fact joined in with it, you have made so many PTA projects and events seamless (well kind of!), I will really miss working with you. Thank you also to you Matt for once again embracing all that we have tried to achieve and giving us the scope to grow this PTA and of course for cooking at countless BBQs. The site team, led by Nicky, have been amazingly supportive even when we've told them of events with a couple of days notice, they have remained in good humour and supported us along the way from setting out colour fun run routes to manning stalls and helping us tidy away at the end of some very long days. I also want to make a special mention for Christine Reig who always going above and beyond to help us with our Academy admin.

Thank you to all of our class representatives for the time that you have given up to organise stalls or events for us this year, we really couldn't do this without you.

My final thank yous (you'll be pleased to hear!) are reserved for our simply wonderful amazing committee who have kept me sane, made it fun and whom I'm honoured to call my friends.

Marina, I know that tonight is tough for you, but rest assured that everything that you have done for this PTA and I has not gone unnoticed, you've given up 6 years of days off to support this PTA having been in an officer position for most of this time. I applaud your commitment and say thank you on behalf of everyone in this Academy for all that you have done.

I would like to say thank you to Leena who really has made my life so much easier this year with her fantastic accounting let alone saving me from a world of unicorn stock and other craziness from Marina and Eleri.

I'm sad that Eleri couldn't make it tonight, but having spent 3 years in officer roles I think that she deserves the chance to work on her career! At least there will be no temptation for her to stand again, that said I'm sure she got voted in as chair over the telephone before, now there's an idea! Eleri has gone above and beyond for the PTA from wearing silly hats, to finding guest speakers she's done it all, even near on succumbing to an asthma attack for the cause during a particularly salubrious planning meeting in a somewhat dusty room at the back of the hall the night before the Spring Fair. Thank you Eleri!

Sarah, you've cooked so many BBQs and spent so many hours standing in extreme temperatures that your knees are giving way, that is true commitment to the cause. Thank you so much for your brilliant secondary take on all of our visions, the PTA has been far better balanced because of you.

Thank you to all of you fellow committee ladies for all that you have done and all of the laughs, you all truly rock.

So here they are, my final thoughts as SRA PTA Chair. Evidence of how far we have come was demonstrated a couple of weeks ago at the Open Evening, Eleri, Marina and I stood with Matt admiring the PTA stand, gone were the flowery PVC table cloth and yellow handwritten sign replaced with a pull up banner and flash embroidered table cloth.

Yet it is not really about how we look but about what we believe, we've believed in this Academy, in this PTA and in our children, we've worked hard, become experts in a variety of random things and dedicated many hours to what we believe in, this has led us to achieve all that we have over the last two years, of which I am incredibly proud.

It is with a heavy heart that I have decided it's time for me to move on but I know that I am leaving the PTA in a great place to be taken forward. I look forward to supporting the new committee into the next phase of the PTA journey. Thank you all for listening.

Michelle Miles