

Friends of St Mary's Chair's report 2022/23

Covering the school year ended 31st July 2023

Welcome to Friends of St Mary's – a registered charity and Parent, Teacher, and Friends Association.

Aims and purpose of the organisation:

Friends of St Mary's purpose is to fundraise to ensure the children at St Mary's can engage in activities which support and enrich their education, and assist in the provision of facilities and items not provided from statutory funds. We have a secondary function which is to develop and strengthen relationships between staff, parents and the wider community.

Background:

I joined the charity in September 2018, after the PTA disbanded and reformed as 'Friends of St Mary's'. I was elected as co-chair in September 2019, and continued as chair in 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Summary of the year:

We've been pleased to host and enable a number of activities, as well as funding items for the school.

Outdoor gym / play equipment has been our main fundraising focus this year, install date summer 2023.

The Willow Garden has been well maintained, and we have funded some more seating for the area.

Community interaction has been important to us. In September 2022 we hosted a Reception coffee afternoon, to help parents get to know each other. We also attended the welcome meeting for the new 2023/24 reception parents, provided refreshments and gave a talk to incoming families about the FOSM.

By way of **enrichment**, Friends of St Mary's organised a Christmas Fun Day which the staff brought to life! We funded an online pantomime for all children to enjoy, £350 worth of classroom gifts ('wet play' supplies at £50 per class), and provided activities, crafts, games and a small gift for every child.

We also funded the Year 6 leavers celebration, which benefits each child once they reach Y6.

Fundraising activities this school year (specific details of funds raised in treasurers report):

- ❖ **Christmas fun day** – We organised our third Christmas fun day, at the request of the school. This was well received, with non-uniform and activities including panto, games, crafts, and Santa. We made parental donations optional and included every child. Donations were down on the previous years, which is understandable as we also had our Christmas fair. It was meant as an alternative for the fair during Covid times, we may have to consider if it is appropriate to do both going forward.
- ❖ **Christmas fair** – we held our first Christmas fair since 2019, held on school grounds after school, with stalls, games, refreshments and a story with Santa. It was very popular and with match funding from Microsoft and HSBC we made a fantastic amount. The hall space was a little too small for a totally indoor event, so we have arranged to use the church hall for the next Christmas fair.
- ❖ **Raffles** – part of our Christmas fair profit came from a hamper raffle made of donated goods, which proved very popular. We also did a raffle at the summer fair, with cash and electronic prizes.
- ❖ **School disco** – Miranda and Peter McLean donated their time, expertise and disco equipment, to organise and run three school discos (R/KS1, Y3/4 and Y5/6) on March 31st. The uptake was fantastic and we had really positive feedback, we hope to run another at Christmas.
- ❖ **Silent Auction** – We have limited this to the summer fair as it is a lot of work, but a great fundraiser. Prizes are dependent on business donations, and the approach maximises funds raised.

- ❖ **Summer fair** was a brilliant fundraiser and community event. We offered a mix of free and ‘paid for’ activities We were delighted with the engagement that we got and had lovely feedback.
- ❖ **Frozen Fridays** – we did some ice pole sales after school which were well received in the hot weather. Thanks to Claire Turner for organising these.
- ❖ **Matched funding** – we were very fortunate to have received matched funding donations from Microsoft, HSBC and Barclays Bank this school year, delivering a significant boost to our fundraising.
- ❖ **Donated stock** – We had a fantastic donation of a pallet of various new, boxed toys from Mattel, we were able to sell them, passing on huge savings to school families, raising funds. We’ve also had some kind private donations of hand knitted baby clothes, and new toys, thank you very much.
- ❖ **Your School Lottery** – We launched a professionally run school lottery in April 2021 and it has continued to provide a steady income stream for us. We will promote this over the coming year.
- ❖ **Dress down days** – We’ve had three this year, two for £1 donation, and one for bottles.
- ❖ **‘Click through’ fundraisers** – we have continued to promote Easy Fundraising which generates income for the charity when people click through whilst doing online shopping.
- ❖ **The Ink Bin** – empty inkjet printer cartridges – has been set up in the school office. HP and Canon inkjet cartridges can give school up to £1.10 each.
- ❖ **Second hand uniform** – all donations gratefully received, we charge a token amount for fundraising. We’ve enabled families to access affordable uniform and worked with the school to assist those in need. Particular thanks to Miranda McLean for overseeing this throughout the year. Anyone with issues accessing uniform should contact us via the office, we may be able to help.

Committee update and thanks - We welcomed **David O’Driscoll** to our team this year.

- ❖ David took on the treasurer role this year, with the support of Lauren King our outgoing treasurer. He has been invaluable in keeping our records organised, and appears like a magician with floats for events, keeping everything running behind the scenes. Thank you David for joining our group.
- ❖ We say goodbye to **Lauren King** in July, as her youngest daughter leaves Year 6. Lauren has been a key member of the Friends of St Mary’s team since 2018, and has worked tirelessly to raise money for the school. Thank you for all your support Lauren, you will be very much missed.

Many thanks to the other key committee members –

- ❖ **Miranda McLean**, our vice chair, whose energy and enthusiasm have driven several projects forward this year - notably, the school disco, but also second hand uniform, silent auctions, planning for fairs and fun days, we’re very lucky to have you.
- ❖ **Tim Gornall** our secretary, who keeps us all organised and on track, chairing our meetings, keeping us accountable with minutes, and creating informative and enjoyable FOSM newsletters each term.
- ❖ **Anna Dixon**, who provides consistent and reliable support across the year, sharing ideas and thoughts, washing hundreds of soft toys for the fair, and playing a huge part in event planning.
- ❖ **Lucia Verona**, who is an experienced committee member, sharing thoughts, ideas and providing sense checks, also a key person throughout the planning and execution of the summer fair.
- ❖ **Naomi Gornall** for taking a professional lead on our communications, always helping when needed.
- ❖ **Claire Turner, Katherine Curry and Victoria Leavett**. Despite being new to the school in Reception this year, they have each been invaluable support with events, planning and organisation, and whether they meant to or not, have made themselves valued key members of the core team!

As well as the aforementioned, thanks must also go to:

- The PTA families - all the partners, children and family members who are so supportive and patient throughout any event we plan, getting involved / being co-opted whether they like it or not!
- All our fantastic school families, for everyone who has volunteered for us, run stalls, helped us to plan, for donating, attending, and spending money, and for all your support throughout the year.
- Mrs Berry, Mrs Measham, and all the brilliant school staff. We have been thrilled with all your volunteer support, just an hour of your time makes a huge difference when running an event.
- Sarita Ramos-Watts and Nicola Campbell, both previous chairs of the FOSM, and Denise Lavender, as their children leave Year 6. We appreciate everything you've done for the school and FOSM.

Finally thanks to Barclays Bank Ipswich, to HSBC, and to Microsoft, for their extremely generous match funding donations via their employees who have been parent volunteers this school year. We're very grateful and appreciate your support. If any families have employers that offer match funding schemes then please let us know, we can help you with the process and it can double the amount we raise.

Forward look for school year 2023/24

Succession planning – The chair would like to step down and hand the role over imminently. She is prepared to co-chair or to stay on the committee and provide a handover, but cannot continue in the role.

If you are interested in helping on a regular or occasional basis in any capacity, please get in touch with Marge Jessop via friendsofstmarysipswich@gmail.com. We have a group specifically for occasional volunteers where we advertise opportunities to help.

Community –

- Friends of St Mary's have a class rep for each year group who takes responsibility for forwarding PTA messages and gathering feedback from parents.
- In 2023 we welcomed the new 23/24 Reception intake at the school welcome evening, we may also hold a coffee morning for families.
- We would still like to pursue a community food bank idea.

Events and fundraising –

- We will continue to promote Easy Fundraising, InkBin printer cartridge recycling, and Your School Lottery, all of which are excellent low effort fundraisers. The school gets 40p of each £1 spent on the lottery, and there's a guaranteed St Mary's winner each week. There is also the option to donate your winnings. We'd love to increase supporters across 2023/24.
- The school disco was well received and we hope to run another one at Christmas.
- We also have a provisional date set for a Christmas event (a fair or similar - Wed 6th December).
- We will consider shelving the 'Christmas fun day' as it was intended to meet a need during Covid. We'll discuss keeping some of the elements – e.g. a pantomime, class gifts – but the purchasing and organisation is very resource intensive, and isn't as necessary now we have other Christmas events.
- We'll plan in some more non-uniform days, and will discuss a summer event at the AGM.

Outdoor equipment – this is fully funded and is now installed, which is amazing, so we will need a new fundraising focus for 2023/24, to be discussed at the AGM.

Funds to be allocated – see treasurers report for full details.

Marge Jessop (Chair)