

Friends of St Mary's Chair's report 2023/24

Covering the school year ended 31st July 2024

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 have continued as chair since then.

Summary of the year:

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

The playground history wall has been our main fundraising focus this year. The install date was January 2024 and this is our first time installing a FOSM purchase in advance of all funds being raised. St Mary's made payment, and the FOSM have paid it off across the school year, so all funds raised from Christmas and summer events have gone towards paying for this. It is an amazing weatherproof resource, available to all children and supporting many areas of the curriculum. We hope it will last for years to come.

Friends of St Mary's have also funded the purchase of **16 keyboards** for the music department, they are available for use across the school from Reception to Year 6, and it has broadened access for all students.

Community interaction and enrichment experiences have been important. We attended the welcome meeting for the new 2024/25 reception parents, provided refreshments and gave a talk to incoming families about the FOSM. We have organised Christmas and summer family events, a Christmas disco and a Play2Day school family event, and provided £350 for classroom gifts (updating rainy day toys) at Christmas. We also funded Y6 leavers books and party food, which benefits each child once they reach Y6.

Inclusion is also very important to us. Second hand uniform is always available for free or a minimal donation. Every child is included in our activities, we work with the school office to ensure this. We also operated a 'pay it forward' option with our school disco and were delighted with the uptake.

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

- ❖ **Christmas discos**– The wonderful McLean family donated their time and disco equipment to run Christmas discos (R, KS1, Y3/4 and Y5/6). These were really well received. Also thanks to the school office for enabling electronic payments, and to those who bought 'pay it forward' tickets.
- ❖ **Christmas fair** – we held our fair in the church hall on a Wednesday during school hours and after school. Thanks to the parish, Fr Jude, and Eleanor for offering the hall free of charge to our charity. All children were included and a great amount was raised, this was a lovely community event. Next year will be Sat 7th December at the church hall, thanks to Anna Dixon for booking this.
- ❖ **Raffles** – part of our Christmas fair profit came from hamper raffles made of donated goods, which proved very popular. We also did a raffle at the summer fair, with cash and donated prizes.
- ❖ **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.

- ❖ **After school sales** – we did an after school sale to get rid of excess sweets and drinks from the summer fair, also ice pops and second hand uniform.
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **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, some people have paid in advance.
- ❖ **'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 -

Many thanks to the key committee members and volunteers –

- ❖ **Miranda McLean**, our vice chair, who never stops! Notably this year she single handedly organised the Play2Day event, put on four discos in one day, and was a key part of all other events.
- ❖ **David O'Driscoll** our treasurer, who has kept us organised and on track, watching over the money, keeping the bank in check, and making sure we have enough cash and funds for every situation.
- ❖ **Tim Gornall** our secretary, who has organised and chaired our meetings, kept us accountable with minutes, and created informative and enjoyable FOSM newsletters each term.
- ❖ **Anna Dixon, Claire Turner and Lucia Verona** who have all made very significant contributions to the PTA, always helping, sharing great ideas, and playing a huge part in event planning and prep.
- ❖ **Naomi Gornall, Peter McLean, Gavin Turner, Luke Dixon, Victoria Leavett, Heidi Copping, Ed Packard, Scarlett McMurtry, Gabrielle Shefford, Abbie Battley, Romilly O'Driscoll, Kat Curry, Sally Drinkell and Lizzy Redshaw** must also receive special thanks for making key contributions to the PTA effort and activities, we are very lucky to have volunteers like you who go above and beyond.

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, becoming involved 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.
- **All of the brilliant school staff.** We have been thrilled with all your volunteer support, it makes a huge difference when running an event. The office has made it much easier for us by enabling online payments, and all staff support us on the ground when people bring things in and have questions, collecting raffle tickets etc. We are very grateful to all of you.
- Finally thanks to **Barclays Bank Ipswich, to HSBC, and to Microsoft**, for their extremely generous match funding donations via their parent volunteer employees this school year. We're very grateful and appreciate your support. If any families have employers that offer match funding schemes then we can help you with the process and it can double the amount we raise.

Forward look for school year 2024/25

Succession planning – Marge Jessop (Chair) will be stepping down as chair for her daughter's final year. She will 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 will take responsibility for forwarding PTA messages and gathering feedback from parents to use for the future.
- In 2024 we welcomed the new 24/25 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 but need someone to take it forward.

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 2024/25.
- The Christmas disco was well received and it would be good to plan in another disco, possibly in autumn or spring to avoid clashing with the Christmas and summer events.
- Play2Day was also an excellent low effort fundraiser, and we should plan in one or two a year.
- We also have a date set for a Christmas event (Sat 7th December). May consider external stalls or a longer opening time, because we may struggle with school volunteers due to the busy season.
- We'll plan in some more non-uniform days, and will discuss a summer event at the AGM.

IT equipment – We have agreed to part fund 32 iPads, a charging trolley, pens and keyboards – the total cost (less VAT) is £11,212. The school can provide 6k in capital funding and they would like the PTA to cover £5212. They would like to get them ordered now for in use in September, school will pay up front and we would return the funds as they are raised, potentially in instalments across three school years.

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

Marge Jessop (Chair)