

**Friends of St Mary's Chair report 2019/20**  
**Covering the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020**

Welcome to Friends of St Mary's Parent, Teacher, and Friends Association.

Aims and purpose of the organisation:

Friends of St Mary's is a registered charity. Our 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 group in September 2018, along with many of the other committee members, when the PTA disbanded and reformed as 'Friends of St Mary's'. I took over the role of chair in September 2019 supported by the outgoing chair Nicola Campbell.

Summary of the year:

The first half of the year was very promising, we had good fundraisers, and in January we ran a questionnaire for parents and got a great response, with many different ideas for activities going forward. The second half of the year, less so – since March 2020 our fundraising and community activities have been curtailed due to COVID 19 restrictions.

Between March and July the FOSM offered the school the option to request funds for anything they felt might help the children with connections and distance learning. The school acknowledged the offers and will consider for any future periods of distance learning.

Funding the redevelopment of the Willow Garden has been an ongoing project and main success, with thanks to our governor Chris Griggs for obtaining grants and donations specifically for this purpose. The area is now securely fenced off, and Pentagon Play have installed fantastic wooden play equipment which has proved to be a great hit with the children. It supports outdoor learning and gives extra options during break times, particularly now when useable space is at a premium.

FOSM have also funded coaches, bibles, and the Year 6 leaver's books.

We welcomed Lauren King as new treasurer this year, she has done a fantastic job keeping us on track. Thank you Lauren. We say goodbye to Rosemary Mason, our co-secretary, who has moved schools, and to Claudia Kelly who has chosen to step back from committee activity this year. Thanks to Rosemary and Claudia for all you have done for the PTA this year. I would also like to thank Barbara Pink for taking care of secretary duties all year. Barbara will continue on the committee but is stepping down from secretary duties.

### Fundraising activities this school year (specific details in treasurers report):

- ❖ Christmas fair - Our Christmas fair was project managed by Rosemary Mason and the event was a great success, with £1,790.78 profit being raised. Thanks to all the committee members who supported this: Barbara, Claudia K, Claudia M, Rimante, Anna D, Lizzy, Lucia, Lauren, Suzy, Nicola, Naomi, Bijoy, and Sarita. Thank you to all the volunteers who gave up their time to help with sorting, ticketing, on the day to run stalls, or helping to set up and clear up. Finally thanks to Francesco's hair salon for sponsoring the event.
- ❖ Low-effort fundraisers – we have promoted Easy Fundraising this year, and also set up Amazon Smile in February. These are 'click through' cashback sites to raise funds.
- ❖ Bags 2 School – we have managed two sets of collections this year, thanks to Elena Biondi for organising Bags 2 School.
- ❖ Dress down days – we had two dress down days this year, raising £290.41 along with donations for the Christmas fair bottle stall. Thanks to Anna Dixon, Claudia and others for organising and collecting donations on the day.
- ❖ Hamper raffles - Thanks to Sarita Ramos-Watts for creating beautiful hampers to be raffled at Christmas and on Mother's Day. The Mother's Day hampers were being raffled whilst we were on the verge of lockdown, hence the lower takings.
- ❖ Second hand uniform - Thanks to Denise Lavender and Lucia Verona for handling the second hand uniform sales despite challenges presented by Covid 19 restrictions. This is a service to school families, we strive to provide affordable access to uniform.
- ❖ Colouring competition – This was held in January as a one-off to distribute a raffle prize that was received after the Christmas Fair, and was well received, thanks to Emma Dowsing for helping with the arrangements for this.
- ❖ Donations - In January we were very fortunate to get a large donation of off-season stock from Poundland Ipswich, comprising sweets, Christmas themed wrapping, activities and decorations. We had intended this to support 2020 Summer and Christmas fairs but will find other uses for it. Any edible stock in date for 2020 has been donated to FIND Ipswich, to avoid it going to waste.
- ❖ Santa's visit - We organised a visit from Santa, providing a small gift for each child and a set of 'rainy day' toys for each class – this was a different approach from previous years and feedback indicates this was well received. Thank you Claudia Kelly for taking beautiful class photos, and to Claudia Marco and Barbara Pink for assisting with the preparations.

## Forward look for school year 2020/21

### **Committee named roles and volunteers –**

The current situation means we cannot meet in person and there is no PTA presence on the school grounds. The danger is that newer parents will not become involved – I suggest we publicise any meetings we have in the school newsletter, as people may feel more able to log in and find out more. We will need to strive to be inclusive of all parents and carers.

This year has also brought into focus the need for succession planning, particularly for the named roles. We don't have many people 'waiting in the wings' to take over.

Naomi is vice chair so that we have a 'named' person to allow us to operate, but she would ideally like someone who is able to invest in the role. The previous treasurer wanted to step back during 2018/19, but continued just to allow us to operate.

We have been extremely fortunate to recruit Lauren King as treasurer, and she has done a fantastic job this year. Going forward we will need to keep in mind the demands of the named roles and potentially have people shadow, with a view to taking over the following year. The bottom line is that without sufficient volunteers for the named roles, the organisation cannot operate.

**Willow Garden** – redeveloping this will continue to be the main focus of our funds raised. Over the summer the lower Willow Garden has been cleared, and the aim is to get it planted and designed this school year. It would be lovely to make it a real group effort and volunteers from the school community will be welcomed.

We note that the kind donation from the Jesus and Mary Convent is contingent upon a statue of St Claudine being present in the garden. We also hope to fund the redevelopment of the pond and other outside areas to maximise the outdoor space available to the school.

**Events and fundraising** - We do not expect to be able to hold events any time soon, this may change as the school year progresses. We intend to promote the low effort fundraisers - Amazon Smile and Easy Fundraising. We'd also like to start a 100 club or school lottery.

We will not be able to offer Christmas cards this year as both we and the school feel it will be too difficult. The same will go for a Santa visit, the situation is too uncertain to commit to this. As an alternative, we could offer each class a budget to purchase some new play items at Christmas.

**Funds to be allocated** – At 31.07.20 we have a balance of £11,186.36 in the account, of which £1,337 is ring fenced for the Willow Garden development. This leaves a balance of £9,849.36. Aside from ring fenced money and an agreed 'buffer' amount, we should aim to spend the funds in the year that it's raised, and to work with the head and the school to do this.

Finally, a huge thank you to everyone who has supported Friends of St Mary's fundraising this year, your contributions have been very much appreciated.

Marge Jessop (Chair)