

Friends of St Mary's Chair's report 2021/22

Covering the school year ended 31st July 2022

Welcome to Friends of St Mary's – a 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 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 and 2021/22.

Summary of the year:

It's been clear to see everyone's delight, post Covid, at being together as a community. We've been pleased to host and enable a number of activities, as well as funding vital equipment for the school.

The Willow Garden project is now complete. This year, Friends of St Mary's have funded benches, wooden animal shaped seats, bug hunting equipment, and bug houses to encourage the wildlife. The McLean family built a wonderful bug hotel out of reclaimed materials, and donated it to the school, we'll use this saving to fund a sun dial for the children to use as a learning tool. All classes, and the after school club, are now using the space. The children play hide and seek, water the plants and hunt for bugs – it is a wonderful area to explore and has really broadened options for lessons and playtime. We hope to provide tours for parents in the coming school year. Also the area will need weeding and maintaining outside of the school's contract, so any volunteer gardening help is very much appreciated.

The pond area project will also be delivered by September 2022. Friends of St Mary's have funded the installation of a patio area and weather proof benches and tables. There will be bark chippings surrounding the patio, and mats for the children to kneel / lay on when pond dipping. We're delighted that this area is now a useable space for the classes and after school club.

Community interaction has been important to us. In October 2021 we hosted a Reception and KS1 coffee afternoon, to help parents get to know each other. This was well attended and well received, we hope to do more of these in the coming year. We also attended the welcome meeting for the new 2022/23 reception parents, where we 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 teachers and TA staff kindly brought to life! We funded a screening of a Christmas pantomime for all children to enjoy, provided £400 worth of classroom gifts of 'wet play' supplies, toys and games (£50 for each class and the after school club), and provided activities, crafts, games and a small gift for every child.

In January 2022 we provided £700 (£100 per class) for books to supplement the reading corners. We also funded the Year 6 leavers books and festival catering, which will benefit each child once they reach Y6, and on the hottest day of the year we kept the children cool by bringing in ice pops as a summer treat!

Finally, we have invested in **equipment for the charity**. We purchased an electronic coin sorter to make best use of volunteer and treasurer time. We have also updated the PTA shed, shelving and storage facilities this year. This will benefit the school for years to come, allowing us to sort and store second hand uniform, other general donations, and event equipment safely and securely on site.

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

- ❖ Christmas – As Covid restrictions were still in place in December 2021, we opted for a second Christmas fun day, and an outdoor Christmas stall to sell some of the Christmas stock. The Christmas fun day was well received, with non-uniform and activities including panto, games, crafts, and Santa. We wanted all children to enjoy the day so made parental donations optional. We were delighted that this approach was successful, and families donated only what they could afford.
- ❖ Raffles – in December we carried out a hamper raffle with donated goods, which proved very popular. We also had a second raffle in June as part of the summer fair, with cash and electronics prizes plus donated prizes. These were popular with the school families and a good fundraiser.
- ❖ Silent Auction – this is a new fundraiser for 2021/22 and has been very well received in December and June. Prizes are dependent on business donations, and the approach maximises funds raised.
- ❖ Tea towels – we tried whole school tea towels this year. They were very popular but we need to ascertain minimum quantities if we do it again, to make sure we don't have a lot left over.
- ❖ Summer fair was a brilliant fundraiser and community event. We were delighted with the engagement that we got and had lovely feedback. We offered a mix of free and 'paid for' activities, and after such a long time apart it was fantastic to be together as a school community.
- ❖ Frozen Fridays – we did a couple of ice pole sales after school which were well received in the hot weather. Thanks to Miranda and Peter McLean for the loan of their freezers.
- ❖ Matched funding – we were very fortunate to have received match funding donations from Microsoft and Barclays in December and in June, 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. The school gets 40p of each £1 spent, and there's a guaranteed St Mary's winner each week. There is also the option to donate your winnings which some families have chosen to do. We'd love to increase supporters across the 2022/23 school year, but are not pushing it too hard because of the cost of living situation at the moment.
- ❖ 'Click through' fundraisers – we have continued to promote both Easy Fundraising and Amazon Smile, which generates income for the charity when people click through whilst doing online shopping. Please use if you can.
- ❖ 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 school office, we may be able to help.

Committee update and thanks - We welcomed Miranda McLean and Tim Gornall to our team this year.

- ❖ Miranda is our vice chair and has brought many fresh ideas to the group. She has worked incredibly hard, including sourcing prizes for silent auctions, planning, shopping, putting together hundreds of portraits for tea towels, selling Christmas stock, second hand uniform, and several ice pole sales.
- ❖ Tim is our secretary and has been a great asset to the group. He has kept us organised with regular meetings, making sure we're focused, doing all the minutes, creating very professional termly newsletters to keep the community updated on our activities, and building storage for our shed.

Both Tim and Miranda were also pillars of the summer fair committee, and we're very lucky to have them on board, thank you both very much for joining us.

Many thanks to the other key committee members –

- ❖ Lauren King, our incredible treasurer, who has worked tirelessly to keep us organised and legally compliant, kept the funds under control, and oversaw so much of the fun day and fair prep.
- ❖ Anna Dixon, who is invaluable support, showing up for every non uniform collection and donation run, washing hundreds of soft toys for the fair, and playing a huge part in the summer fair planning.
- ❖ Lucia Verona who has been a consistently active committee member, especially with her contributions to the planning and execution of the school summer fair.
- ❖ Naomi Gornall who has been fantastic, showing up for all the events and contributing to the considerable preparations, and taking a lead on our class communications.

Also thanks to the PTA families - all the spouses and children who are so supportive and patient throughout any event we plan, getting involved whether they like it or not!

As well as the aforementioned, **thanks must also go to all our fantastic school families**, for everyone who has volunteered for us, for donating, attending, and spending money, and for your support throughout the year. **Thanks also to Mrs Berry, Mrs Measham, and all the brilliant school staff** for your support as well. We were thrilled with all the volunteer support, even an hour of your time makes a massive difference.

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

Forward look for school year 2022/23

Volunteers – We are delighted to welcome David O'Driscoll to the team. David has volunteered to act as Treasurer for the coming school year, and will be nominated to run during the next AGM (barring any other candidates coming forward). Thanks to Lauren King for her invaluable help over the last three years. Lauren will continue on the committee for her daughter's last school year, and provide a hand over.

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 2022 we welcomed the new Reception intake at the school welcome evening, and we will hold a welcome coffee morning for the new Reception parents in the first weeks of term, and general coffee mornings in conjunction with the school.

Events and fundraising – Lauren has continued to promote Amazon Smile and Easy Fundraising, and I have continued to promote the school lottery, both of which are excellent low effort fundraisers. Miranda has kindly offered to look into running a school disco with support from other volunteers. We hope to hold another Christmas fun day, possibly alongside a Christmas event, and some more non-uniform days.

Outdoor equipment – this is likely to be our primary fundraising focus for the 2022/23 school year.

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

Marge Jessop (Chair)