



## Welcome!

Welcome to the 2020 St Thomas' PTA annual report, which looks back at what we have achieved in the past school year and looks forward to the academic year ahead.

The main objective of the PTA is to enhance the education and experience of all children at St Thomas'. This is done through developing relationships between the staff, pupils and parents. We organise events which help to build community spirit and also through providing facilities within school which would not usually be provided by the local education authority.

## Committee

During the year, the key officers of the PTA were Rhian Greaves (Co-Chair), Laura Nadel (Co-Chair), Angie Pollard (Secretary), Rebecca Judson (Treasurer) and Sarah Morley (Communications Officer), together with elected committee members. All staff and parents of pupils at the school are automatically general members of the PTA.

## Approach in 2019/20

You will all no doubt have read Mrs Morris' recent letter following the announcement of her decision to retire. In it, she described the exponential growth of St Thomas', from a small one form entry school, to the largest Primary in Stockport. That growth places a huge demand on PTA funding as class numbers increase. We are supporting more coaches to the pantomime and more leavers' hoodies than ever. But that growth also presents real opportunities and untapped potential for the PTA to explore within the School community.

As a committee, this year we have been committed to harnessing those possibilities but also to ensuring the PTA has the infrastructure and systems needed to be able to positively contribute to the ongoing development of our wonderful school.

With that in mind, we set ourselves three key objectives:-

1. **Formalise the PTA's activities to create a consistent and professional approach:** this is certainly the least glamorous of our aims for the year and is still a work in progress.

Examples of the tireless work that has been done include:-

- a. consistent email communication via the school at the end of each week;
- b. gathering and analysing feedback from events and initiatives to understand what has worked well, what has gone less well and where we can avoid wastage (of time and money);
- c. setting up template risk assessments centrally stored for events and fundraising initiatives;



- d. formalising the constitutional position;
  - e. regularly meeting with the senior leadership of the school and feeding back at PTA meetings.
2. **Increase engagement across the school community:** like many PTAs, we have a huge school community but had historically found it was often the same faces that volunteered for each event.

During the course of the year, we have looked at ways to encourage more involvement with the PTA, basing our approach on the findings of the PTA survey that was carried out in the 2018/19 academic year. Personally, I also fell back on my own experience of running the Luxury Raffle with class friends.

The focus has been to encourage everyone to do a little to contribute to the whole. In doing this, we hoped to persuade families to offer what they could in terms of time, expertise and connections, doing what they can, when they can to support the PTA. In short, to attempt to banish the perception that active PTA members are those with too much time on their hands; I can tell you that is not the case at all!

The stand out success in this respect was the amazing inaugural Bubbles and Bingo event, run by the parents of Mrs Mellor's class. The event raised a stunning £1,436 but also created a real camaraderie amongst a group of new parents who had previously not met. Many had never been involved in a PTA event before and yet finished the night happily committing to run the bingo event again in the future.

Like so many things, this initiative has been curtailed due to the current restrictions but we think it remains a vital component of a successful PTA for St Thomas' going forwards.

3. **Explore alternative funding sources:** the PTA had previously not looked to third party funding in any structured way. I was keen to address this and one of my first proposals, accepted by the PTA, was to create a new position for a Corporate Funding Officer. The role would look at available grants, corporate funding and sponsorship opportunities to help raise further sums for the benefit of the children. When this idea was first discussed, we could not possibly have imagined that we would find someone as committed and professional as Joanne Hayes to fill the post.

The importance of this revenue stream cannot be underestimated and is likely to become increasingly key to the PTA as the ability to fundraise has been considerably impacted by the pandemic.



It is important at the AGM to mark quite how far we have come in this respect. Joanne has put in an immense amount of work and has enjoyed real success that is already benefitting the pupils on a daily basis. With that in mind, I have asked Joanne to report separately to the AGM but wish to place on record my thanks for all of her efforts this year. She has certainly set the standard and provided a really sound foundation from which we can build on the initiatives she has identified.

### **Events and initiatives**

It is right to note that like so many aspects of our lives, the Coronavirus pandemic has had a negative impact on the PTA. We lost half of the last academic year to the lockdown and along with it our major fundraisers; the Summer Fair and the Luxury Raffle.

However, it wasn't all bad news! You have already heard about the hugely successful Bubbles and Bingo night and we also saw the return of the Christmas Fair, which was very well received by all who attended. The PTA felt it was important that we attempt to bring the school community together to celebrate Christmas. In planning, we took on board the criticisms and concerns of previous years and adopted a more simplistic but no less festive approach. It was amazing to see so many new PTA volunteers involved too. We had hoped to build on this success in December 2020 but unfortunately that won't now happen. However, the Christmas fair will be back and better than ever in 2021!

Away from fundraising activities, the PTA has also sought to contribute positively to the school experience in other ways:-

- Angie Pollard conceived of and instigated the costume swaps for the nativity performances and World Book Day, which helped to reduce the costs involved for our families but also contributed to the recycling of costumes that might otherwise have been discarded; definitely a good thing! Angie has also spent hours on attempting to return those identical blue jumpers to their rightful owners. A thankless but much needed task for which I know we are all grateful!
- We have continued to try and bring class groups together through the PTA Ambassadors who help to cascade information via class WhatsApp groups. The PTA Facebook and Instagram pages are also invaluable in this regard and my special thanks to Sarah Morley for her continual updates to these platforms.
- As the conduit between the School and the parent group, it was a privilege to be able to express the sentiments of our families in thanking all staff at the school for their amazing efforts during those very early and frightening days of the pandemic.

### **How the money has been spent**

The PTA has continued to support the school through the regular donations that are made annually. We also set aside funding specifically to mark the occasion of the Year 6 pupils leaving the school to begin their high school journeys. Unfortunately, the planned Ten Pin Bowling trip had to be



cancelled due to Covid19 but we were able to provide party bags and treats for each class leavers' party, which the children loved.

This year, we have continued to contribute to the improvements to the Early Years and KS1 outdoor provision. It was one of the highlights of lockdown walks to see the new pergola being erected in the playground. Large enough to accommodate a whole class, it will be wonderful to see this new addition in full use as the weather improves.

Whilst the pergola is clearly an impressive addition to the playground, there has rarely been more job satisfaction for a PTA Chair than seeing the children's faces as they enjoyed the bright new playground markings, also funded by the PTA. That alone made all the hours worthwhile!

There have also been some really valuable additions purchased via our new corporate funding initiative which Joanne's report covers in more detail.

In the year ahead, we will continue to work closely with the School's Senior Leadership Team to identify how best we can support the needs of the children with the focus remaining on improving the outdoor learning experience at both sites.

### **Thank you!**

There are too many people to thank by name but my special thanks to the committee, together with:-

- Polly Hammerton and Julie Hanson: Christmas cards
- Jen Cleary and Claire Hyde: magnificent efforts at the Christmas Fair!
- Nick Prince: the Diamond Dogs were an amazing hit at the Fair
- Adele Burns: Terracycle
- Hayley Mayer: clothing collection
- Emma Fowler and Barbara Fisher: Christmas wrapping
- Claire Hagger: organising the leavers' hoodies

My thanks also to anyone who has run a stall, collected old clothing, saved crisp packets, contributed a tombola prize or bought a mince pie at the nativity. Each and every one of you is appreciated.

I would also like to thank our key staff contact, Mr Campen, whose accommodation, patience and good humour (particularly at very stressful moments) is always welcome!

### **Future plans**

Looking ahead, we have agreed a trimmed down programme with the school for the coming term. The Smarties Challenge will swing into action soon, Christmas cards will be designed imminently and the Luxury Raffle makes a festive return.



We hope the New Year will bring a vaccine, good health for us all and an easing of restrictions. Certainly as a group, we have ambitious plans for the year ahead and in particular the Summer Fair and we look forward to realising some of these aims, circumstances permitting.

In the meantime, please do whatever you can to support the PTA's work. Amazon Smile and Easy Fundraising represent particularly useful opportunities for us; allowing families to shop online and contribute to the PTA, all without spending any extra money. Please head over to the PTA section of the school's website to find out more about how you can support in this way.

**Rhian Greaves**

PTA Co-Chair 2019/20

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