



A big HELLO from the PTA!

We feel a bit like we've disappeared this year! With so many of our main events cancelled, you'd be forgiven for thinking that The Firs PTA was another COVID casualty! But fear not, dear reader, you can't get rid of us that easily! We are very conscious, though, that we haven't even introduced ourselves to new parents in Saplings and Pine, so we thought we'd give you a quick update (Years 1-4 please keep reading too!).

So here's the thing: **YOU are a member of The Firs Lower School PTA.** Purely by being a parent or carer of a child at The Firs, you're in the club. Lucky you! All you have to do next is decide how much you want to get involved and how much feelgood factor you can handle when your child comes home to tell you that:

I get to go to my first Disco!

The PTA bought us a new sandpit!

The PTA gave me a Christmas present!

I felt a bit sad at lunchtime, so I sat on the [PTA] buddy bench and found a friend, and we played together with the [PTA] skipping ropes

Mummy said the Firs Ball was the most brilliant night in Ampthill

Don't worry, Mum, my school trip isn't too much money because the PTA are contributing

I had so much fun at the Panto [that the PTA put on for us]

I won the [PTA] Easter Egg Raffle!

I'm sooooo excited for Movie Night!

Science week was the best week ever at school - the teachers worked so hard and the PTA paid for the extra equipment that brought it to life

Maths is so cool now with the new Maths equipment that the PTA bought us

I get to have swimming lessons because the PTA paid for the coach to get us there!

I did my ICT lesson on one of the [PTA] Chrome books today

Today we did cooking and used the [PTA] oven

I went up a reading level and am now on pink [PTA] RWI books!

Back in July, so many of our Year 4 leavers cited PTA events as some of their favourite memories of their time at The Firs: The Fun Run, Bedtime Stories, the parade at Gala Day, the discos and film nights and the Christmas craft fair were all mentioned in their (PTA funded!!) Leavers' Book. These are the things that memories are made of, and the things that help make for a happy childhood & school experience - our mission as a PTA is to **'Enhance our children's experience of The Firs Lower School, through events, experiences & funding for equipment'**.

Of course all this takes a lot of work. Over the last few years, we've built a very dedicated committee team with an army of events helpers who are called in to help at specific events throughout the year. Without these people, none of the things mentioned above would be able to happen, and we wouldn't have been able to contribute **£35,000 to the school over the past 3 years**. Our current committee have children in Year 3, and have all served on the committee for 3 years now, meaning they cannot hold another term. Danine (Chair), Angela (Treasurer) and Jo (Secretary) will all be stepping down this year, but will still be in the PTA as helpers and to give advice and guidance to the new committee until their children leave the school in July 2022.

Helen Pearson, our current Events Secretary, has happily agreed to remain on the committee, but we need to build a trusty team around her to keep the magic happening. The most important part of the PTA is our army of volunteers - the Fun Run alone took more than 50 volunteers to make happen. See overleaf to see how you can get involved...

If you'd like to chat to anyone about getting involved, please get in touch via email firslowerpta@gmail.com or speak to any of these people: Danine Maskill (Child in Y3), Angela Abbott (Child in Y3), Jo Freeman (Child in Y3), Helen Pearson (Children in Y3 & Saplings), Tanya Moffett (Children in Y1 & Y3), Rebecca Ellis (Children in Y3 & Saplings), Heidi Woodhead (Child in Y4) or Vicki McQueen (Children in Y2 & Pine).

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED: The Roles of our PTA

CHAIR - A communicator & people person

The Chair provides leadership for the committee, sets the agenda for meetings and manages meetings in line with the agenda. They are the main liaison with the Headteacher, and the final decision maker. The Chair should make sure everyone's voice is heard, that everyone feels welcome and should strive to get others involved.

SECRETARY - An organiser & communicator, with good written skills

The Secretary is responsible for ensuring effective communication links between the PTA and the school. They provide a link with the school secretary, deal with correspondence and arrange meetings. The role requires good organisational and communication skills and being able to stick to deadlines, take minutes and keep actions moving. The Secretary will make arrangements for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and help the Chair prepare the annual report. They manage the Facebook page and write updates like this one. They champion the work of the PTA and strive to get others involved. They also deputise for the Chair wherever necessary.

EVENTS SECRETARY - An organiser & communicator, with good PC skills

We split the secretary role last year to make it more manageable. The Events Secretary manages the administration of all PTA events. This involves liaison with the Events Officers on the requirements for an event and with the Secretary to ensure that communications are timely and relevant. They prepare letters, flyers, posters, tickets etc. for events, collate responses for events and co-ordinate rotas for volunteers for events. A good role for someone who's around at school drop off / pick up.

TREASURER - A numbers person

A key role for all committee members is to manage and control the funds the PTA raises. Although all the committee members have equal responsibility for the control and management of PTA funds the Treasurer plays an important part in helping the committee carry out these duties properly. They will manage any banking, bills & receipts and maintain up-to-date records of all PTA financial transactions, so a love of excel is an advantage! This role *could* be taken on as a 'back seat' role by someone who's not able to commit to all meetings etc, but wants to help out.

EVENTS OFFICERS - A good organiser

Events Officers contribute at meetings with their opinions and ideas, representing those in their year groups. They take responsibility for making individual events happen - with a team around them, but organising things that need to be ordered (for eg. a Film Night Event Officer would sort out the movie, order in the hot dogs, crisps, fruit etc and liaise with the events secretary to issue tickets and finalise numbers and volunteers). For a bigger event (like the Fun Run), two or three people would share this responsibility (we split out food, drink, stalls, entertainment etc). We have 'How To' instructions for each of our regular events, so you would not be expected to start from scratch!

EVENT VOLUNTEERS - all and everyone

If you can't commit to meetings but are happy to help at events, this is for you. This might be an hour or an afternoon of your time to help serve drinks & hotdogs, run a stall, sell raffle tickets, cook a BBQ, encourage dancing at the Pineys' first disco or stand guard at a gate so kids don't escape!!

YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE

It's important to remember that you're never alone in any of this - there will always be a team of people around you to help and advise and make things happen. We have a lot of fun organising and running events. Most meetings are not complete without a bottle of wine (or 2?!), and we have several PTA socials throughout the year. So if you want to join a great team, make some new friends (or just bring along your existing ones!), we'd love to hear from you.

Obviously, in these crazy Covid times, events are minimal and meetings virtual, but we hope to get back to some sort of normality in the Spring term.

Thanks for reading, and welcome to the PTA! Danine, Jo, Angela & Helen xxx