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PRIMARY

Autumn/Winter 2017

Primary **PTA**

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The cuts forcing PTAs to buy the basics

*“Move like
a dancer”*

WHY THE ARTS ARE CRUCIAL FOR KIDS

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- * HOW TO PICK YOUR PTA DREAM TEAM
- * WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN NEW MEMBERS
- * GROW THE SKILLS YOU’LL NEED

**ALGEBRA
ANGST**
ARE MUMS
AND DADS
SCARED OF
MATHS?

**BOYS
WILL BE
BOYS?**

Taking on
gender
stereotypes

ALSO INSIDE: CYBERBULLYING | SWIMMING | YOGA AND MINDFULNESS

Funding by FACEBOOK?

Oliver Leeds looks at how a new service is helping PTAs raise funds simply via clicks on social media...

Fundraising forms a core part of the job PTAs do. The money they raise traditionally goes towards those little extras that help classroom learning, or which enable participation in activities that children might not otherwise have the chance to experience. But as every PTA knows, finding new ways of fundraising that can capture peoples' imagination, engage families and encourage participation can be a challenge.

So when we at PTA UK came across a service that allowed funds to be raised via a free online resource – and without the need for parents to contribute financially – we knew we had to try it out...

Raloo is an online fundraising platform, which works by pairing up individual PTAs with brands that are willing to sponsor their efforts at raising money for specific projects. We set up a pilot project with Raloo, during which eight PTAs were matched up with Bloom & Wild, the mail order flower delivery service. The PTAs were asked to rally their school communities to perform a few simple actions online, which ranged from watching short promotional videos to sharing links to the business on social media. Each of these actions were converted into points – those points were then converted into money, which was in turn paid directly back to the school PTA.

The pilot proved to be successful, easy and quick to run and manage. Being completely free, the PTAs taking part were able to reap the rewards very quickly. They were able to monitor their campaign pages at any time to see how many points they had gathered through the actions of their supporters, and could see instantly how much money their points translated into as the campaign progressed.

Among those taking part was Epsom Primary School, which was raising money to convert a neglected part of the school playground into a quiet area that could provide the children with a peaceful and reflective space to support their emotional well-being. Catherine Grinyer, chair of the



Epsom Friends group, said, "When I heard about Raloo, I thought it sounded interesting and a bit different. I took the idea to the committee and we decided to go for it."

Creating a buzz

They set about asking parents, friends and community members to visit their online campaign page and follow the few simple interactions with Bloom & Wild. Their

campaign ran for a total of 10 days, and was sufficiently successful that they were able to reach their target of £1,000 in just eight days.

"It was really easy to set up," Catherine remembers. "Once we'd registered, I could see that the campaign would be easy to communicate to parents, and that they'd support it because the commitment was giving their time – and even then, only a few clicks – rather than money. It was something that parents could do on their smartphones or iPads, so they could contribute to our campaign on the hoof, or even from the comfort of their armchairs."

Epsom Friends fully embraced the campaign and made sure that parents were not only made aware of the fundraiser, but enthused by it. They worked hard to create a buzz using their PTA Facebook page and individual year group Facebook pages, while encouraging class reps to share information among their own groups. They also promoted the campaign via direct mail among subscribers to their PTA website, and saw to it that the campaign was regularly featured in the school newsletter, mentioned in reminders and discussed among the teachers.

According to Catherine, "We saw parents asking their friends and family to join in, so it snowballed. Two crucial things for us were that we have community Facebook groups in our town – a parents' page and a social listings page. They both posted about our Raloo campaign, so there was reach beyond our immediate parent community. One community member said she went around her office and made all her colleagues do it. Everyone got behind it – so many people wanted to share it and show their support for our school."

After an incredible communication effort by the PTA, 332 people supported their campaign in little over a week. "We'd definitely recommend Raloo," Catherine says. "It's a fun and innovative way of raising money for a specific project that can really boost your fundraising efforts. Not every parent can come to events, but using Raloo is something anybody can do. All you need is a few minutes of internet access. I'd 100% recommend it to other PTAs."

A great result

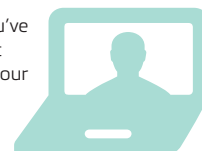
As for the quiet area in the playground, Catherine explains that, "It's almost there. We've removed broken flagstones and replaced them with astroturf. We've painted a pagoda and ordered some giant planters so that we can put some new flowers

Try it yourself

You can register your PTA to take part in future Raloo campaigns at raloo.com/pta-register. When the next fundraising opportunity comes up, Raloo will be in touch with simple instructions on how to get going. All you need to do then is:

- Have a clear project in mind
- Plan how and when to communicate your project (e.g. via the school newsletter, Facebook page, class reps etc.)
- Make sure you have good images and an accurate description of what you're trying to achieve

Once you've completed your campaign, report back to your supporters and let them know how much money you've raised and how it will help deliver your project.



and herbs in. Bloom & Wild have said that they'll give us a plaque that we can put up to celebrate the finished quiet area. We'll soon be putting some screens up, as well as suncatchers and windchimes, to create an oasis of calm in a busy playground. The children are desperate to get in there.

"It's been a fantastic project. This was a refreshing approach that asked for no money and only a tiny time commitment, so it was very well-received by the parents."

Raloo founder Kasia Michalska adds that, "We set up Raloo with a vision to connect, collaborate and celebrate people to achieve a common goal through social media. Our previous experience working for Google stood us in good stead, and we recognise the potential of pairing up sponsors with supporters to raise money for many charitable projects."

"The pilot carried out with PTA UK was hugely successful, and we have a number of amazing opportunities in the pipeline which will directly support schools that register to be involved."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Oliver Leeds is commercial partnerships manager at PTA UK

pta.org.uk
@PTAUK



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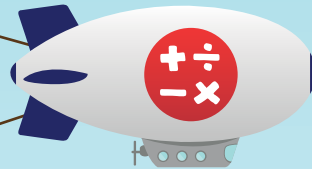
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Don't alienate THE NEWBIES

This year, let's try not to pour cold water on the optimism of our new members, suggests **Laura Albero**...

It's September – the school gates are buzzing, the air full of potential and fresh starts. Anxious parents are collecting first year children who have spent the day sprinkling sand, splattering paint and making new friends. (The parents have meanwhile spent their day trying to do everything they promised to focus on once their kids were in school, but ended up just worrying about said kids).

The happy children stream out of school clasp crumpled, sweaty letters – *'Please come to the PTA meeting! We raise the money that you don't have to spend on all those wonderful trips and educational opportunities!'*

Parents new to school life are enthusiastic at the idea of playing a part in their children's education, and it's a joyful and wondrous thing. These, beautiful, unsuspecting souls move heaven and earth so that they can make it to their first meetings and dutifully appear at the appointed time. All are welcomed. Tea, coffee and (the good) biscuits are passed round.

The ideas start to flow: *'We are ROCKING this fundraising. No school will have raised as much money as we will this year! Go us!'* Catching new parents as their children enter school life is the best way of getting people involved. If you succeed in attracting new members who generate fresh ideas, the fundraising year ahead should go swimmingly. How could it not?

We could try that, but...

I've lived in different parts of the country and joined more than one PTA in my time. And I can tell you that this glow of enthusiasm usually lasts... about an hour, at best. Long enough for the old hands to have finished their coffee and rolled their eyes.

The nominated spokesperson (as decreed by the 'PTA machine', which only those on the inside truly understand) looks up. And the hope-extinguishing floodgates open.

'Why don't we put a photo booth in our Halloween disco? After all, now we have a PTAAer who's got one. Let's DO IT!'

'That's a wonderful idea, except we can't do anything related to witchcraft.'

'Beach BBQ? Yay!'

'We could try that, but people won't turn up.'

'Eisteddfodd? Cultural!'

'People round here just don't do that.'

Every idea is impossible. Each one simply demonstrates how little the new people know about anything, and just how well the existing system works. I hope this sounds familiar, because in my experience it comes up a lot.

A vicious circle

The irony is that those complaining and talking down every idea are the very same people who stay up late, book babysitters and work tirelessly to make the PTA a success. They're not scared of hard work and are admirably dedicated. They're not being deliberately unkind or dismissive – they're simply sharing the wisdom of their experience.

Yet the problem is that this leads to a vicious circle. The 'new ideas' people feel rejected. Some will have arranged childcare, or taken time off work to try and be a part of what's going on, and now they feel worthless and unwanted. Will they come back? Probably not. Why would they?

What ends up happening is that the same people do the same work throughout the year. There are hardly even any meetings, because they'll only involve the very same people, who already know what they're doing. And anyway, *'No one else ever turns up.'* *'Nothing new works.'* But... how could it? Without meetings, without asking for help and accepting some when it's offered, nothing will ever change. The PTA becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

So I urge you all – break out of the spiral. Grasp that newness. Encourage your first-time attendees. Try new things. That one idea might not work, but maybe another will and it ends up being huge! How would you know?

This September, you'll find yourself in a meeting with people in it. New people, with new skills and fresh enthusiasm. Don't waste them. They could be your new best asset.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Laura Albero is a member of Stepside Community Primary PTA, linguist and qualified counsellor

Down with 'his and hers'?

Meet the couple trying to take a stand against gender stereotyping in education and elsewhere – one diary entry at a time...



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It's hardly uncommon now for both men and women to work in order to support their families. Job opportunities for both genders are nothing like as prescribed as they used to be (though rates of pay and promotion still leave something to be desired, but that's another matter). In an age when women and men can theoretically pursue whatever career and life for themselves that they

wish, it follows that that's the message we'd want to impart to our children. They should be free to explore whatever interests and enthusiasms they happen to have, right?

And yet, more recently it seems that traditional childhood gender stereotypes may have started to reassert themselves.

At least that's the view of Ros Ball and James Millar, parents to a daughter and son, aged 9 and 6 respectively. The couple are co-authors of recently published book, *The Gender Agenda*, which documents their efforts at trying to raise their children in a social and media environment that seems determined at every turn to hammer home what boys and girls 'ought' to be like and what they 'should' be expected to enjoy.

As James is quick to clarify, however, "We haven't tried 'gender-neutral parenting'. We've always said that you can't do that unless you leave your child alone in a room and keep them away from the outside world. What we have tried to do is give them the tools to recognise gender stereotypes and challenge them."

Ros picks up the point: "How people behave in their home will have an impact on how their children see themselves, but there's so much more to a child's life. The adverts they see on buses, the programmes they see on TV, films, books, what they hear in school – all these things that shape their understanding of what it is to be a boy or a girl."

Thus, they began recording instances of their encounters with such stereotypes over a series of diary entries that they subsequently posted to an online blog – sightings of particular adverts, conversations with other parents, and on occasion, incidents related to nursery and school. "In the book we mention how, when our daughter first went to nursery, the staff talked about 'the girls' table' and 'the boys' table,'" says James.

Ros recalls another example of "A friend who, when her daughter was starting primary, was worried about whether she would fit in with other girls. It was a co-ed school, yet she'd automatically assumed that her daughter would only play with other girls, not boys."

"Up until junior school, say age 9 or 10, we all just mixed together," says James. "I remember having female friends round to play, at parties you'd invite everyone – I don't remember that level of gendering."

"It's quite a modern phenomenon," adds Ros. "Gendering does seem to be very much more on the cards these days."

Star Wars versus fairy stories

As their daughter enters Y5 and their son Y2, has the issue of gender stereotyping come up much over the course of their schooling?

"Our daughter used to tell us that she couldn't play with cars, or take part in car races when she was in reception, because the boys 'Wouldn't let her,'" James recalls. "At the time, we spoke about this to her, rather

than her teacher, because there's that thing about wanting to fit in – you don't be 'that difficult parent.'"

James and Ros' desire to highlight unthinking assumptions about boys and girls seems to be somewhat balanced against not wanting kick back *too* much. "Our son's teacher was brilliant," continues James. "On the last day of term she sent him home with a present, which was nice – but the girls received a book about fairy stories and the boys got a Star Wars book. Part of me wanted to go up and ask her why none of the girls could receive the Star Wars book, or any of the boys the fairy stories book, but she'd been a brilliant teacher. It would have been a bit much to start haranguing her about it on the last day of term."

And what of their daughter's experiences? At one time, PE lessons would be split down gender lines, with boys playing football and cricket and girls playing netball and rounders, but that hasn't generally been the case for some time. Here, at least, aren't things pretty much equal in terms of the activities children get to take part in? Well, yes and no.

"On the face of it, there appears to be this loose equality. Our daughter plays cricket, for example," says Ros. "But when you drill down, you find something a bit different. When the children play football together in PE classes, the boys won't pass to the girls. Our daughter's teacher does something which we think is great – for a portion of the game, often the last 10 minutes, he'll declare that only girls can score, which means the boys have to pass to the girls if they want their team to win. But it's sad that that has to happen."

"Oh, you're different"

It's not intended as a 'gotcha' question, but I have to ask – in light of how much they've tried to grapple with issues of gendering and stereotypes, to what extent have their own children's interests and hobbies developed along 'typical' gender lines?

"A bit," concedes James, "though I'd say that our daughter's coming out the other side of that. She's starting to question things more and make her own decisions on that front – we're wondering if our son will do the same"

"Do they have some pink and blue stuff? Yes, they do," says Ros. "We haven't tried too hard to avoid all that – prohibition never really works, but when children come to visit, we say that all the toys in the house are for everyone."

They'll watch adverts for 'boys' toys' and 'girls' toys' and say 'That's not true, is it?' notes James. "They'll clock it."

It might seem like a small thing, but as Ros concludes, it's a step towards taking on larger issues. "You'll often hear people say that the next generation will be more equal – but looking at our kids right now, things don't seem great. This year's A level results in computing and science were terribly misbalanced for gender, just really bad – you'd like to think we're getting somewhere with all this, but it's not looking good."



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Dear Gender Diary...

Several snapshots from Ros and James' two-year documenting of everyday gender stereotyping...

11TH JANUARY 2011

Being shown round her new nursery a member of staff said to our daughter, 'This is what we call the boys' corner.' It's a play table for cars.

16TH JULY 2011

Went to a primary school fair today. The 'Test your strength' stall had prizes of toy guns, swords and bows and arrows... I didn't see any girls with the prizes.

23RD NOVEMBER 2011

A voice message from a relative. 'Really annoyed, [daughter's] pre-school nativity play and all the girls are angels, boys are shepherds.'

27TH JUNE 2012

News from the kids' aunt about their five-year-old cousin. He wants to get pink Crocs (shoes) for summer, but said 'I know I'd never be able to wear them to school because everyone would laugh at me.' He says he knows he's not meant to like pink, but doesn't care that it's a girl's colour. Where to start unpicking those sad statements?



FURTHER READING



The Gender Agenda is available now from Jessica Kingsley Publishers, priced at £9.99

 @GenderDiary



CARRY ON COMBING

The collective mind of Mumsnet presents some tips on how to tackle those troublesome nits...

It begins with a note in your child's bag. 'We have nits in school,' it announces, breezily, as if informing you of the date of the Christmas concert. In fact, as every parent knows, the phrase is spin for 'burn your bedding, paint a plague cross on your door and prepare for the apocalypse'.

But there is hope. Keep your cool and you can win – and rebuild, once the war is over. Here's how to nix a nit without surrendering your sanity.

Assemble your arsenal

Preparation is all. Don't wait for the note – accept the fact that at some point during their education your children will be infested, and hit your nearest chemist to stock up. If you've got the basics (a nit comb, the queen of which is the 'Nitty Gritty', and a bottle of conditioner), you'll be able to swing into action as soon as the enemy makes landfall.

When you receive the dreaded letter, or if you spot your child scratching, act fast. Wash their hair, rinse, apply lots of conditioner and leave on. Use a wide-toothed comb to detangle, then get to work with your Nitty Gritty. Separate the hair into sections and work through individually, combing carefully from roots to tips and inspecting the comb for squatters each time. Wipe the comb on a tissue or rinse in a bowl of water with each sweep, so you can see what you've netted.

If you find live lice, rather than just nits, use a head lice treatment. These fall into two camps: 'poison them and suffocate them' and 'slide them off'. You'll probably remember the nit treatments of your youth. They were basically DDT – a heavy-duty

insecticide which did the job, but didn't make for a pleasant experience. You can still buy the stuff, but the problem (beyond your child's streaming eyes) is that lice have developed immunity to it. Research in the US found that lice in 25 of 30 states studied were invulnerable.

The alternatives, more popular these days, are silicone- or oil-based and work by either dehydrating the lice or smothering them in goo, which conveniently makes them easier to remove. Whichever method you choose, you'll still need to comb afterwards. Some treatments claim to only need one application, after which the lice and eggs can be brushed out, but the combing method, though painstaking, is the only way to know for certain you've got them all.

Remember, it's not enough to get rid of the lice; the eggs must go, too, or you'll be back to square one within a week. Thoroughness is key.

Clearing the battlefield

So you've made your first pass. Think you can sit back and crack open the gin? Think again. Now's the time to consolidate. Once you've Nitty Gritty-ed, you should repeat on days 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15. We recommend a child-friendly DVD box set to get you through.

Head lice can live only on humans, so pets will remain unmolested, but you do need to check everyone else in the household for infestation. Under-10s tend to be the most vulnerable, but don't for a moment assume anyone is immune. Bedding, toys and clothes should be put through as hot a wash as possible. Brushes, combs, bands and so

Further info

This article is an edited extract from the book *How To Blitz Nits (and Other Nasties)*, published by Bloomsbury and priced at £8.99 RRP



forth should be soaked in boiling water. If that feels insufficient, chuck the lot away and start over. You are, after all, worth it.

Establishing defences

Congratulations, you've won the opening battle. Now step back and consider the war. Firstly, reduce the risk of acquisition by tying back long hair. A nice, tight plait secured at each end is the Mumsnet-preferred option. You ever see Princess Elsa with nits? Nope.

There are various things you can apply to hair that are anecdotally effective. Many Mumsnetters swear by Vosene shampoo. Tea tree oil mixed with water and sprayed on is said to be a repellent, ditto lavender oil. Hair gel apparently makes it harder for the lice to attach their eggs, so long as you don't mind sending your boys to school looking like a Bros tribute band.

If you want to get in front of the problem, pick a weekly time (Sunday nights are popular, since they're awful already) and get combing. Think of it as part of your end-of-week ritual, like shoe-polishing or the Antiques Roadshow.

Finally, there are those apocryphal parents who, in the face of infestation, shave their children's heads. This will work, as long as you can cope with the sobbing, the reactions of others, and the redundancy of your arsenal of Peppa Pig hair-bands.

Frankly, though, you can buy every preparation on the market, send your child to school in a swimming cap and make a pact with Satan, but you might well end up with nits anyway. Along with death and taxes, if you have children, head lice are one of life's certainties.

Primary PTA readers will receive a 20% discount when ordering a copy of *Blitz Nits...* via bloomsbury.com/uk (P&P costs still apply) by entering the code 'BLITZ' at checkout; offer ends November 9th 2017



Assemble your DREAM TEAM

Clare Jenner explains how the key to setting up a successful PTA is identifying what skills are available among those keen to be involved – and being able to work out who's best placed to take on what...

We all know that PTAs are a real force for good in our schools. They work hard to raise funds, support school events, forge good relationships between teachers and parents and engage the local community. Yet despite the importance of such groups, research we've carried out at PTA UK shows that only one in 10 parents report ever being involved in their school PTA, with the biggest barriers to engagement being a lack of time and a fear of not having the right skills to support the group.

The reality is that being involved in a school PTA doesn't have to take up a lot of someone's time, if they don't want it to. Furthermore, many would-be volunteers will likely possess

many of the skills needed to make them a truly valued member of the team – they just don't realise it. But first, it's important to get the basics right.

Elect a Chair

The role of Chair is really important. A good Chair will run meetings efficiently, gather views and give everyone a chance to have their say. They should make sure that committee members are familiar with the association's constitution, and aware of their roles and responsibilities as committee members and trustees (remembering that all committee members are automatically trustees of the association). If there is no Chair the job can be done by other committee members, taking it in turns to lead meetings until a new one is elected.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHAIR?

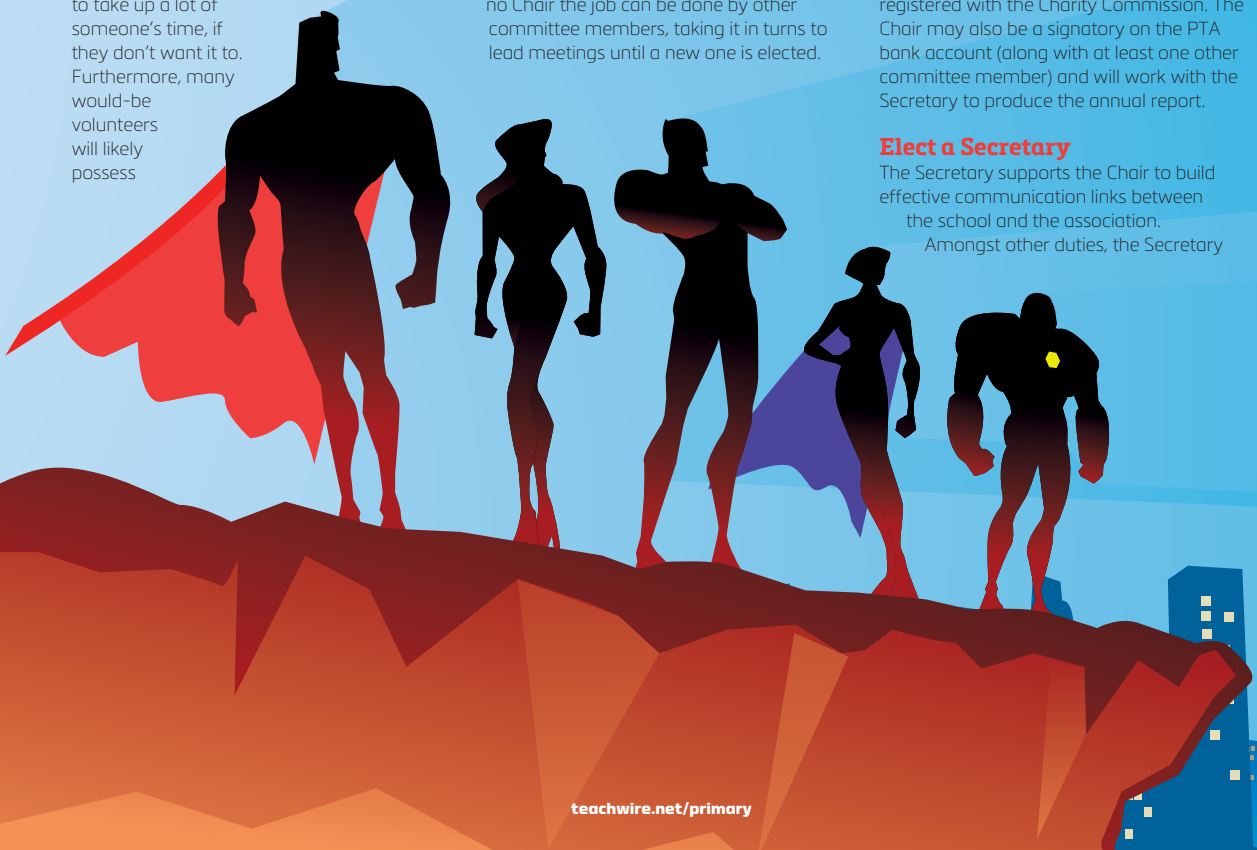
It's a role that requires you to be organised and inclusive, as it will be your responsibility to prepare for meetings with the Secretary, invite committee members, parents and staff, suggest items for the agenda, delegate tasks and monitor their progress. You'll be the main link between the school and the committee, and will need to ensure the committee fulfils its role in respect of governance of the association, as set out in the constitution.

That means that you'll be responsible for holding an AGM, managing the election of committee members and ensuring that annual returns are completed, if your PTA is registered with the Charity Commission. The Chair may also be a signatory on the PTA bank account (along with at least one other committee member) and will work with the Secretary to produce the annual report.

Elect a Secretary

The Secretary supports the Chair to build effective communication links between the school and the association.

Amongst other duties, the Secretary



What the research says

PTA UK's annual parent insight survey found that overall, parents are very willing to be involved in their own child's learning – but that when it came to doing something more for the school as a whole, this level of involvement would decrease. That said, the research found there to be some potential for change:

- 43% of parents said they would consider taking an active role in their PTA
- 49% said they would consider becoming active in their school's Parent Council or other parent group, despite not having done so in the past
- 40% said they would consider volunteering



is responsible for preparing for meetings, circulating agendas and minutes and keeping track of attendance and actions agreed, as well as maintaining the PTA's records. These include updating trustee details with the Charity Commission and helping the Chair to write the annual report for the association. The Secretary can also be a signatory on the PTA bank account and handles written and email correspondence received by the association.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SECRETARY?

To be a good secretary, you'll need to be organised and efficient. You'll also need to be a good listener, with the ability to identify key discussion points, actions and agreements at meetings, so that they can be accurately recorded in the minutes. It's also important for you to be calm, friendly and approachable.

Elect a Treasurer

The treasurer has an important role in leading the way when it comes to the

control and management of PTA funds. It's worth remembering however, that all committee members have equal responsibility here. Treasurers ensure that accurate financial records are kept and best practice procedures are followed for counting money, banking and making payments. They should keep the committee updated with regular reports at every meeting and see that end of year reports are completed for the association's AGM.

Other responsibilities include ensuring that procedures for making approved payments and claiming approved expenses are followed by all committee members; arranging independent reviews of the association accounts; completing the Charity Commission annual return (if applicable); and managing or helping another committee member to manage Gift Aid.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TREASURER?

Treasurers need to have a basic understanding of bookkeeping, so that they're able to accurately manage records of income and expenditure. They also require an eye for detail, especially when making up floats and collecting money from various stalls, and need to be a real team player. The role calls for an ability to remain calm during busy times. Rather than work in isolation, a treasurer will need to communicate regularly and clearly with the rest of the committee.

Build your committee

Beyond these three key roles, there will be many other roles that committee members can get involved in to help support various PTA activities and events. When recruiting new committee members, be aware that the following skills and attributes can make a real difference:

- A confident and assertive personality
- The ability to remain impartial
- A calm, friendly, enthusiastic and approachable demeanour
- Organisational and delegation skills
- A willingness to be visible and available

to others

- A readiness to be flexible (bearing in mind that your committee members will likely have to plan around the needs of their own children)
- A readiness to be objective and realistic
- A sense of humour

Being part of the school PTA is highly rewarding. The reality is that every parent will have something to offer – you'll often find that the concerns many have about not possessing the right skills are unfounded. Once a volunteer gets involved, they may well discover something that they're particularly good at and learn some new skills – all while doing something good for their children and their school.

Further information

PTA UK members can download further information about committee roles and responsibilities, plus a range of resources such as simple accounting templates and a 'good practice' guide for Treasurers, from our online advice hub. If your school has yet to join PTA UK, details of how to apply and our membership benefits are available by contacting **0300 123 5460**.

More information regarding training courses that can help schools to better engage parents or assist with setting up a parent group can found at parentcouncils.co.uk

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Clare Jenner is membership services manager at PTA UK

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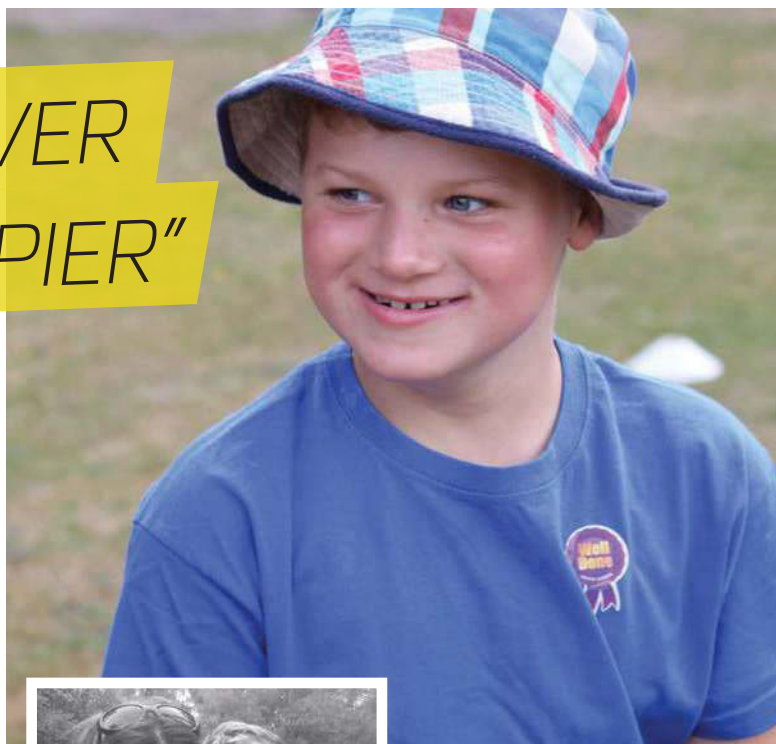
We hear how a school specialising in speech, language and communication needs was able to give one eight-year-old a newfound appreciation for the great outdoors

Larisa Strickland is the mother to eight-year-old Matthew. He's among the pupils attending Meath Primary – a school in Surrey run by the charity I CAN specifically for primary-aged children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Meath includes a Forest School, which takes each class through six sessions of constructive outdoor play a couple of times per year. These sessions form an integral part of the school syllabus, running throughout the term for one lesson a week while the other classes do PE.

These Forest School sessions will typically start with the children gathering together to talk about the week they're having and their plans for that day, without the pressure that might come from being in a classroom. They then get to decide which activity they would like to do, whether it be 'cooking' up all sort of wonderful imaginary concoctions in the Mud Kitchen, or learning a new craft or skill. Meath pupils have previously made spiders out of conkers using bit drills, whittled sticks with the aid of potato peelers and even made sparks using a fire-steel – but there's always an emphasis on safety in everything the pupils do.

Larisa is a parent governor at the school and one of its active fundraisers, having previously cycled from London to Paris in 2016 to raise over £4,600 for the school's holiday club. Larisa currently works for the charity Action on Hearing Loss, and is in the process of learning British Sign Language to improve Matthew's communication, with support from family and friends. Below, Larisa shares Matthew's story...



Confidence and independence

Matthew started at the Meath School when he was five. Matthew's non-verbal; he understands very well, but the only speech he can manage is 'mumma and poppa' and unintelligible growls and sounds. He's been that way since he was three years old.

As you can imagine, Matthew was really struggling in mainstream education. Initially, he was at school three days a week with support, then two days a week in a special needs school. Unfortunately, this arrangement soon wasn't working, since the two schools weren't sharing information and the support he was receiving was disjointed.

Following a lengthy and stressful battle with the local authority, Matthew was finally placed at I CAN's Meath School, where he's never been happier. We've seen his abilities develop, and his confidence and desire for independence grow week on week. We've noticed a huge difference in what he's now able to do.

Safe and secure

Another thing that's changed has been Matthew's enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoors. We think this desire to be outside has come from his experiences of the Forest School. Matthew is now a lot keener to go on walks, and to go and play with the ducks near the river.

Recently he's been signing that he wants to go out for picnics. At the Forest School they sit and interact on outdoor mats – I think he enjoys that and wants to recreate the same experiences at home. When the weather's good he wants to be outside, and now really enjoys independent constructive play in particular much more than before.

For the first few years of Matthew's life we were so worried about him and his development, especially without a diagnosis. Now we're confident he's in the right academic placement, with all the communication support he needs.

The Meath School is the best possible environment for Matthew, which we've had backed up by assessments from educational psychologists and the school's own Bill Harrison Assessment Centre. He's very content, and we know he feels safe and secure there. His face lights up every time he arrives at school, which is a testament to the importance of having a secure and supportive environment, and the amazing work performed by [Meath School Principal] Janet Dunn OBE and the team.

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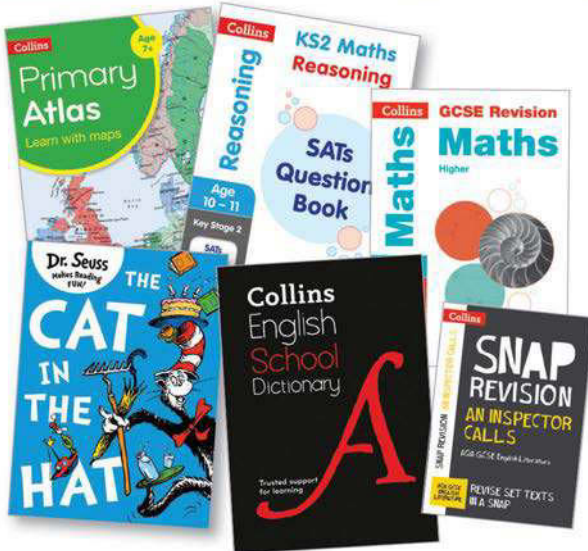


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Are we at BREAKING POINT?

Looking forward to spending your hard-won funds on those fun extras that kids enjoy? A rude awakening may be around the corner, learns **Anna Blewett...**

Some names have been changed to protect the anonymity of our sources

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There's nothing like the summer term to swell the coffers for the next school year – end-of-term discos, summer fêtes and special leavers' events all offer excellent fundraising opportunities. But if your committee has earmarked last summer's funds for Christmas pantos and class trips, you may have to think again. Unprecedented budget cuts are forcing heads to take difficult decisions, and breaching the normal etiquette around asking for your cash may be just the beginning.

"Our PTFA hasn't been asked to support the school in its basic provisions, and if we were I don't think we'd be happy," says Fran, the outgoing chair of a PTA in Colchester, Essex. "We all feel we raise money for the extras. We always pay for the Christmas panto, and this year we're reopening the school swimming pool. I know there are cuts in budgets, but currently our school must be managing because they haven't requested anything from the PTFA. That's not our function as we see it!"

Many PTAs would echo Fran's sentiment, and yet an uncomfortable reality may be looming on the horizon. "Most PTAs feel they exist to provide the icing on the cake," says Jane, a special

• £3 billion

That's how much money schools must save by 2019-20. Why?

- salary increases
- the national living wage
- increased NI contributions
- pension rises
- the apprenticeship levy
- non-pay inflation

educational needs co-ordinator with 40 years in the teaching profession who is currently based at a small village school. "But right now, that cake's crumbling. Parents don't necessarily know because budget cuts aren't impacting on them yet, but they will."

"It's going to get worse"

These ominous words are backed by troubling facts. Recent statistics from PTA UK suggest that more than a third of parents have been asked for financial contributions towards their children's schooling. When the Department for Education (DfE) released statistics last month showing that expenditure in academies exceeds income, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) described the figures as damning, and said they proved that "School funding levels are unsustainable".

More relatable for most of us are stories of the impact. St John's Primary School in Crowborough, East Sussex, hit the headlines in March when parents were asked for donations of

essential supplies, such as pencils, glue sticks, paper and even toilet roll. At Wandsworth's Furzedown Primary School, meanwhile, older pupils were asked to help clean classrooms when no cash could be found to replace a departing cleaner.

Such tales are a wake-up call to anyone ring-fencing funds for 'fun extras'. Fran's successor may be forced to change their policy. At a school just 10 miles away the cuts are biting. "We have such a serious crisis that we had to make the decision to employ a failing teacher because we can't afford an experienced one," says Caroline,

a Year 6 teacher in the senior leadership team. "Only 51% of children taught by him this year have met their expected progress, which is shocking, and some have even gone backwards. As a result, staff are now being rotated so his class gets a good teacher for the new school year and his new class will have a good teacher next year."

"We are also using PE premium money to fund learning support assistants in the afternoons, but we will have to share one between two classes, so the impact they'll have will be minimal. We'll have had to make redundancies, and currently have no



idea how on earth we're going to manage our SEN interventions or Pupil Premium expectations, as we literally have no staff to do it! Our CPD budget is £200 per teacher and most courses are around £400 to £500. That's fine if you're experienced, but not good for new staff!"

For many schools, the problems are just starting. "It's bad now and it's going to get worse as the budget decreases over

primary in North Essex. "People would realise how much we desperately need the PTA to keep fundraising. There really is the need for help; I think letting people know what's going on could work to schools' advantage."

Tanya's workplace, like many schools, is facing some bleak realities. "We've reduced the number of teaching assistants and teachers. It's unfortunate – we've lost the equivalent of two full-time teachers and can

"We'll be desperate for whatever our PTA can raise"

three years," Caroline continues. "We'll be desperate for whatever our PTA can raise, but sadly unless parents follow politics – and even then it's not clear – they won't realise the situation."

Helping with the essentials

A widespread lack of transparency around holes in the budget may not be surprising – after all, what school wants to tell prospective parents that they're struggling to balance the books? – but it could be obscuring a route out of the crisis. "I think some good would come from being more open with parents," admits Tanya, finance manager at a single-form entry

no longer offer specific children the extra help they need – but it's just something we've had to do." Like the team at Caroline's school, Tanya is hoping for continued financial support from parents. "A good PTA is a very valuable commodity," she points out. "They struggle to exist, but I hope they're not a dying breed because they're worth their weight in gold."

Cash raised by the school's PTA – the hard-won profit from discos, talent shows, bazaars and quiz evenings – has taken on a new significance as the budget dwindles. "Money from the PTA always used to be for fun things," says Tanya. "Seven or eight years ago that cash was used to subsidise school trips and contribute to big one-off expenses like a new computer suite. It always covered the little things, too – crackers and serviettes on the table for the school Christmas dinner. Just the finishing touches, little extras the children wouldn't otherwise have."

"But latterly it's been books, an outdoor learning space, playground equipment. Now the PTA is helping more with essentials, rather than just the fun things."

But do parents have any idea of the situation? "Some parent governors have a fairly good understanding, but I don't think many others really understand how difficult things are in school," Tanya replies. "You hear flippant remarks: 'You get a really good budget of a million pounds!' Well, that money doesn't go very far! The bulk of it goes on staffing, and then there are all the hidden extras. National Insurance contributions are going up, and pension contributions, and now we have to pay an apprenticeship levy."

"No one talks about those things. They're all hidden very cleverly by the government, but they're passed on to schools who now have to find all this extra money from a budget that's dwindling anyway."

Enthusing parents to raise cash for such expenditure may be a tough challenge, but it seems that such concerns may be the future for your PTA.

School funding in crisis – a timeline

December 2016

The National Audit Office produces a report on the financial sustainability of schools (see tinyurl.com/nao-schools-2016), which warns of a reduction in spending "Not seen since the mid-1990s", equating to an 8% cut in real terms over the five year period to 2019/20.

March 2017

A report from the Public Accounts Committee (see tinyurl.com/pac-schools-17) accuses the DfE of putting pupils' futures at risk, criticising its requirement that schools in England make a total of £3bn savings in the period to 2020.

June 2017

More than 4,000 schools write to parents asking that they help make school funding a 'doorstep issue' in the 2017 general election campaign. The NAHT describes the situation as 'unprecedented'.

July 2017

Education Secretary Justine Greening announces £1.3bn in funding for schools in England, amid accusations that the money will come from existing allocations rather than an injection of new cash. Campaign group Fair Funding for All Schools (see fairfundingforallschools.org) co-ordinates a rally in central London, highlighting the number of schools asking parents to set up direct debits to plug school budget shortfalls.

September 2017

A long-awaited announcement on the final funding formula is expected this month. To view an estimate of how your local school will be affected, visit schoolcuts.co.uk – a regularly updated website developed by a partnership of teaching unions, which tracks the impact of funding cuts on overall budgets, cash per pupil and staff numbers.

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TREADING WATER

Swimming is a curriculum subject, says **Jon Glenn** – so why are nearly a third of Y6 not reaching their attainment targets, and what can parents do to help?

In 2015, Swim England were asked by the government to look at what challenges there were in relation to school swimming. We led a wide-reaching consultation that involved schools, PTAs and providers, and carried out some research, which disappointingly found that 31% of children leaving Y6 hadn't reached KS2 swimming attainment targets.

We asked teachers what the issues and challenges for them were, and more than anything they'd say it was their lack of training and confidence. These teachers were trained in handling classes of 30-plus kids, of course – but put those children in a swimming pool and there's the possibility that they can drown. The time required was also an issue. If you need to take a group of children to a swimming

pool 20 minutes down the road, even if just for a 30-minute lesson, that's still at least a good hour spent outside of class.

"Six hours of PE training"

We highlighted these issues and others in a report published earlier this year (see tinyurl.com/se-report-2017), which put forward a series of suggestions. One is to invest additional funding into 'top-up lessons', so that children who get towards the end of the KS2 swimming curriculum but aren't quite there can have intensive lessons towards the end of the summer term. That would mean them going every day for five to ten days, just so they get that extra boost and the swimming ability they need.

The report also makes it clear that school swimming is about water safety too. It's not just about getting the next Adam Peaty, but about giving the vast majority of children in England enough swimming ability so that if they should ever fall into water or get into danger, they can get out. Whether it's treading water, dealing with cold water shock, or understanding beach safety flags, it's important that they're taught the water safety element as well.

As far as support and training for teachers is concerned, the average primary school teacher usually gets around six hours or so of PE training. They're then expected to deliver the full gamut of sports and dance, from gymnastics and rounders to football and netball, and then swimming as well. There's National Curriculum swimming training for primary school teachers, which we're encouraging the government to make available to as many teachers as possible, but there's a need to look at initial teacher training as well. One approach might be to offer swimming summer schools to teachers either entering, or soon to be completing their training.

Pulling things together

We've also seen the loss of local education authorities, which used to co-ordinate swimming locally and provide it to their schools; now it's a free market out there in which every school competes.

That also has a big impact on transport costs, in that if you're one school ringing up a local coach company to take your pupils to the local pool, you can expect to pay full price. If you're in a group of 25 schools from across the county looking to strike a collective deal, that's a different story. We've lost that capacity for pulling things together.

As a parent, you should ask your school exactly what sort of swimming provision they're offering. It can sometimes be the case that schools might not be providing enough, or advising children who can already swim that they don't have to attend, in order to save costs. We've also seen some issues with parents being charged for having their children take part in swim classes. Nobody should be charged for a curriculum subject.

Parents also have a role to play in teaching their children to swim. We did some research a few years ago in Manchester, and found that in a group of 7 to 8-year-olds taking school swim lessons, 50% had otherwise never visited a swimming pool. I'd encourage parents to take their children to a pool to play in early years, so that they're not afraid of the water. If they get the chance to jump around and play games when they're younger, then once they start learning swimming at school they'll already have acquired those basic aquatic skills.

It's the same as learning numbers and the alphabet – if you know the basics, you can learn a lot quicker once you start putting it all together.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Glenn is Learn to Swim and Workforce Director at Swim England

[@swimming.org](https://twitter.com/swimming.org)

[Swim_England](https://www.swim-england.org)





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"HUMAN CREATIVITY IS A MIRACULOUS THING"

In primary schools across the country, drama, dance and music are being scaled back in favour of devoting more resources to the teaching of core subjects. **Nikky Smedley** spells out why this is a development that should concern us all...

It's not news to any of us that there's been something of a devaluing of the teaching of drama, dance and other arts subjects in recent years. Music fared rather better, at least for a while, but now that too is being pushed aside in favour of so-called STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects.

I believe that part of the problem lies in the misconception that teaching arts subjects only has value in terms of pupils getting better at those artistic disciplines – when in fact the development of the creative competencies inherent in those disciplines serves us well in every aspect of our lives.

The ability to think creatively is one of

humanity's greatest gifts. It's not just about painting or ballet; it's about being able to solve problems in new and effective ways. It's about being able to look after our needs and make our way in the world.

Skills that can be adapted

It's a cliché to say that we've no idea what jobs the primary children of today will be required to do once they've left education and started to make their way in the world, but it's nonetheless true.

That's why we need to ensure that our children develop core skills that can be adapted to whatever demands are made upon them in a future that we cannot yet know. Those skills will obviously need to

include literacy, numeracy and knowledge of the world around them, but it's essential that they also be equipped with the ability to think creatively – and nothing does that better than arts subjects.

It's interesting to observe the many lists available online that highlight the attributes businesses say they most want in their employees. Communication skills almost always come top, often closely followed by such things as teamwork, self-motivation and drive, flexibility, reliability and problem solving skills.

Communication, of course, is at the heart of all artforms – whether it's developing the skills to make yourself better understood by others, or organising your creative output in order to express yourself more effectively to an audience. Very little art making happens in isolation. For most part, communication has to play a part in the process, which is certainly the case when it comes to primary-level arts education.

Drama, dance and music are all dependent on teamwork and mutual

reliability. No form of drawing, painting or even a piece of creative writing will get done without a tonne of self-motivation and drive. It's difficult to simply reach into the air and pull something out of nothing, whatever age you are. Art teaches you what inspiration is – how to be brave enough to trust and follow your feelings, and to not shy away from taking risks. On top of all of that, there's the immense gain in self-confidence to be had when you achieve the thing that you set out to create.

Exercising the creative muscle

There's little doubt surrounding the now received wisdom that learning through play is essential in the early years. Learning through the arts and creativity is the logical next stage of this. Research from several EU countries has shown that there tends to be a marked drop-off in the creative skill set that children possess as they move through education – the very same skill set that businesses say they want, and which will obviously benefit the individual hugely.

At the primary school stage, we have an

opportunity through arts subjects to embed in our children prowess that will give them a more wide-ranging proficiency than what's available to them through any other area of study.

Best of all, that creative muscle gets stronger the more we exercise it. Yes, some students may exhibit a seemingly natural artistic bent – but the more a child practises the competencies they need to turn their artistic ideas into a reality, the greater their abilities at utilising curiosity, courage, effort, energy, self-belief and tenacity will be.

Children who are more emotionally vulnerable may discover new forms of support for their feelings and unforeseen ways of expressing themselves through artistic endeavour, which can help them realise their full potential without feeling ostracised or freakish.

We live in a world where we seem to be mutually isolating ourselves from each other more than ever. Is there not a growing need for activities which, by definition, will enable us to put ourselves in one another's places, develop our ability to empathise and help

us connect with those who are maybe very different from ourselves?

Preparing for an unknown world

Nor is it just the 'softer' areas of development that benefit. Take music, for example. All music is formed of patterns. If a young mind can learn how to recognise and reproduce the patterns needed to make music, they'll be exercising the same part of the brain used for recognising and reproducing the patterns inherent within maths and linguistics.

We all have to live out our days in our bodies – yet for many of us, our physicality seems to be merely a vessel in which to carry around our thoughts. How much healthier, happier and less burdensome on society would we be if we'd all been able to acquire the bodily awareness of a dancer when we were still children?

Arts subjects teach us to not fear uncertainty; to venture forth without necessarily knowing what the ultimate outcome will be. Just like life. Is there anything more certain than the fact that it's an uncertain world out there? What better preparation for it than to practice fearlessness in the face of the unknown?

What we want for our offspring and from them – in their childhood, and as they grow to take their places in the adult world – is precisely what the arts, culture and creativity can provide. So let's encourage, apply and protect those creative competencies.

Move like a dancer, listen like a musician and invent like a writer. Develop the discipline, communication skills and ability to collaborate of the artist. Practice technique and imagination. Practice play and reliability. Practice experiment and exploration. Practice risk and trust.



Human creativity is a miraculous thing. In many ways, it's all we have – so let's not deprive our future generations of its true worth.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nikky Smedley's three-decade performing career has encompassed dance, singing, comedy, poetry, puppetry and acting,

including the part of Laa-Laa in Teletubbies. She currently provides training and coaching for adults in storytelling and puppetry, and is a visiting storyteller in primary schools

 thestoryteller.me.uk
 @StoryNikky



VOICES THIS ISSUE...

Welcome...



...to the third issue of *Primary PTA*. As I write, the 2017/18 academic year is just getting underway. It's an exciting time for primary kids, of course, but also one that can be filled with some trepidation. Many will be starting at a new school, finding their way through unfamiliar corridors and seeing a whole lot of new faces. Even those jaded veterans of Y5 and Y6 will be feeling some mixture of buzz and uncertainty at the thought of their new teacher, and maybe some new peers they'll be sharing a classroom with over the coming year.

The same can also apply to parents looking to take a more active role in their child's school education. Joining a PTA involves getting to know people and figuring out the dynamics of an established group, which isn't always easy. And that's before you even start the work of helping to organise events and raise funds.

This issue, you'll therefore find some helpful advice and ideas for PTA neophytes and seasoned old hands alike. Those new to all this will find a handy overview of the core PTA roles on page 18, and an insight into how groups across the country make sure their funds are being spent well on page 36.

If, on the other hand, you've been at this for long enough that you're ready for a whole new challenge, you might find our guide to what school governors do on page 44 to be useful reading. For others, it's a good time to consider how friendly and approachable your PTA is. Will the novel (if potentially impractical) ideas of your newer members get a fair hearing at your next meeting? Laura Albera's piece on p13 may give you pause for thought.

As ever, we also touch on the academic side of things – this issue it's the turn of maths and arts education – and also find out why shrinking school budgets are set to make the hard work you do for your PTA even more essential than ever.

Enjoy the issue...

Callum Fauser, editor
callum.fauser@theteachco.com



FEATURED...



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Oliver Leeds is commercial partnerships manager at PTA UK



Laura Albera is a member of Stepside Community Primary PTA



Carolyn Bunting is general manager of Internet Matters



Nikky Smedley is an actor, trainer and visiting storyteller in primary schools



Claire Maugham is director of policy and communications at Smart Energy GB



Barbara Johnstone is a retired teacher and former Ofsted inspector



Louise Pennington is the professional development leader for maths and Numicon at Oxford University Press



Tes Macpherson is the founder of PTAsocial.com



Clare Jenner is membership services manager at PTA UK



Lesley Smeardon is PTA UK's membership services manager



Helen Clare is the founder of Class Yoga



Cerys Matthews is a musician, songwriter, author and broadcaster

WHO'S SCARED OF MATHS?

A child's first and most enduring maths educators will be their parents, says **Louise Pennington** – which is something to be embraced, not feared...



the curriculum, while only 33% felt confident when helping with homework. Those figures probably haven't altered much in recent years, but there are a few simple things that parents can do to successfully support their child's mathematical learning.

Be positive

One of the most important things for parents to do is promote a positive view of maths. Research shows that expressing a negative view, such as saying, 'I am rubbish at maths!' has a negative effect on a child's attainment and progress. Positivity is key!

Children need to talk about maths and explain their thinking. Parents can use 'maths talk' in everyday situations – for example, when out shopping, estimate and compare prices and offers: 'Is petrol cheaper here or down the road?'; 'Is it better to buy the family pack or take the 3 for 2 offer?'

This helps children understand the relevance of maths, think mathematically and apply their skills. Also, ask questions to support this – 'How did you work it out?' or 'Can you explain...to me?' Children are being asked these types of questions more and more in school, so they should be used to it!

Another way to support maths learning and improve both attainment and motivation is by promoting a growth mindset. This centres on the understanding that you can improve in mathematics – or any subject, for that matter – because intelligence isn't fixed; it can get stronger with practice and effort.

To encourage a growth mindset, children need to understand that maths is not simply about working quickly and getting the right answer. It involves problem solving and reasoning, so being resilient and persistent is key. Praising effort is important, and a simple way to reassure is to use the word 'yet'.

As a teacher (and parent of twins), I believe that parents have a crucial role to play in their child's education because, simply put, higher attainment in maths is closely linked to parent/carer engagement. As Sir Peter Williams found in his independent 2008 review of mathematics, "Parents are a child's first and most enduring educators, and their influence cannot be overestimated."

Whilst this isn't surprising, for many

parents it can be easier said than done – especially if they had a less than positive experience of mathematics as a child. It can be difficult for parents to know how to support their child, and many are concerned about teaching things incorrectly.

According to the Department for Education's 2010 research report 'Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement' (see tinyurl.com/dfe-parents-2010) 38% of parents didn't understand their child's school work and didn't feel well informed about

For example, if a child says “I can’t remember the 6 times table!” say “Maybe you don’t know it all yet, but you will.” Encourage a child to try, and stress that mistakes are a normal part of learning. These small changes will support a child’s resilience so they’re able to make mistakes and keep trying, which is an essential part of effective learning.

What are children expected to learn?

Having a broad understanding of the curriculum is useful for parents. In England, changes made in 2014 to the maths curriculum have meant that there is now a higher overall expectation. Some content previously covered at Key Stage 2 (KS2) is now covered at KS1, making way for a number of secondary maths topics to be taught in KS2. Fewer topics are covered overall, but those that are will be taught in more depth.

All pupils are expected to build firm foundations and move on to using this in different contexts, rather than accelerate into maths from later years or Key Stages. There’s no longer any ‘racing ahead’ for the more able – instead, they’ll learn in more depth.

Formal written methods: There’s now a focus on this at KS2, with column addition/subtraction and short, then long multiplication and division are all taught before Year 6 (though it’s worth noting that in Welsh schools the methods aren’t as prescriptive).

Fractions: Children are taught to add and subtract fractions, and then in Year 6 to multiply and divide (the latter is absent from the KS2 Welsh curriculum).

Times tables: Children are expected to have secured their times tables up to 12 x 12 by Year 4. There continues to be debate in government over whether to introduce compulsory KS2 times tables tests.

Imperial measures: These have made something of a comeback. Children are taught Roman numerals into thousands, and how to convert between imperial and metric measures, such as miles and kilometres.

Algebra: This is now introduced to all children, not just those working at a higher level, and the same applies in Wales.

Order of operations: In Year 6, children are now expected to know and use the order of operations, i.e. Brackets, Orders (powers and roots), Division and Multiplication, Addition and Subtraction, or ‘BODMAS’ – something that was historically not taught until KS3.

Welsh variation

In Wales, the current Welsh National Numeracy Framework has a theme of progression through six key strands, with a focus on numeracy across the curriculum. The strands in question are ‘developing numerical reasoning’ and using skills in ‘number’, ‘measuring’, ‘geometry’, ‘algebra’ and data. Some KS2 topics in the Welsh framework to be aware of include:

Multiplication facts: Knowing these up to 10 x 10 and using them to solve division problems is expected in Year 6.

Negative numbers: In Wales this is taught throughout KS2; in England they’re usually learning from Year 4.

Managing money: This topic is also taught across KS2, and includes the pros and cons of having a bank account.

Representing and interpreting data: This is required of children throughout KS2, using lists, charts, tables and diagrams (in England, children aren’t required to represent data). In Welsh schools probability is taught in Years 5 and 6, but not taught in England at all until KS3.

Imperial measures: Children in Year 6 are expected to use the language of imperial measures, such as pints and miles.

It’s important to mention here that a new

Fun and games

At oxfordowl.co.uk you’ll find a wealth of free resources for both home and school, comprising games, activities (including Numicon, pictured), recipes and expert advice



curriculum is currently being developed in Wales, which is due to be launched in September 2018 and will be used across all Welsh schools by 2021, so this could all change! Yet no matter where you live, if you’re unsure about the methods your child is learning, a calculation policy should be accessible via the school’s website and through any school-run parent workshops that might be available.

Finally, games and activities are valuable tools for supporting home learning. Card games and board games, such as Monopoly, Snakes and Ladders and Chess, all utilise maths skills. Promoting maths when you’re next out shopping, cooking, baking, or planning a holiday will meanwhile help to highlight the importance of maths in everyday life – and hopefully make maths feel more like fun than a chore...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Louise Pennington is the professional development leader for maths and Numicon at Oxford University Press



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Block the CYBERBULLIES

Could you recognise the tell-tale signs of cyberbullying?
Would you know what to do if you spot them?

Carolyn Bunting takes a closer look...



The extent to which primary school children are living their lives in a digital world was laid bare in an Internet Matters study earlier this year (see tinyurl.com/IM-6YO), which found that six-year-olds are as digitally advanced today as 10-year-olds were just three years ago.

The statistics showed that 44% of six-year-olds go online in their bedrooms compared with 27% in 2013, and that 26% use the web for social media, illustrating the staggering pace at which the digital landscape continues to evolve.

We can appreciate that the online world provides an incredible platform for children to learn from and engage with, but we must also recognise that it presents potential risks. 86% of 7 to 11-year-olds use some form of online communication, but according to the 2013 'Have Your Say' report (see tinyurl.com/have-say-13), 31% said that 'People being unkind' prevented them from enjoying time spent online – which serves to highlight how much cyberbullying is becoming an issue for younger children.

What to look for

Cyberbullying occurs when someone bullies others via some form of electronic means, be it social media, mobile messaging services or a gaming platform. Given that the behaviour will normally be repeated, and can often be devastating in its emotional impact, it's an issue that parents need to get to grips with as early as possible.

Initial safety precautions to ward against cyberbullying should include setting parental controls on your broadband and network. As children get older and come to have greater access to smartphones – along with the increased exposure to social media that this entails – parents must ensure that their child's device and accounts have appropriate privacy settings engaged, that their public-facing social media profile is sound, and that they're accessing age appropriate apps.

Even if you've made the personal decision not to give your child a smartphone, there is still a risk that your child could be targeted through apps installed on family devices and computers used at home; early conversations are a key prevention method.

At Internet Matters, we urge parents and teachers to familiarise themselves with the early signs of cyberbullying, and to look out for behavioural changes that may indicate that a child is being targeted.

These can include:

- Children stopping using their electronic devices suddenly or unexpectedly
- Appearing nervous or jumpy when using their devices, or becoming obsessive about being constantly online
- Changes in mood and behaviour, such as becoming sad, withdrawn and angry or lashing out
- A reluctance to attend school or take part in typical social activities
- Unexplained physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomach upsets
- A reluctance to discuss what they're doing online or who they're talking to

So what should we do if we think our child is being cyberbullied?

How to respond

1. Talk about it

Find the right time to approach your child if you think they are being cyberbullied – ask open-ended questions and listen without judging.

2. Show your support

Be calm and considered, explain how you will help them get through it and praise them for talking to you.

3. Don't stop them going online

Restricting a child's device usage, or taking it away altogether, might make things worse and make them feel even more isolated.

CASE STUDY: "The insults were really upsetting"

Julie's son Peter was targeted at the age of 11 on the video games service Xbox Live, which he had been using for the past two years. He was targeted by two boys at primary school.

Julie says, "It started as silly messages about his Minecraft buildings, but it soon escalated and turned into abusive messages and voicemails from the pair."

"I blocked the boys on all of Peter's channels, but the insults accusing him of being stupid and ugly continued on his YouTube channel – they were really upsetting. I consider myself quite digitally savvy, and luckily had very early conversations with Peter about cyberbullying and told him to come to me should he ever face comments online."

"He came to me straight away with the messages, and we took it to the school where we asked for their help. Having early conversations with Peter stopped him from dealing with it alone, and meant we could intervene straight away."

4. Help them deal with it

If the cyberbullying is taking place among the child's schoolfriends, advise the child to tell the perpetrator(s) how it has made them feel and ask them to take down the relevant comments or pictures.

5. Don't retaliate

Advise your child to not respond to abusive messages, and to leave conversations if they feel uncomfortable.

6. Block the bullies

Where possible, block any repeated bullying messages and report the sender using the social network or gaming platform's 'Report this user' or 'Report abuse' function.

7. Keep the evidence

Take screenshots in case you need proof later of what happened. On a Windows PC, press the 'Print Screen' key; on Macs, enter 'Shift+cmd+3'. Most smartphones now have a built-in screenshot function, but the method of activating it will vary according to the make and model.

We would also encourage you not to deal with the cyberbullying alone. Talk to friends, and where necessary, get the school involved. It's natural for your child to worry about what the outcome of doing this might be – how your school responds will vary, depending on their anti-bullying policy.

Take it further

Every school should have an anti-bullying policy in place, and may also have mentors who can help you. Further information about this will be available via the school website, so make sure you familiarise yourself with it. If you've not been provided with a copy of the school's anti-bullying or behaviour policy and are unable to find it online, ask the school's administrator or secretary.

Having familiarised yourself with the policy, contact your child's teacher or the head of pastoral care to arrange a meeting. Discuss plans for resolving the issue and ask them to give you an update once they've addressed the matter.

If the matter is successfully resolved, make sure that you continue to stay in tune with your child's digital world by having regular conversations and reiterating to them how they can come to you or their teacher should they face any further issues.

If the cyberbullying doesn't get resolved, and you don't feel it's being addressed properly, move up the school by finding out who is in charge of safeguarding and organising a meeting with them. Failing that, write to the head of the school and make an official complaint.

There is presently no law against cyberbullying, but some cyberbullying activities can constitute criminal offences in extreme cases. If you feel that your child may actually be in danger, contact the police.

Finally, don't stop when the bullying stops. Stay in touch with your child, keep up those conversations and consider whether counselling may be necessary in helping them deal with the after-effects of cyberbullying.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Carolyn Bunting is general manager of Internet Matters – a not-for-profit e-safety advice and information organisation

backed by the UK's major internet service providers.

 **@IM_org**

 **internetmatters.org**

HOW WE SPEND IT

Six PTA members tell us how they go about deciding what funding ends up where...

With school budget cuts making the headlines over the last few months, many PTAs are having to make increasingly tough decisions over how to spend their hard-earned funds.

Money made from fundraising events tends to be in high demand, and the committee often has to make difficult choices about where their funds will be most impactful. Taking into account the (often conflicting) demands of school staff, parents and councils can make the process of allocating funds incredibly complicated.

We asked some of our customers to share their experiences, tell us how they decide their spending priorities and what they generally spend their money on. Who knows – perhaps their explanations could help to inform your own spending decisions...



Representative: Tracy Hardy
School: Ninelands School
Location: Leeds
Ave. PTA profit per year: £9,000

In the last few years we've funded all sorts of resources for the school, including new reading scheme books, nativity costumes, an outdoor canopy and spot lighting for performances in the school hall. We've bought breakfast for

Year 6 pupils during SATS and leavers' gifts. The PTA also replaced a set of hall curtains that were so ancient, they were even remembered by some parents who were past pupils!

Sometimes we save up for a big item, rather than spending money throughout the year on multiple items. Our spending decisions are made by the headteacher, PTA committee and teachers – the teaching staff are asked for a wishlist of items, which are then narrowed down and proposed to the PTA committee for consideration.

Our last big purchase was a canopy to help create an outside classroom area for the Foundation Stage, so that they could make more use of our outdoor space. Stage lighting for both halls was also a pretty big spend. All of our purchases make a difference to the school, but the outdoor canopy had been on the wishlist for a long time. It was brilliant seeing it when it was complete and knowing that we helped to achieve it!

Representative: Caroline Courtney
School: Rowley Lane Infant, Junior and Nursery School
Location: Huddersfield
Ave. PTA profit per year: £10,000

We discuss our fundraising targets for the coming year at our AGM every September. We also ask for parents to contribute their ideas too, so we can include everyone's



Headteacher Jenny Shore (right) and part time teacher and PTA treasurer, Claire Lund (left) with the Huddersfield Town AFC mascot taken at the school's summer fair

opinions. The final spending decisions are ultimately made by the head, the teachers and the PTA committee.



"We replaced a set of hall curtains that were so ancient, they were even remembered by some parents who were past pupils!"

Over the last few years we've managed to buy a school-branded minibus, an outdoor shelter, a climbing wall and school library books. We've also been able to fund the school's texting service, presents for leavers and a subscription to First News. We're currently fundraising to have air conditioning fitted in the main hall, which is going to be a big expenditure but we're already halfway towards achieving our target. We're planning to have reached it by Summer 2018!

I think the minibus was our best purchasing decision: it's definitely reaping rewards now. Not only does it look fantastic, but it's also helped enormously in getting us to and from various off-site events, including sporting activities. The children also love the Buddy Bench that we had put into the playground, which the school council helped to paint.



Representative:
Lisa Smith Walker
School: Friends of
St Mary's School
Location: Truro
**Ave. PTA profit per
year:** £4,500 (topped
up quarterly by anonymous donor)

We aim for one or two big spends per year that can benefit the whole school, and always put aside £200 per class per year to spend on whatever resources the teachers would like. We also have regular yearly projects, like leavers' hoodies and transport for school trips to camp. The rest of the spending decisions are discussed by the committee and headteacher, particularly bigger and more expensive projects, though we do also like to hear what parents think about how the money should be spent.

We've recently funded classroom equipment, sports equipment and a greenhouse, and have also paid for a travelling planetarium to visit our school, which the children absolutely loved. But our best purchasing decision was probably a whole-school trip to a theme park, as a thank you to the children when the school received an Ofsted Outstanding!



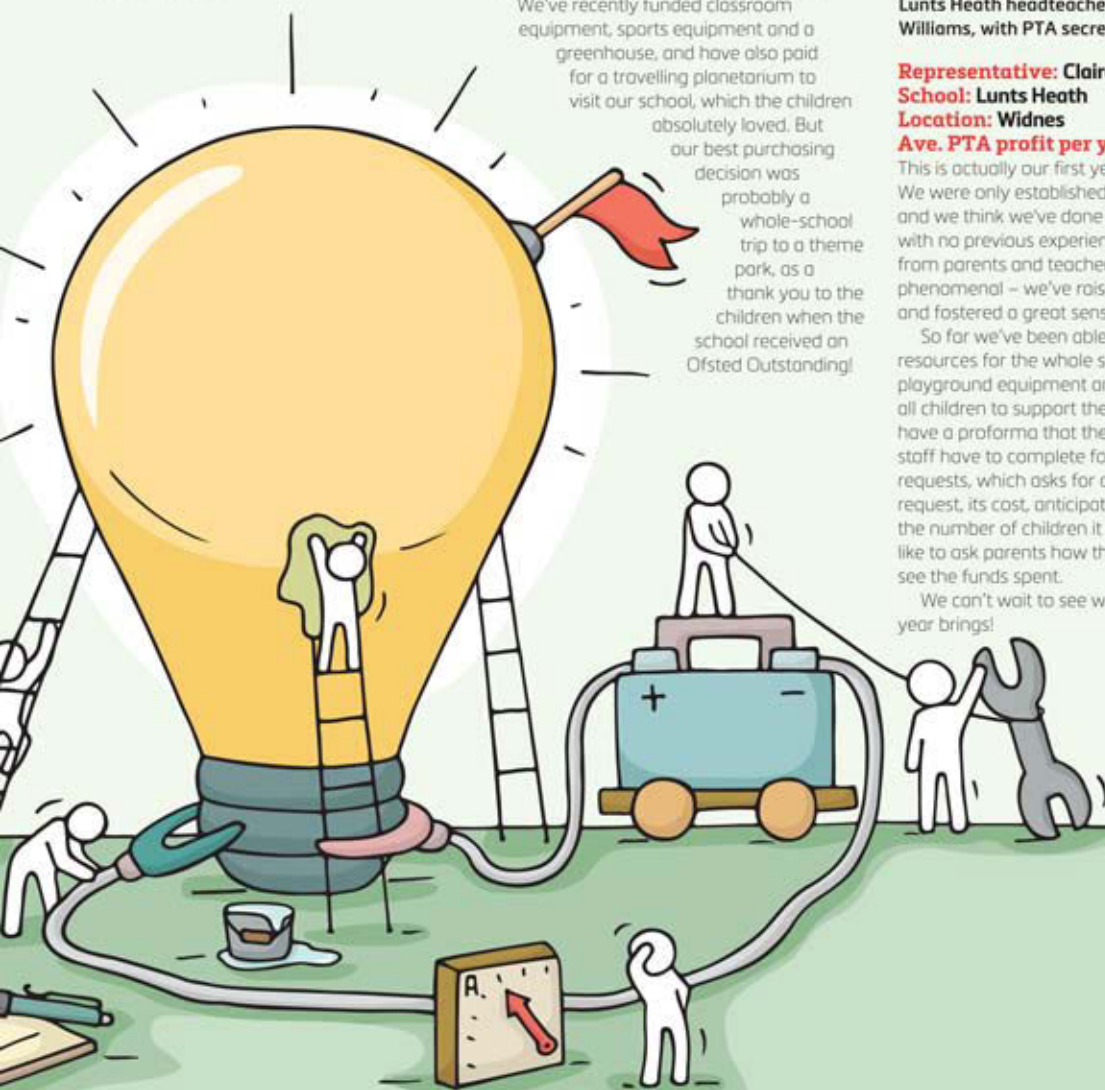
Lunts Heath headteacher Andrew Williams, with PTA secretary Lisa Finnigan

Representative: Claire Campbell
School: Lunts Heath
Location: Widnes
Ave. PTA profit per year: £7,000

This is actually our first year as a PTA. We were only established last October, and we think we've done pretty darn well with no previous experience! The support from parents and teachers has been phenomenal – we've raised over £7,000 and fostered a great sense of community.

So far we've been able to pay for spelling resources for the whole school, some new playground equipment and workshops for all children to support the curriculum. We have a proforma that the head and teaching staff have to complete for all spending requests, which asks for details of the request, its cost, anticipated benefits and the number of children it will help. We also like to ask parents how they would like to see the funds spent.

We can't wait to see what next year brings!





Representatives:
Emily Tittley and Lisa Vose
School: St. Anne's
Fulshaw
Location: Wilmslow
Ave. PTA profit
per year: £16,614
(£125 per pupil)



All parents at our school are automatically members of the PTA, and all spending decisions are discussed and voted on at the monthly PTA meetings and AGM.

We have large fundraising projects that may span several years, and also a yearly wishlist which is proposed by the school and agreed upon by the PTA committee. Parent Governors and the current headteacher, in their capacity as parents at the school, do have a say on spending, but only in their role as parents and therefore as members of the PTA.

Several years ago our funds paid for outdoor play equipment, which continues to be much loved by the pupils, and we pay for a visiting music teacher who delivers music lessons to each class. The PTA also recently helped to fund a new school building called 'The Egg Box' – a fantastic resource which is

primarily used as a library, but also serves as a space for small group work and meetings. As a small school the extra space was very welcome! The building of the Egg Box wouldn't have been possible without the hard work and dedication of previous PTA committees.

Our next fundraising project is to resurface a large area of our playground, so that it can be used in all weather.



Friends of West Horndon Primary School founder and Chair, Vicki Edgar

Representative: Nicole Southwell
School: West Horndon Primary School
Location: Essex
Ave. PTA profit per year: £5,000

We're a relatively new PTA, having only been formed two years ago. The committee and school work closely together, and we very much take our lead from the head as to where our money should be spent. She's very keen that our fundraising efforts be put towards additional activities, and not for purchasing items that the school should be in a position to fund itself.

Our main spend to date has been on our resident actor and author visits from Chris Connaughton. Each class spends time with Chris, who adds fantastic value to our curriculum. The kids love it and get so much from his visits!

Our profits from last year and this year are to be spent on a purpose-built track, as the school is invested in the Daily Mile – a movement to improve the physical, emotional and social health and well-being of our children, whatever their age or circumstances. We're currently aiming to raise £10k to fund this worthwhile addition to our school.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tes Macpherson is the founder of PTAsocial.com, a free app for PTAs to plan their fundraising events and get more parents

helping. Start your free account today at ptasocial.com.

"We have large fundraising projects that may span several years, and also a yearly wishlist"



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Photography: CliQQ Photography
cliqq.co.uk.

Accounts: 01206 505995

Design & reprographics:
Ace Pre-Press 01206 508608

Subscriptions department:
Zoe Charge, zoe.charge@aceville.co.uk
01206 505922

Subscription enquiries:
0844 576 7861

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Published by: Maze Media (2000) Ltd, 25
Phoenix Court, Hawkins Rd, Colchester, Essex,
CO2 8JY. Tel: 01206 505900

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Could your next fundraiser benefit from some branded merchandise?

Initiatives Fundraising explains how its bespoke school branded products can lend a personal touch to your next fundraising event...



Can you tell us more about the products you offer? What are your biggest sellers?

We were conscious that traditional school fundraisers needed to be brought in the 21st century, which is why we've introduced a range of unique colours and products across the Initiatives Fundraising range, such as our collection of tea towels and aprons in vibrant red, grey and chocolate. Our best seller is the now well-known Bag for Life!

Are there minimum order quantities in place for any of the products?

The minimum order is 50, and orders must be placed via the school – this helps to ensure that the highest level of funds are raised from orders being bundled together.

What sort of feedback have you received – are you aware of any cases where schools have used your products in an unusual or noteworthy way?

We did receive a lovely testimonial from Elham Primary school: 'We are delighted with the product, and especially with how easy the process has been – the pictures on your postcard-sized paper especially. A friend is PTA chair at another school, and had to pin lots of postage stamp-sized pictures onto a big sheet, which was a complete headache for her!'

Can you describe for us the type of service that Initiatives Fundraising offers?

We've done self-portrait products for a while now, and through consulting with parents and teachers we've come up with a headache-free process to make things easier for schools. Our service helps schools create their own school aprons, tea towels or bags, providing them with a quick and efficient way – because time is precious – of creating quality branded products to support their fundraising initiatives. That might include bags and swimming towels for children to use throughout the school year, keepsakes, gifts for mother's day, or prizes for the Christmas and summer fair, for example.

What does the process of turning a drawing into a product usually involve?

The very first step is to request a starter pack from us. We'll provide you with some ready to use drawing sheets, as well a sample you can show to parents, pre-sale flyers and forms for taking pre-booked orders. There's no need for any cutting, gluing or stamping of stamp-sized pictures to posters – we'll do all the hard work for you!

How long does it usually take for the products to be created and delivered?

We'll deliver your order within three weeks of receiving the drawings submitted via our template and a completed order form.



To find out more, call 0845 609 02 06 or visit initiatives-fundraising.co.uk



Let's EXPERIMENT!

We hear from **Oli O'Neill** about the education provider Science Boffins, and its mission to open children's eyes to the wonders of science...

Science Boffins have spent the past 11 years focussing on one goal – to show children that education, and science in particular can be fun. In that time, here are some of the things we've found...

1 When children have fun, they learn more effectively

There's a direct and positive correlation between children having fun and their receptiveness to learning. As soon as their focus is on enjoyment, they'll want to pay attention and listen. And when they're listening, they're learning.

2 Children need opportunities to ask questions

There are many science-related areas that children want to explore, yet don't have opportunities to ask about. That's why open Q&A sessions form part of every Science Boffins presentation, so that pupils have the freedom to ask just these kinds of questions.

3 Only 15% of children aspire to be scientists

According to research conducted by Kings College London in 2013, only 15% of children aged 10-14 want to be a scientist when they grow up – much lower than most other industries. That said, there's also a distinct link between those subjects that children enjoy at school and the careers they pursue later on. Change one, and you can change the other.

4 Aristotle got it right in 350 BC

As the great Greek philosopher and scientist put it in *Nicomachean Ethics*, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them." As budgets get tighter, and health and safety laws become stricter, opportunities for physical, hands-on learning seem to be diminishing – but that doesn't alter the fact that that people, children especially, learn better through doing. Many children

can benefit from the kind of kinaesthetic (hands-on) learning that will now often be provided via extra-curricular activities.

5 Science isn't just about science

Science extends far beyond atoms, forces, plants and so forth. The subject encourages children to develop skills in problem solving, practice careful observation and analysis, think creatively and much more besides. Whether a child chooses a career in science or not, the skills they'll learn through STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths) education are invaluable.

Educational entertainment

11 years ago we had a vision of encouraging children to enjoy science through parties, school workshops and other events. As of summer of 2017, we've to date successfully engaged with more than two thirds of a million children.

When a child joins a Science Boffins presentation, they'll be encouraged to explore a specific topic, get hands-on and find out everything they can about it. The key word is fun, and whilst we don't claim to be teachers, we do promise a combination education and entertainment rolled into one.

We've often dealt with PTAs who have booked our events for schools, since they can be delivered in a range of settings – be it as part of a science day during term-time, a science camp during the holidays or a school fête.

So far we've worked with over 300 schools in 2017 alone, and have over 50 presenters based around the UK, covering most areas across the country, so no child need miss out on the fun!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Oli O'Neill is head of development at Science Boffins

scienceboffins.co.uk
[@Science_Boffins](https://twitter.com/Science_Boffins)





Teaching for **MIND & BODY**

Helen Clare outlines the numerous physical, mental and emotional ways in which primary children can benefit from being taught yoga...

Has your child's school introduced yoga and mindfulness practices into its daily routines? If not, then read on to find out why it's something schools ought to offer, and how they can be encouraged to do so...

Yoga, considered a science and a way of living, has been around for 5000 years. Yoga is made up of many aspects, from physical movements and postures, to breathing, meditation and living peacefully with love and respect for yourself and for all other living beings.

First and foremost, yoga is a great way, if not the best, to introduce children to the concept of mindfulness. Through its movements, the mindful, peaceful, present state of being is easier to achieve, without even knowing it. It's fun, a great form of exercise that's accessible to all and can enhance focus, improve behaviour and induce calm.

The physical benefits

Yoga is a non-competitive exercise that everyone can enjoy. Less sporty children get the chance to enjoy moving

and appreciating their bodies, without experiencing anxiety over competition or being assessed. More athletic kids get to enjoy trying something new and challenging, while everyone enjoys the self-esteem boost of seeing themselves progress. Balancing and standing poses will help to improve children's balance, coordination and strength. Other poses can help develop and maintain flexibility, while encouraging good posture.

You'll probably have heard much talk of mindfulness in schools, and how important it can be in education settings. Yet seated mindfulness practice, whether for adults or children, is very difficult, and in any case, our kids are already sitting too much as it is. Yoga is a form of 'moving mindfulness' – by moving through the postures, while considering their movements and their breathing, children can find a mindful state more easily than when asked to just sit and consider sensation and breathing.

Physical relaxation is something I'm often asked about, which may be because children simply don't get time to properly relax anywhere else. Children now are often busy not just with school, but also after-

school clubs and homework, and will tend to grow up in busy families. To see children lying completely relaxed is a wonderful sight. Teaching them how it feels to be fully relaxed can help them sleep, reduce stress and help them learn and grow.

Emotionally calm and relaxed

Through practising the balancing poses, children will learn to focus more fully. They'll want to achieve a specific pose, and once they've managed it, will want to hold it for longer. Sooner or later, this concentration will then go far beyond PE. Teachers I've previously worked with have reported much higher abilities to concentrate in lessons following yoga. The combination of exercise, mindful movement, breathing and relaxation teaches children how it feels to be emotionally calm and relaxed – which is how they should be feeling most of the time.

We can teach them methods to use throughout their childhood and beyond. Yoga offers a toolbox of techniques that children can use to self-regulate their behaviour, calm themselves down, clear their own mind and feel more positive.

The impact of yoga follows children out

of the yoga 'lesson' and into the rest of their school day, which means it will also follow them back home. Parents have reported their children wanting to show them yoga poses and teaching them to younger siblings, while exhibiting a greater calmness, improved behaviour, awareness of their emotional state and the ability to self-regulate their behaviour. I've been told by more than one child that when a sibling annoys or bullies them, they'll use yoga to calm themselves down and feel better, rather than retaliate.

A relaxed child will learn optimally and grow optimally. Yoga postures stretch the muscles, helping to release built-up tension and making it easy to relax. Teaching conscious relaxation as part of yoga familiarises children with the difference between tense and tight muscles, enabling them to be more aware of when they are and aren't relaxed.

It's only when they're in a calm and relaxed state, both physically and mentally, that a child can fulfil their true learning potential. Mindfulness optimises brain integration and development of the pre-frontal cortex, known as the executive functioning region of the brain. This is the part that regulates emotion and behaviour, plans, organises, rationalises and makes decisions – all skills that we want to promote.



How to get started

1 Encourage your school to find a good children's yoga teacher – ideally one with adult and child training and previous school teaching experience. Check the directory at classyoga.com to see if there's someone trained by us in your local area.

2 Use our online yoga classes, which are specifically designed for classroom use. Your school can sign up to a free 10-day trial to try them out.

3 Discuss the possibility of sending staff to a children's yoga teacher training course, or bringing a trainer into school.

TIGERS, DRAGONS AND SUPERHEROES

Why not try these simple yoga exercises with your child at home?



Tiger

Great for: balance; core strength; focus and concentration

Start on your hands and knees and feel your balance here. Keeping your eyes still, gazing at something ahead, stretch one leg back behind you parallel to the floor. When you're ready, stretch your opposite arm out in front. See if you can keep your focus and balance for three to five breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Dragon

Great for: waking up and energising; leg and core strength

From your hands and knees, place one foot forward, checking that it's flat on the floor with your ankle under your knee. Take your hands to your hips and when ready, reach your arms all the way into the air – these are your 'dragon wings'. Take a breath in through your nose, and breathe your fire out!



Superhero

Great for: back strength; improving posture

Lie on your front, stretching your legs back behind you and your arms out in front. Count to three, then 'take off', lifting your legs, arms, chest and head. Holding the pose, see if you can take three big breaths.



Sit and breathe

Try this a little bit at a time – it's usually easier after doing some poses, and can be lovely to do when lying flat on your back. Place one hand on your tummy and the other on your chest. Notice them moving up and down as you breathe. Think about breathing into your tummy, then up into your chest and all the way out. Let it be easy, and don't try too hard. As you breathe in, think 'calm'; as you breathe out, think 'relax'.

Yoga with mindfulness can build concentration, promote self-regulation of behaviour, assist with children's learning, boost motivation, and in turn, improve attainment.

***Disclaimer** – Take responsibility for the health and well-being of your children and yourself at all times, and obtain guidance from a good teacher. Seek advice from a doctor if you have any pre-existing health complaints before commencing a yoga practice.*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Helen Clare is a yoga teacher and founder of Class Yoga; previously a primary school teacher, she switched to teaching

yoga full-time after seeing the benefits it bestowed upon the children in her classes

classyoga.com
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Going into GOVERNANCE

If you're considering making the jump from PTA to governing board, there are some things you should know first, as **Barbara Johnstone** explains...

Every school, be it an academy, multi-academy trust or a maintained school, has a governing body. Their job, according to the DfE-issued Governance Handbook (see tinyurl.com/dfe-gov-handbook) is 'To provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance.'

I myself am a primary school governor, having previously held a similar role at a different school, and see the role of governor as being a demanding, yet rewarding one. In the process of holding full governing body meetings and organising various committees, the governing body will help to ensure that:

- Pupils' learning and progress is promoted
- Pupils are able to work in a safe and secure environment
- Attention is given to the overall well-being of staff

The role of school governor might appear to be fairly straightforward, but it will place considerable demands on an individual's time if they're to fulfil the duties of the role effectively. The National Governors' Association considers governors to be one of the largest volunteer forces in the country. That illustrates the extent to which governors are prepared to willingly give up their free time in order to make a positive contribution to pupils' education.

Who makes up a governing body?

The members of a governing body come from all walks of life. Most will typically have a particular skill, or some form of specialist knowledge, that they bring with them to ensure that the governing body as a whole has a broad base of expertise on which to draw.

Some members might come from the

world of finance or the commercial sector, or perhaps be drawn from elsewhere within the education profession. A governor with experience in finance, for example, might be assigned to a specific committee related to school revenues or funding, which will likely be the best use of the skills that he or she has to offer. In a similar vein, a retired teacher would be a valuable addition to a curriculum committee, which would provide opportunities for him or her to share their accumulated experience and knowledge.

Each governor will also usually be given a specific area of responsibility, such as special educational needs or English, depending on an individual governor's areas of interest. Every governing body will further have a Chair and Vice-chair elected by the other

members; full governing body meetings and committee meetings will usually take place once a term.

What qualities do governors need?

The DfE's competency framework for governors (see tinyurl.com/dfe-gov-competency), lists seven 'principles and personal attributes' that governors should be able to demonstrate. According to this, the members of your governance board should be:

- Committed
- Confident
- Curious
- Challenging
- Collaborative
- Critical
- Creative

One could almost take



for granted the idea that a governor should be 'committed' and 'confident' – how would they be able to make contributions to meetings if they weren't? The other five merit a closer look.

On the face of it, being 'curious' and 'challenging' could be seen as going together. You might see this happen in meetings, when governors ask specific questions in order to clarify the details concerning a particular case or situation. You might see it on other occasions when certain forms of data are presented to the governing body that don't seem initially clear. Either way, you'll want governors in the room who are prepared to seek out whatever information they need to improve their understanding.

Similarly, a governor who is 'challenging' will be one that doesn't accept things at face value, but instead seeks further clarification where needed and always strives to improve their understanding and approach to any given situation.

Since any governing body will be expected to work together as a team, it's seems natural that working together through 'collaborative' engagement will be needed if the governing body is to function effectively. Collaboration,

of course, involves listening to others and building positive relationships – between the governors themselves, but also with the wider school and local community.

The ability to be 'critical' again relates to the ability to ask useful questions and challenge others, but with an important addition – being supportive while doing so. It relates most directly to cases where governors look to improve their own effectiveness within the governing body by attending governor training sessions.

Finally, it's important for governors to be 'creative', open-minded, able to solve problems and willing to foster innovation and creative thinking. If that's the case, it will ensure that the governing body will always moving forward for the benefit of the school.

Is it a worthwhile role?

An effective governing body will review and evaluate its role on a regular basis. This might involve members identifying what they perceive as strengths and areas for development, before setting targets for the future. Governors will also refer to the school's

Ofsted reports to check that any issues previously raised by inspectors have been addressed.

Aside from attending formal governing body meetings, members will also have opportunities to visit the school, talk to staff and pupils and attend assemblies. Governors will receive invitations to school concerts, sports days and other informal activities, enabling them to gain a wider view of the workings of the school and the pupils' learning. Governors should also see to it that the pupils are happy in school, and that they're being both challenged and appropriately supported.

Ultimately, the benefits of being a governor surely outweigh the disadvantages. They play a part in making sure that staff and pupils have respect for each other and love learning together. The role of school governor is an important one within the life of a school, as well as one that can be hugely rewarding for the governors themselves.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Barbara Johnstone is a retired teacher, former Ofsted inspector and holds a Doctorate in Education



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THE PERSONAL TOUCH

If you're in search of an appealing fundraising idea for this year's Christmas term, you might want to take a look at this service from IQ Cards that enables children to design their own personalised printed cards for the festive season – or indeed any other time of year. The children create their

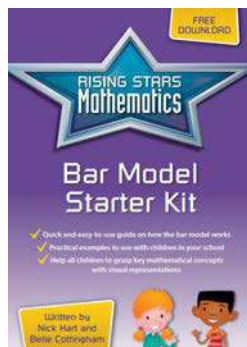
own designs in class using custom forms supplied to the school, which parents then get to see at home, alongside a covering flyer with ordering details. Once the orders and payments are received by the school, the cards will be delivered to the school individually wrapped for ease of distribution. iqcards.co.uk



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English four-hole ocarinas are easy to play, easy to teach and easy on the ear in a whole class setting. Simply cover the four holes in different combinations to play 14 musical notes and get started playing well-known tunes straight away. Ocarina Star Buys are available for 24, 36 and 60 children and include free resources for the teacher worth £122 including a CD-Rom and audio CD, an ocarina for every child, plus music books and flashcards. The ability to read musical notation is not essential, as everyone follows special child-friendly ocarina tablature – effectively a form of 'picture music'. ocarina.co.uk

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PROBLEM SOLVING

From Rising Stars Mathematics comes the Bar Model Starter Kit – a free, easy-to-follow guide to getting started with the bar model. Said model can help children tackle word problems by encouraging them to visualise the problem at hand and decide which operation (addition, subtraction, multiplication or division) it calls for. The Bar Model Starter Kit comprises a 12-page booklet that explains how the bar model works and how it can be used for Years 1 to 6, and is available as a free download for schools registered with the Rising Stars website. risingstars-uk.com/barmodelstarter

ON THE BEAT

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TIME FOR TEA TOWELS

Fundraising this Christmas? Why not offer parents something personal and practical, like these children's self-portrait tea towels from Stuart Morris? To take advantage of this tried-and-tested way of raising money, order your free artwork pack now by calling 01473 824212 or emailing info@stuartmorris.co.uk. If you sell 300 tea towels at £4.00 each, you'll make over £670 in profit for your school. Order before 3 November for a 5% discount – if you can find school fundraising tea towels at a better price, Stuart Morris promises to beat it! stuartmorris.co.uk

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"The way the system works is mindless"

Jake Taylor talks to former Catatonia vocalist and broadcaster **Cerys Matthews**, about the challenges that schools are increasingly having to contend with...

You're an arts ambassador for Linden Lodge School – how were you appointed to the role, and what does it entail?

Lyndon Lodge is a college for blind, partially sighted and challenged individuals that find it hard to communicate in a way that most people do. I was invited by a staff member there to become an arts ambassador. She was, I believe, originally from Wales and was keen to put on an Eisteddfod, which is basically a competitive arts festival. This started off in the form of 'slams', like poetry slams in a way – they were held in pubs and gathering places many, many centuries ago and have been held in Wales for time immemorial.

They've continued, and now incorporate disco dancing and art competitions, as well as the more traditional poetry recitals and singing. It's a great explosion of creative energy and I love it.

I go there once a year for these Eisteddfods and try to keep these sorts of things in the public eye. I've had teachers from Linden Lodge on my radio show as well, to draw a spotlight to the great work they do there.

More broadly, what are your feelings about arts education in primary and secondary schools at the moment, based on your children's experiences? How does it compare with your own schooling?

I was handed a recorder for free when I was probably around four or five years old, and that's when it became very apparent that my overriding interest was, and always would be, music. As soon as they gave me that recorder, I was off and I never looked back.

I don't think music or the arts should just be accessible by an elite, or the most enlightened or educated in society. It has to be there across the board, available to all children, regardless of what sorts of homes they come from. If there's no interest in the home for the arts they should be able to have access to it in the schools, so that we all start from a more equal platform as we go through life.

What do you see as the biggest problems currently facing the education system?

At my local primary school, Thomas Jones in Notting Hill, headteacher David Sellens won an OBE for his services to education last year. He runs a tight ship and there's nothing wasted. You have provisions for children in wheelchairs, and there's nothing that isn't catered for in that school. Now if even he is saying that it's going to be struggle, with teachers being laid off and a reduction in the percentage of children with special educational needs that they'll be able to take, then I know that it's been pushed too far.

How good have your children's schools generally been at keeping you informed of their progress?

The way the system works at the moment is mindless. The current marking system, for instance, is ridiculous. I get my children's school reports back, and I have no idea how my child is doing. Everything is so convoluted. Don't get me wrong, there's so much good stuff going on, but that comes from the teachers primarily – it's the tools and systems they have to work with that are hampering them.

Cerys Matthews was lead singer of the band Catatonia in the mid to late 90s, before moving into the world of broadcasting and currently presents the show *Cerys On 6* on BBC 6 Music at Sunday lunchtimes.

As well as being a mother to three children, Glenys, Johnny and Red, Cerys is also involved with the celebrated specialist school Linden Lodge, and is an outspoken community activist.





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PLAN TO SUCCEED

Once you've got the basics right, you can put together an effective, enjoyable fundraising event every time – and **Lesley Smeardon's** guide is a great starting point

Many PTAs up and down the country have already set the wheels in motion for a busy season of fundraising events which bring together families, teachers, governors and the local community. Such activities and collaboration sends a positive message to our children, involving them and encouraging them to support the efforts of their parents and teachers. But of course, behind the fun is a flurry of activity to ensure the day runs smoothly and draws in a crowd!

Use our top tips below to help you plan and organise your event and check

out pta.org.uk for more advice and guidance.

It's all about timing

The sooner you can set a date and time for your event, the better. Make sure your proposed date doesn't clash with other school events, community activities and if possible, with other PTA fairs in the neighbourhood.

Once you've set your date, identify an overall coordinator and build a group of willing volunteers. Consider splitting them into working teams to take responsibility for different elements of the event such as food and drink, entertainment, publicity

and promotion. It's also worth befriending the school premises manager, and if you don't already have one as part of your working party, asking the school to appoint a teacher who can act as a link between the PTA and teaching staff.

Deal with the details

You'll need to check whether you need a licence or not. Get a Temporary Event Notice if you're planning on selling alcohol, a music licence if your staging live music (you won't need this for background music) and a lottery licence if you're going to be selling raffle tickets. You can get all of these from your local authority.

Health and safety needs to be considered too. Carry out a risk assessment and make sure there's a first aider on hand to help. You could also appoint an external first aid provider, but remember to book them well in advance as they will be in high demand during busy seasonal periods. It's also wise to inform your local ambulance service ahead of any large events.

Don't forget about your insurance. Make sure you've got this in place ahead of any fundraising or social events, and check that it covers public liability for the following:

- All the planned activities at the event
- Any PTA-owned and hired-in equipment
- Money loss and personal accident cover for all volunteers

All outside suppliers must have their own public liability insurance.

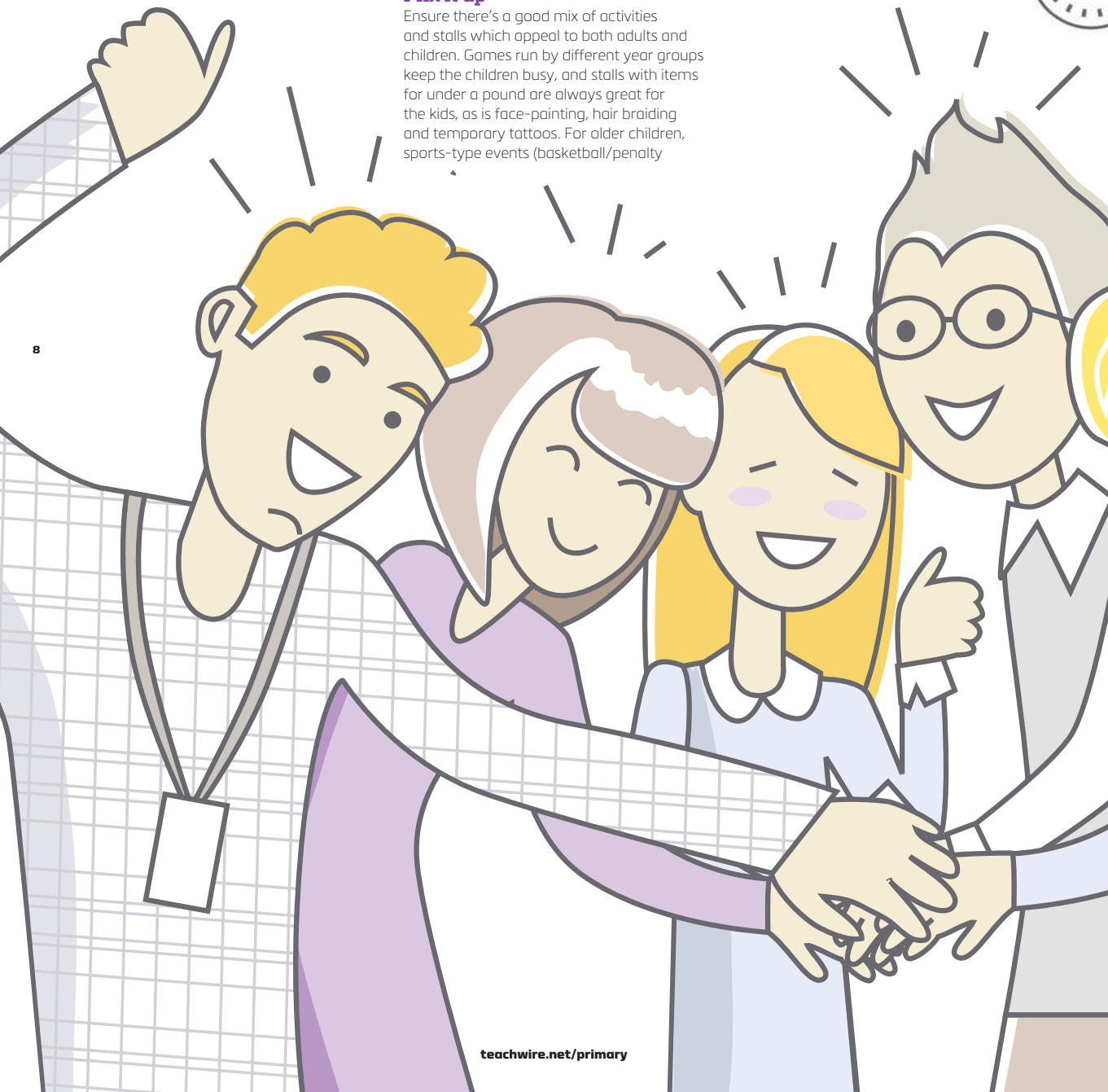
PTA UK members automatically receive bespoke insurance cover provided by Zurich as part of their annual membership fee, so if you're already a member don't forget to log in and get the latest advice.


Mix it up

Ensure there's a good mix of activities and stalls which appeal to both adults and children. Games run by different year groups keep the children busy, and stalls with items for under a pound are always great for the kids, as is face-painting, hair braiding and temporary tattoos. For older children, sports-type events (basketball/penalty

shoot outs), photo booths, live music and stalls where good natured staff members get doused with water are popular.

Consider offering parents the option to rent for a fee a 'pitch' on which to sell their own goods, where they keep the profit – but be clear as to what is and isn't allowed to be sold, and ensure that the relevant insurances are in place. Renting pitches out to commercial stallholders from local businesses is also a good way to bring in funds, and might make your event feel more professional.





“Ideally, aim to start publicising the event around six weeks ahead of time”

Got the gear?

It's really important you consider what equipment you're going to need for each stall. Think about what you've already got before considering hiring as an option. If you do need to hire in equipment, consider whether the stall is viable, once you've taken into account the costs of the equipment and the likely return.

Otherwise, be creative and see what's available in school which could be used instead. Tiered school benches with plastic pots on top can serve as Nerf Gun targets, for example.

Let them entertain you...

Some PTAs hire in outside entertainers and activity providers, which can range from magicians to climbing walls, a loan of a local fire engine and clowns. This can be a good way of giving the event a greater sense of occasion and encouraging people to stay longer (and perhaps spend a bit more on food and drink!). As there'll be an initial outlay in terms of cost, however, this option will need to be given careful consideration. You'll want to be certain that you'll make your money back on it, as well as a profit.

Don't forget you'll also need to think about where this entertainment will physically take place. If it's an outdoor activity, will its success be dependent on the weather? Is it likely to need specific staging, a certain type of electricity supply or specialist lighting in order for it to work?

And the winner is...

Many PTA events will involve a raffle. If you're going to hold one, start preparing it well ahead of time. You'll need to decide if you're going to sell tickets on the day or in advance, and have your printed tickets and relevant licences in place.

Approach local businesses and parents to see if they're able to offer any prizes. Don't forget to promote the prizes that you've managed to secure, and be sure to thank your contributors on event programmes, newsletters and any other marketing materials you'll be producing for the event.

Find out more

Become a member of PTA UK and you'll be able to access a range of exclusive resources and information to support your PTA and fundraising events. Contact the membership team on **0300 123 5460** or visit pta.org.uk to find out more.

You can also join the PTA UK Facebook page, where you'll be able to share tips and information with others active in PTAs around the country, and follow @PTAUK on Twitter

Spread the word

Your event programmes, signage and other forms of publicity should also be prepared well in advance. Ideally, aim to start publicising the event around six weeks ahead of time by distributing posters throughout the local community, promoting it via social media and engaging with your local newspaper to create a buzz about what's going to be on offer. You could also approach local estate agents to see if they'd be prepared to publicise your event on their boards, and see if they might be interested in promoting their business on boards at the event itself for a fee.

Use your event as an opportunity to promote the work of the PTA. Set up a PTA stall at the entrance where volunteers can get their rota schedules, visitors can pick up programmes, and parents can find out how they can volunteer in future.

And finally...

After all the hard work of the event, it's time to raise a toast to all those who have helped in making the event a success. Set aside time to gather feedback from the event's volunteers and visitors to find out what worked well and where things could have gone better. This will then help in the planning for next year.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lesley Smeardon
is PTA UK's membership
services manager