

PTA meeting minutes – 6.2.25

Online via Zoom

- **Apologies for absence:** Lindsey Henderson, Sophie Gibson, Martha Gibbons, Catherine Vanrenen, GianCarla Setter, Teri Lammin, Melissa Dew, Nadine MacLennan
- **Present:** Joana Osorio (JO), Kate Sidaway-Lee (KSL), Nik Dow (ND), Molly O'Malley (MO), Sarah Powell (SP), Rosie Abraham (RA), Niki James (NJ), Jess Powis (JP), James Taylor (JT)

- **Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising:**

Minutes of the last meeting approved.

Christmas Events: KSL reported £210.50 raised from personalised Christmas gifts (last year £257, which was lower than the previous year). Process simple, went well with minimal effort. Decide in the autumn whether to continue with the same company or return to previous provider.

Christmas Bazaar: raised £2904, expenditure £886, net profit £2018 not including sponsorship. KSL - Positives: Most stalls did well. Food made a loss.

Historically food has been sponsored. No vegan food available (only vegetarian). Maybe aim for something cheaper next year, although price was good from the caterers. Food was quite complicated, maybe too many options / increased effort and stress due to complicated menu this time. Next year aim to have a simpler menu eg hot dogs, mac'n'cheese, something vegan. Most people eating were the children, so focus on child-friendly options next time. By having a simpler menu could keep this within the PTA (homemade) or arrange a sponsor, rather than an external company providing the food (JT). Total was good. Not so many flyers (with map) needed next year – perhaps target the younger classes. Other feedback – always busy, difficult with pushchairs, kids loved the games (ND). Christmas Bazaar is to raise funds but also to bring the school community together. Very festive (JO). Good choice of date at the start of the month. Queue for Santas grotto was long and very cold/raining – is there any way to change this – try to keep people inside the specialist room and escorted by the elves rather than waiting outside (RA). Other activities were available in the specialist room such as colouring and reindeer food (JO). Idea to consider timeslots. Fake snow was enjoyed by older kids (JT).

Nail painting worked really well and was busy throughout the evening. Craft stall was enjoyed (JP) but perhaps need something more complicated for older children (KSL). Quiet space was appreciated. Craft stalls don't do well financially, but enhance the atmosphere (JO).

Tokens for premium pupils all collected apart from 1 or 2 (KSL).

Really good event!! Everyone had a good time. Did not feel as busy/hectic as in previous years. Well done to everyone who supported the event (JT).

• **Spending strategy and allocation of funds:**

JO - PTA constitution referred to – in summary: to give to Topsham School opportunities that they would not otherwise have access to. Not focussing on the curriculum, but additional opportunities to achieve their full potential. PTA aim to provide opportunities for all – eg some children would not have opportunities for swimming lessons or to see a pantomime without this funding. The School know best what is needed, and the PTA should be led by this. This was discussed at the AGM – Mrs Whitehead & Mrs Wannell attended - and we discussed the basic contribution of £3600 (swimming lessons, residentials, Christmas show and lunch, coach travel). We also decided to top up the fund for reading for pleasure and promote cycling and scooting to school by providing more storage for these. The PTA is open to fund other needs/opportunities throughout the year. This was the starting point for the year (2024/25).

JO read out messages regarding the above:

Sophie has requested further discussion on allocation of funds. Martha – suggested summary newsletter at the end of each school year about how funds are raised and how these were spent, gathering ideas from parents on what to spend money on, and has volunteered to co-ordinate an online suggestion box for parents between now and July.

ND – need transparency, consider what clubs or sports could be supported, gaps in provision/opportunities in the local area, in agreement that school will know what is needed, knowing that everyone has had a voice is important and showing what funds are going towards might help people to feel more involved and understanding what we are doing.

NJ – good to have pool of ideas, but school should lead on this as they know what they need, concern that parents do not have the same perspective, is it worth finding out what other PTAs within the Federation are doing? is the Federation going to change things in terms of the role of the PTA eg travel costs may go down due to access to Federation transport which may affect the agreed yearly basic contribution.

KSL – would like the school to take the money more quickly, previous suggestions have not been taken up by the school, have not previously funded clubs but perhaps we could reconsider this, happy with cycle shed idea as they need replacing, in the past we have also funded external providers for drama.

JT – in agreement, some reservations about parents influencing the spending, money should be spent on something tangible whether that is focussed on a particular subject eg science week or experiences but need to spread money across

the school and ensure that every class benefits. Aim to give them experiences as a springboard to new hobbies, ideas etc. by exposing children to different activities. Would any teachers be interested in doing something to increase their level of expertise in something that could be used as a club? ie PTA funding training for a teacher which could then be used within school eg forest school.

RA – grumbles from parents who know that the PTA funds are not being spent, aren't understanding why, need “raise then spend approach”, rather than continued accumulation of funds. Would like to see some sort of forest school experience – KS1 area – would be really valuable.

JP – Outdoor education supported, or water sports, sea swimming experience. Would prefer to fund experiences rather than equipment that might not be used. Focus on saving up for a specific thing and communicating this to parents to get them to buy in to PTA events.

JO – at the end of Covid and we had £4k in the account. Thankfully the PTA has always been able to raise more money than the basic contribution, allowing us to support the school. The PTA funded training for all of the teachers in the school previously (Guy Claxton, Autumn 2022, £500, Learning Powers used within school) as a one-off and including an assembly with all students. Funding training for teachers has to be discussed and checked if in line with the constitution (as a registered charity, we always have to adhere to established rules).

MO – would like to go back to the staff and get some feedback for ideas. Mrs Watts has requested funding for the science week experiences again – before Easter, like last year. Mrs Watts has asked whether this year the pancake flips funds could be used for science equipment.

JO explained we will need to know how much is needed and what activities Mrs Watts wants to fund. All agreed the last science week was a great experience – all agreed and happy to fund. Pancake flip has always been a specific thing eg cooking equipment, gardening equipment, science equipment etc. However in some events we need to raise funds for the basic contribution that we are committed to. JO proposed that we could commit to funding the pantomime and the KS1 animal encounter in the basic contribution so that we would fund it every year (£1000). JT – agree with pantomime, consider ringfencing money for a KS1 event but not necessarily animal encounter. JO reported that the animal encounter has been repeated several times. NJ – suggested Y6 theatre trip, rather than in school experience. KSL advised that we have covered the basic expenses up to now this year, but nothing more, so further events/effort later in the year will be needed to fund additional projects.

JO - Bike and scooter shed to go forwards – aiming to double the space in KS1 and KS2. JO has met with Miss White to discuss this. Promoting healthy lifestyle habits and good for the environment (reducing the congestion and carbon footprint). KS1

don't have an appropriate place for bikes and so they are left by reception. Note KS1 gate is locked so whenever children are in clubs they have to leave bikes by reception in order to access them. Council and potential sponsors to be contacted. PTA contribution not yet confirmed – more information on costs needed and will be discussed on next meeting.

Miss White would like PTA support to spruce up the school: volunteers to paint sheds and small repairs and have a grounds day. Last done was right before Covid lockdown. JO requested more information on the best day for school for a grounds day in order to arrange this. Miss White has also requested support with organising a regular set time to keep up the gardening eg group of 2-3 parents on set day/time each week to work with different classes/teacher on a rota to maintain the outside space. ND - Miss Whitehead arranged a grounds morning last year and the children joined in for a while which they enjoyed. KSL asked whether it has to be parents or could it be volunteers from the Topsham Gardening and Allotment Society? JO requested MO to find out exactly what is needed and if volunteers can be outside the school community.

- **Pancake Flip Challenge:** Pancake day on 4th March (tbc by school). Volunteer needed to arrange prizes (vouchers) and wraps for the flip. JO suggested Topsham Treats as well as the Boathouse (who have sponsored previous years). JO will contact Topsham Treats and the Boathouse to ask if they can sponsor the vouchers. Sponsorship forms will go to parents. Miss White has suggested that the pancake flip could fund the spruce up of the school eg paint – not appealing? Other suggestion of more science equipment. Sports equipment suggested – MO to check with school if this idea has support. The PTA can pay for the spruce up separately. JT suggested if there are specific items eg shed paint, perhaps we could explore donation from parents (leftovers that may be available for donation) – could school provide a list? MO to follow up with what is needed.

- **Silent Auction / Quiz night:**

JO - Launch of bids to start on 24th February. Need to start asking for donations from parents & others (local shops and regional attractions). Volunteer team needed – we have a list of local businesses, who to approach and who does not usually donate. When approaching businesses, advise of benefit with regards to marketing (name on website) and increased promotion within the local community. Be creative & think more widely eg babysitting, a painting, guided tour of the fire station, baking, bike service, Zumba sessions, home cooking, allotment vegetables, ironing. Does not have to be professional services. Donations will be on the website for bidding - JO to update the website as lots are donated. Bidding will finish on 21st March (Quiz Night date). Use local business contacts. Need to contact regional attractions eg Crealy, climbing. MO

to organise Dartmoor Zoo lot. Last year raised £1120. Whatsapp message to be sent to year groups asking for auction lot donations and also in monthly newsletter next week.

Quiz night: Friday 21st March. Theme: TV/Movies (for dressing up). Quiz master: Marc Norris. JO will organise the bids on the night. Need bar team – NJ volunteered and will discuss with Catherine Vanrenen. Sponsorship for prizes needed - ?Rodney Spiller (hamper) for winners and wooden spoons.

• **Any other business:**

Suggestions box – to be discussed further – suggestions can always be sent via the PTA email or contact us page on the website. If changes are to be made as to how the school is managed (strategy, budgeting, staffing), it needs to go through the School / Federation Governors.

- **Date of next meeting:** In person, Tues 11th March 2025, 8pm at The Globe