

## St Patrick's PTFA Parents & Carers Questionnaire: February 2006

### Report of findings

#### Background

It is essential in the view of the PTFA committee that the parent body of the school are consulted in order to assist the PTFA in planning and prioritising its objectives.

To this end it was agreed at the PTFA meeting in January 2006 that it would be of value to gather views on matters such as,

- communication between PTFA and parents
- understanding of the PTFA's role
- favoured methods of fundraising and identified priorities for spending.

A questionnaire was devised and circulated in early February 2006 via two methods

- placed in book bags
- downloadable form on the PTFA page of the school's website

The questionnaire was also announced in the weekly school newsletter.

#### Response rate and issues in availability

Of the **150 copies supplied** to the school for distribution and unknown number downloaded through the website a total of **39 completed questionnaires were returned**. Based on the known number of 150 this represents a **response rate of 26%**. This is understood to be about average for a questionnaire of this nature and it should be borne in mind that all figures quoted in this report are based on that response rate.

Some parents have reported that they did not receive a copy of the questionnaire via the book bag. This could be due to one of any number of reasons so it would be wrong to make assumptions; however it is **recommended** that for future circulations via the book bag method the PTFA discuss with the school ways of ensuring that all parents and carers receive copies of important communications.

### Results and conclusions

#### Purpose and value of the PTFA

Parents were asked what they think the purpose of the PTFA is/should be. Not surprisingly the vast majority of respondents considered the purpose of the PTFA to be *raising funds for the extras in order to help enhance the experience of children at the school*. The following additional quotes from some responses were tied into fundraising but expand upon it and are a good representation of the comments most commonly made,

"Promotion of the school"

"Involve parents and school community"

"Strengthen relationships"

"Help parents and children to have fun whilst raising funds"

"Represent parents' views"

A final decision on the strap line for the PTFA has yet to be made but it is **recommended** that these findings are considered in doing so.

The commonality of views amongst parents on the purpose of the PTFA is interesting when set against the fact that the respondents were less certain of having a clear understanding of the PTFA's role and objectives. Only **62%** agreed or agreed strongly with the statement that they did have a clear understanding.

In determining the opinion of parents as to the value of the PTFA, it was pleasing to find that **95%** of respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with the statement that they consider the PTFA to be a valuable body that enhances the education of children at the school.

It would appear that there is pretty much unanimous agreement as to the overall purpose of the PTFA. People are less clear on the next layer down, the role and objectives and it is **recommended** that the PTFA agree and communicate a simple strategy and action plan based on agreed priorities, setting out purpose, role and objectives for the short to medium term with fundraising targets and a schedule of events. It is further **recommended** that this strategy and action plan be updated on an annual basis in consultation with parents/carers, teachers and the Board of Governors. This will help the PTFA address issues of clarity as evidenced by comments such as,

"Not clear who decides what regarding money to be spent and priorities between school and PTFA"

#### **PTFA meetings and events**

Of those that responded **56%** stated that they had not attended a PTFA meeting, this usually being due to difficulty in attending evening meetings (**46%**). Predominantly this difficulty was specifically for one of the following reasons,

- other commitments such as work or childcare
- distance from, or access to Corsham where meetings are traditionally held

**10%** of those that had not attended stated that it was due to a lack of information about the meetings and only **3%** stated it was due to a lack of interest.

Encouragingly, **all** of the **43%** of respondents that have attended a meeting and stated what their impressions were, judged the meetings to be useful, productive and/or interesting.

A significant **72%** of respondents stated that they have assisted with the running or organisation of a PTFA event in the past. Similarly despite only about half of respondents having attended a PTFA meeting, a whopping **82%** of all respondents stated that they would be *willing to assist with PTFA events in the future*.

"Keen to support but cannot commit to regular meetings"

"Happy to assist at events on the day"

Interestingly, when asked to consider the more strongly worded statement 'I am keen to get involved with the work of the PTFA', a smaller **56%** either agreed or agreed strongly. However this is still to be viewed as a positive result as of those that responded only **12%** stated that they disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement.

It is clear from this that there are a significant number of people who are willing to get involved and give of their time despite not being able to attend the meetings where matters are discussed and decisions are made. It is therefore **recommended** that the PTFA consider carefully both how it seeks to involve the majority who are unable

to attend meetings and communicates its ideas, decisions, priorities, key contacts, etc., with the main body of parents.

This recommendation is borne out by the finding that of all respondents, less than half (**43%**) consider that the PTFA does a good job of ensuring that everyone knows who to contact in connection with an event.

General comments about people’s views on the meetings they had attended were positive, e.g.

“I felt it was run in a professional and business like manner.”

**Skills, abilities, resources and connections that parents and carers have to offer**

This part of the questionnaire demonstrates that the parents and carers of children at St Patrick’s possess an extremely wide range of skills and abilities that they are willing to offer to help the work of the PTFA.

Most people (**46%**) are willing to offer ‘another pair of hands’. Next highest is IT skills, which **25%** of respondents stated they are able to provide. It is also pleasing to see that nearly **20%** of people have arts and crafts abilities that can be used.

The vast majority of respondents made some sort of comment on what they have to offer and in addition to those above, numbers of respondents by percent mentioned willingness to help in the following areas.

cooking 18%	sewing 8%	publicity 5%
word processing 15%	face painting 8%	purchasing 5%
driving 12%	first aid 8%	childcare 5%
writing 12%	cleaning 8%	planning 5%
serving 12%	sport 8%	graphic design 5%
marketing 10%	finance 8%	communications engineering 3%
ideas 10%	publicity 5%	filming and editing 3%
gardening 8%	networking 5%	

Results also show that there are connections with a number of businesses and organisations from within the parent/carer body that could prove useful to the PTFA in the future. These have been noted and will be followed up in due course. It is **recommended** that details of individuals and the skills they have listed be banked for follow up in planning of future events.

**Social events and fundraising events**

People were asked to comment on the types of social events that would appeal to them. Many responses were received and findings show that the majority favour a healthy mix of daytime family events and adult only social events. Comments on the value of these events demonstrate a desire to look beyond the simple raising of funds to helping in bringing the school community together in fun and rewarding ways.

The three most popular types of event mentioned by respondents were,

- family daytime events such as barbeques and picnics
- adult only evening events (a wide variety of types were listed but most seemed to involve dancing/music and/or alcohol)
- sport related events

People were asked to state whether they would attend specific types of event. This produced the following results,

Type of event	% indicating that they would attend
Summer fete	95
Christmas fete	92
Disco or party to celebrate school's 40 <sup>th</sup> anniversary	89
Family ceilidh/barn dance	82
Mixed children's 5 a-side football during the World Cup	77
Auction of promises	77
NCT style sale of nearly new clothing	77

People were also asked for suggestions as to other fundraising methods. A wide range of ideas were received and an amalgamation of these is listed here for information, in no particular order of priority. It is **recommended** that the PTFA consider these suggestions and the results above when compiling a schedule of both fundraising and social events in the future.

children's craft fairs	chargeable membership of PTFA	cheese and wine tasting
weekly school lottery	bingo	sponsored walks
race nights	half a term to increase £5 given to each family	dance
car boot sale	cake stalls	sports day
summer bbq	meals provided at home for cash	treasure hunt
skills raffle	quiz nights with sponsor supplied prizes	skittles tournament
event to celebrate Sister Stella's time at the school	summer ball	Easter egg hunt
rounders event	arts and crafts	sponsored skip or spelling
summer family picnic	mini Olympic day	

### Communications

People were asked how they would prefer to be kept informed of PTFA activities and events. Five options were listed and the results showing the % of respondents favouring each method are shown below,

Method of communication	% indicating a preference
School newsletter in book bag	82
PTFA newsletter in book bag	71
PTFA page of school website	36
E-mail	36
PTFA notice board	26

This would appear to indicate that the traditional method of a newsletter being sent out in book bags, be it part of the school weekly newsletter or a PTFA specific one, is the favoured means of communication.

That said when asked whether they had visited the school's website **51%** of respondents indicated that they had and **56%** agreed that they would find an expanded PTFA section of that website as a useful source of information.

Of those that have visited the website comments included,

“Very informative, especially for new families”

“Could be developed further”

”Ok but there are opportunities to involve pupils more and improve the presentation of school”

“Good start but the links could be better”

“Basic”

“Very good”

“Notice of holiday dates much earlier would be good”

It is **recommended** that these comments and the findings above are considered in determining any plans for increasing the use and accessibility of the school website and PTFA pages. It is **further recommended** that these plans, if developed, form part of the **previously recommended** strategy and action plan of PTFA activity if the PTFA is to address communications issues effectively as evidenced by comments such as,

“Communication a bit hit and miss.”

#### **Fundraising priorities for the PTFA**

Parents and carers were asked to offer their opinion as to what the priorities for PTFA fundraising should be.

The most commonly identified area for funding related to improvements to the **outdoor equipment and environment**. Specific comments representative of the huge support for making this area a priority are,

“Modernising outdoor area and providing a nature area with pond”

“Improved outdoor environment”

“Covered outdoor classroom and activity area”

“Friendship stops in playground”

Other priority areas that received significant support are an expanded library, sports equipment/activities and ICT facilities, such as interactive whiteboards.

Other suggestions included,

- school equipment
- a reading scheme
- days out for kids
- more staging for the hall

It is **recommended** that these findings are taken into account by the PTFA when discussing priorities with the school and formulating the **previously recommended** action plan.

#### **What should PTFA do more of and any other comments**

Finally, people were asked to comment on what they considered the PTFA should do more or less of. Only one comment was received in the ‘less of’ category and that related to the expense of attending the summer ball, however it should be noted that several comments in other parts of the questionnaire cited the ball as a worthwhile and fun event.

Suggestions and comments in the 'more of' category and general comments are as follows, in no particular order,

"Doing a grand job"

"More of same, more social events"

"Social evenings, Christmas fete please"

"Improve road safety, safety of lone children in and out of school"

"Family activities"

"Last PTFA was good at fundraising; I like the professional manner of new PTFA with minutes of meetings, etc."

"Encourage more parents to get involved"

"Social events at varied locations to bring parents together"

"Get the children involved"

"Sport related activities for kids, gardening club, more books for schools"

"PTFA committee member monthly surgery after school"

"PTFA do a fantastic job"

"Difficult to get in touch if not attending a meeting"

"Pictures of class reps and committee members up would be good"

It is **recommended** that these comments are considered by the PTFA when considering improvements to structures and processes. The following comment is worthy of particular attention as a really positive way of involving the key people in decision making,

"Consult the children more as to what they want"

The PTFA would like to thank all those who have taken the time to respond to the questionnaire. Your views are essential in helping set the priorities for the future and ensuring that we do the best we can for all our children during their time at St Patrick's – whilst having some fun along the way!

**Nick Skeet**

Vice Chair

St Patrick's PTFA

5 March 2006