

**Welcome to your
PTA**



at close



Friends

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Introduction

Welcome to our school

This booklet has been compiled by Ox Close Friends especially for you, as a new family joining our school community. We realise it can be strange and a little nerve-wracking starting at a new school and there always seems to be so many questions to ask. This booklet aims to provide you with information about our Parent Teacher Association which forms a major part of school life.

If you have any questions that remain unanswered, please contact one of the committee members.

Why do we have a PTA?

We are fortunate at our school to have a PTA that is and has been an integral part of the school community for many years. In its time the PTA has raised thousands of pounds, which has been spent on equipment and resources to enhance our children's education experience and the school's facilities.

Our PTA is about much more than simply fundraising. The PTA exists to provide closer links between home and school and it is an excellent way to bring staff, parents and friends together socially in support of the school, working towards a common goal. It is fun too - just ask any of the Committee members or PTA helpers. Obviously, as in any organisation, we have experienced some challenges but with the continued support of parents and staff, our PTA has always succeeded in its efforts.

All parents and members of the school community are encouraged to get involved, even if they only have a small amount of time available. All families are automatically members of Ox Close Friends when their child joins our school.

The PTA is extremely conscious of the ethos and diversity of our school, and we try very hard when organising and planning events to respect this. Not all of our events are run as fundraisers. For example, the PTA attend the annual leaver's assembly and donate leaver's hoodies to the year 6 children moving onto high school.

Charitable status

Charity law requires voluntary organisations such as ours to register with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. As a charity we must abide by Charity Commission rules and regulations and we are bound by a governing document referred to as our constitution. Our constitution sets out the rules about how we operate as a PTA and how we conduct ourselves. If you would like to see a copy of the constitution, please contact one of the Committee members.

Being a registered charity enables the PTA to:-

- receive charitable donations from local and national companies
- apply to grant-making charitable trusts; most charitable trusts will give grants only to groups formally recognised as charities
- receive donations made through payroll giving and company matched giving schemes
- apply for Gift Aid

Our PTA history

We can trace our PTA history back over thirty years. Some of the people, who were committee members previously, still help us out in a number of ways today. Some of our members are ex pupils themselves who now have their children at the school. So you can see we are a very close knit community.

Links with the local community

We have, over time, developed strong links with the local community and are always well supported by both residents and businesses, for which we are very grateful. Many of our local shops are very generous providing donations for raffle prizes, auction items etc and some have taken part in our Christmas and summer fairs. We are also extremely grateful to the local businesses who have participated in charity matched giving schemes. This has made a huge difference to our fundraising efforts.

Role of the Committee

Our PTA committee consists of four Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. We also have four committee members to make up the full committee.

The Committee meet on a regular basis usually once or twice per term, with smaller working groups meeting as necessary when we are planning larger events like the summer fayre. All parents and carers are welcome at any of our meetings. We usually meet at 7.30pm in the Ash Tree pub on a Tuesday; however we occasionally meet in school on a morning of straight after school too.

We have a growing list of PTA volunteers who commit some of their time to helping the committee. Every little helps, so just one hour assisting at an event would be invaluable. If you are interested in joining the committee or acting as a class representative or PTA volunteer, please do not hesitate to talk to a member of the Committee.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Our Annual General Meeting is held in January and provides an opportunity for all parents to come along and hear in more detail about the work of the PTA, the events we have run, the funds we have raised

and how the money has been spent. It is also the occasion when we elect our new committee members.

Support from PTA-UK

Our PTA is a member of PTA-UK, which is a national charity and membership organisation providing support and guidance for all home school associations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our association is one of over 13,600 members in current membership of the PTA-UK. We pay an annual membership fee which gives us lots of member benefits including comprehensive insurance cover for all PTA run events, support and advice on running the PTA plus fundraising ideas and good practice hints and tips. PTA-UK also provides us with the opportunity to meet and communicate with other PTAs to discuss and share experiences. We receive termly publications, and we receive guidance to ensure our events are legal and safe. In addition, we have a valuable resource at our fingertips – www.pta.org.uk

How we raise money

Some of our regular events and fundraisers include Halloween disco/karaoke, Easter disco/party, summer fayre, Smarties challenge, pub quiz, clothes recycling, reindeer dust and snowman soup at the Christmas productions and refreshments on sports day.

So you can see there is always something going on. We always try and respond to the children's requests; it is great to see them having fun at the events or enjoying using a piece of new equipment that the PTA has donated.

We raise money in other ways too. Donations from parents are extremely important. You can donate time, money, items for sale, raffle prizes and auction lots or offers of services and skills.

As our PTA is a registered charity, we are able to raise money through Gift Aid and company matched giving schemes.

Gift Aid

In the past Gift Aid has boosted our funds considerably. It is tax claimed back from the Inland Revenue from donations made to us out of your earned income.

If you are a UK tax payer, we are able to claim 28.2p in every pound that you donate to our PTA. The procedure for this is very simple. We ask our parents to sign the declaration form attached (this only has to be done once whilst you are at school) to confirm you are a UK taxpayer. The declaration can be cancelled at any time. Following this, every time you support the PTA with a cash donation or if you support a sponsored event, the PTA can claim the Gift Aid on your contribution.

There is nothing further for you to do and we need no other information from you. The issue of Gift Aid is taken on trust and you can support more than one charity in this way. We do not, and are not required to divulge any personal information to the HMRC from your completed forms.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the declaration form at the back of this booklet. If both parents are taxpayers, please request another Gift Aid form from our PTA Treasurer or copy the one you have. As a PTA we are very conscious that with a relatively small school community, the demands are often not as widely spread as in larger schools, and because of this, we try to raise our funds from as many different sources as possible.

Company matched giving

Company matched giving is a very simple. Companies or businesses pledge to donate to a charity such as ourselves an amount of money relating to the amount that an employee(s) donates or fundraises for us.

We have been helped enormously in the past by this type of donation, and there are several benefits to both ourselves and the company involved:

- employees' morale is boosted by having their efforts supported by their employer
- the company benefits from having charitable donations written off against taxable profits
- the company can endeavour to get publicity for their giving
- our PTA benefits from receiving perhaps double what we have raised at an event

If you think that your employer has a matched giving scheme already in operation, or if you would like some more information about charity matched giving or setting up a scheme in your workplace, please talk to one of the PTA officers, or ask in the school office.

How we spend the money we raise

Following a fundraising event the money is banked straight away. It is at our PTA Committee meetings, that the decisions on how to spend the money are agreed.

Usually, Mr Harrison or other teachers will have a 'wish list' of items that the school would like the PTA to consider funding. In the past we have encouraged the school council to take part in this exercise by asking each pupil in their class for suggestions, which they then collate and present to the committee in an in school meeting. As you can imagine, we receive a wide and varied range of requests!

At other times it will be for resources to improve a particular area of the curriculum or school environment. We have also regularly donated in the past to school trips. The PTA funds are spent on the 'extras' that are not provided by the school's budget, thus making our children's learning experiences so much more fulfilling and exciting.

PTA funds are not spent on improving the fabric of the school building as this is the responsibility of the school Governing Body. Our Constitution commits the PTA to spending money on things that will benefit the children directly.

The money we raise is usually spent fairly quickly. That way, you can be sure that in supporting our school, your child(ren) will feel the benefit, along with everybody else.

Below is a list of items the PTA purchased for the school last year and the amounts raised from various events – we think you will be impressed.

Halloween Disco	£517
Matched funding for Halloween Disco	£500
October Clothes Recycling	£117
Reindeer Dust/Snowman Soup	£266
Smarties Challenge	£665
Easter Fun Night	£350
March Clothes Recycling	£40
Sports Day Refreshments	£43
Total	£2,498

10 x Laptops	£2,777
3 x Guinness Book of Records	£24
Party Bags at Christmas	£300
Pro-bots	£270
Cookery equipment	£62
Reception equipment	£197
School & reception equipment	£480
Basketball nets	£400
Year 6 leavers hoodies	£473
Total	£4,938

How we get information to you

All PTA letters we send home are printed in colour on letterheaded paper – so they are easily recognised. The letters include information on funds raised to date, forthcoming events and dates plus requests for assistance, when we are planning large events. Following a PTA event, we always put into the weekly school newsletter how much was raised, and if we can, we tell you what the money will be spent on.

PTA letters are posted on the school notice boards which are situated outside the main entrance.

A summary newsletter is published at the end of every term giving a round up of events, details of the total amount raised that term, any equipment we have bought for the school, stories, input from the children etc.

We are currently trying to establish a list of parents' email addresses, so we can contact you this way. Please let us have your email address if you are interested in being on the committee or volunteering at events by emailing oxclosefriends@gmail.com.

How you can get involved

There are lots of ways you can help and support your child through the PTA.

Offering to help before events or at other times during the year is so valuable. It doesn't matter if you can't help on a regular basis, or even if you can not come into school. There are always jobs that can be done from home if you have half an hour to spare e.g. wrapping gifts, preparing raffle tickets etc. We really couldn't achieve what we do without the behind the scenes help that we receive.

If you would like to be more involved you can volunteer to be a Committee Member. Or you can simply support the AGM and give us your ideas for fundraising events. This is also the time to ask questions or voice your opinion.

You can help by letting us know if you have any contacts or skills we could use, everything is potentially valuable to us.

If either or both parents complete the Gift Aid declaration form, your donations will be worth a lot more to us.

And finally, we are always extremely grateful to receive donations as mentioned before.

There is brief questionnaire at the back of the booklet to fill in and return if you are able to help in any way, no matter how small. Don't forget to include an email address if possible.

What the PTA means to our school

Because our PTA involves the whole school community we thought you would like to know what others think about our PTA.

Parents, grandparents and carers

“Thank you so much for organising the new style Halloween disco with Karaoke. Chloe loved it and said it was the by far the best disco Ox Close have ever had!”

“My son has a great time at the fundraisers, such as the discos, parties and summer fayre. He even enjoys doing chores at home to earn money for the Smarties challenge! The money raised by OCF is vital to provide additional equipment for the children and for subsidising school trips. Keep up the good work!”

"I decided to volunteer with the PTA when my son was in reception class, he is now in year 4. It is such a pleasure to see the fun the kids have at our events, and even more pleasurable to see them using the equipment we have funded."

"This [leaver's hoodies] is a fab idea hope funds allow the same for next year too! Here's to another great year of Oxclose friends fundraising you all do a fab job xx well done xx"

"Can I just say thank you to Lesley and your fellow Ox Close Friends for all the effort and the wonderful things you all do to help us all achieve the fabulous things we are able to put on at school for all our wonderful children and parents who are part of ox close school well done xxx"

"I wanted to give something back to the school, so I volunteered my time to OCF. We raise funds for the school by holding discos and other events during the year to help raise much needed extra funds for the children and staff. Such an example is that with the help and support of the parents, children and staff were we able to buy ten extra laptops for the children and sporting equipment."

From the children

"They donate money to give us new equipment like laptops and hoola hoops." (Gabriel B)

"They help us to have lovely Christmas parties and set up activities for us to do." (Laila B)

"My favourite is the Halloween disco because you get to see everyone dressed up, you can dance, play games and do karaoke". (Layton C)

"My friends love all the new sports stuff we have outside now from Ox Close friends." (Skye R)

"I like all the chocolate in the Easter raffle!" (Seth E)

From Pam Sneath, Chair of the Governing Body

“The PTA is an essential part of any school and at Ox Close Primary, it's no different. Personally I became involved with Ox Close Friends over 15 years ago when my first son joined Reception class and I have seen the success go from strength to strength. We have created an environment where all parents and carers are members and everyone's contribution is highly valued. Over the years, the fantastic work and financial contributions made to the school have been invaluable, enabling us to create a richer learning environment for our children; the purchase of ten new laptops is a great example and there have been several more. Without this, we would not have been able to make changes so quickly and therefore support the current children in their learning experiences. The wide variety of social functions, allow us all to get to know one another in a more relaxed setting. The children see their parents and the school staff working together for their benefit and from my experience as a parent, I believe that this adds to their feelings of security and sense of belonging whilst at school. All of the governing body are very grateful for the hard work, enthusiasm and commitment of Ox Close Friends and sincerely hope that it continues for many years to come.”

And last, but by no means least...

From Mr Harrison, Headteacher

“Since I became Headteacher at Ox Close, I have constantly promoted the need for close links between home and school. At the end of the day, we share a common goal: the welfare of the wonderful children of Ox Close. The Ox Close Friends have a long history and for some time had loyal, hardworking volunteers. In recent times, I feel that the Friends have played a very significant role in school life and their profile has never been higher. Working together, we have been able to enjoy the benefit of many fantastic fund raising events. The result of this, of course, is that the

children benefit- none more so than when the Friends funded new lap tops for the children. I never cease to be amazed by the dedication and support from the Friends, be it at organised Friends events or just helping out with the nitty gritty of school life. Ox Close Friends looked at events such as the School Disco, which had become tired in its old format, and actually listened to the views of the children. As a result, the discos now run much more smoothly. It has been a pleasure to welcome the Friends to events such as school assemblies, proving that they are a vital part of the fabric of this fantastic school. The Ox Close Friends *contribution* to the school community provides a collective of professional skills, innovation and new ideas, creativity and collaborative working practices. Together, we have achieved so much, and I look forward to continuing this valuable partnership in the coming years.”

Thank you for taking the time to read our booklet. We hope you now know a little more about Ox Close friends. On behalf of all the pupils we would like to thank you for your very valuable support which enriches their learning experience and makes their time in school so enjoyable.

From all the PTA Committee

With very best wishes, your PTA committee for 2016

Les Lynn Viki Donna Debbie Emma Amanda

Lesley Thompson, Lynn Gibson, Viki Clarke, Donna Gowland, Debbie Hockridge, Emma Cockburn and Amanda Gallone