

# Milton Road Primary School PTA

## Chair's Report 2017-18

The last year has been an exceptional one for the PTA. We raised an unprecedented £23K, helped in part by the hugely successful auction of promises, effectively doubling our usual annual fundraising. We've also spent more this year than ever before, and were delighted to complete the first two phases of the IT project so quickly, allowing us to turn our sights to a very new ambition. It has been a pleasure to lead our very positive and agile committee, and see so many members of the school community get stuck in at our events. There is a great positive feeling at the moment at MRPS, and I hope I've conveyed a little of this in my report. Long may it continue...

### Activities

Almost all our energy and focus in the first half term of the year went in to the auction of promises. It was to be our biggest and most spectacular fundraising event for many years, and what a night it turned out to be! The scene was set for an elegant evening – candlelight, dapper hosts in black tie, delicious food from Cantab Caterers, prosecco on tap... (I was only slightly disappointed we canned the idea of waitresses on roller skates in the end). The guests arrived, the bidding started... and that's when things started to go a little crazy. From the off, there seemed to be an element of competition among many in the room, and very quickly we were taking enormous bids for all of the wonderful promises we had on offer. By the end of the night, we raised £12,000! It surpassed all of our expectations, and Dr Catchpool's, who sat watching quietly at the back, in a state of shock.

There were so many wonderful promises on offer, I could never capture them all, but what really inspired people were the 'money can't buy' experiences. I want to express my enormous thanks to Dany DuBois and Hermione Fairbairn, who worked tirelessly with me to make the event happen, and who were both exceptional at persuading local businesses to support our event and donate promises. I would also like to thank our treasurer Yung-Chin, who persuaded us to buy a card payment machine at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, and kept a cool head throughout the evening to ensure we collected £10k of the £12k on the night. It was a wonderful evening, with a real energy and focus, and made a massive difference to our fundraising efforts for the year.

Of course, while all this was building up, the autumn term was also busy with several other events which we run annually. We traditionally start the year with the Welcome Picnic for new families, offering tea and cake after school, and a chance for families to meet each other and some of the PTA. We also enjoyed the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual MRPS Fun Run. This year, for the first time, we had bad weather, and the start of the morning saw many of us huddled under the marquee. But it didn't put people off, and our bacon sandwiches attracted many along for a brilliant morning of racing.

Our children's discos have proven to be reliable fundraisers for the PTA, as well as great fun for the kids, and we had great attendance even when it snowed heavily during the World Book Day disco in March. The DJ we use knows how to put on a good party, even if us grown-ups remain somewhat baffled at some of the music and dancing which comes out in KS2! And not wanting to leave the grown-ups out, we also held our annual band night (read 'disco') in May. Once again, we had a great time dancing to wonderful live music provided generously by talented local bands Shake Your Tail Feather and Van Duran. We tried a new venue, the Cambridge Union, which offered some plus

points – a late license and cocktails – but also some downsides. So next year we will reconsider the NCI Social Club as well as other venues.

And finally, the two most popular events in our calendar were the Winter and Summer Fairs. Both fairs are always fantastic social occasions, attracting lots of families. This year's summer fair stands out as one of the best in recent years, thanks in part to a wonderful variety of musical entertainment provided on the night. With a real 'festival' feel, and probably helped by being held in the middle of a heatwave, the end time of 7pm was rigorously ignored, and some parents were still dancing on the field at close to 9pm!

One new activity added this year was selling our own Christmas trees. A small band of volunteers spent several chilly weekends in December peddling beautiful trees, keeping themselves and customers warm beside the firepit in the outdoor classroom. The opportunity to support the school while buying a Christmas tree inspired many families, but also drew support from the wider community – several families in the area who had sent children to MRPS in the past came along to buy their tree. We'll be selling trees again this year, and hope to reach even more families.

We also trialled the idea of a board games afternoon, and opened the hall one Sunday afternoon to a number of families, offering a range of games to borrow, as well as the chance to come and share their own. Given that it was a warm, sunny Sunday at the start of the summer heatwave, we were pleased that lots of people supported this event. Our plan for next year is to move the event to January, when the outdoors looks less appealing! Many thanks to Sabine Bucholz for suggesting and initiating this event.

As we look forward to 2018-19, we may be expecting a slightly quieter year. We will be running our usual programme of events, but are always open to new ideas. If you'd like to suggest an idea for a new event or way of raising money, we'd love to hear from you at the AGM.

### **IT Revamp**

As well as being an exceptional year for fundraising, it has also been an exceptional year for giving back to the school. At the start of the academic year, the new IT suite was officially opened. Phase 2 of the project, putting smartboards in all 14 classrooms at £3k each, initially looked like quite a daunting task. However, owing both to the amazing amount raised through the auction of promises, and also some clever negotiating between the PTA, the school, and the company leasing the boards, we were able to establish an excellent deal which enabled us to get all the smartboards in by Christmas. This far exceeded our original plans to phase the boards in, and meant that all teachers and pupils were able to benefit right from the start.

The staff and children are over the moon with their new resources, and to show their appreciation, invited the PTA in to an assembly at the end of Christmas term, presenting us with a fantastic card signed by all the children, and some lovely artwork.

### **Other support to the school**

Among the big news stories of IT suites and smartboards, we musn't forget that a key role of the PTA is to fund many of the smaller day-to-day resources that really enhance learning for the children. One particularly innovative request came from Mrs Morgan in 2M, who received funding for new chapter books for the Y2 classes. Both classes then went on a trip to Heffers and each child was given a budget to spend themselves. With a discount offered by Heffers, Y2 was able to purchase a whole raft of exciting new books to bring on their reading. Some other examples of things we have funded this year are: French games and resources for KS2, new dictionaries for the library, boxes

outside classrooms for storing outdoor clothing, outdoor resources for foundation stage, and new digital cameras to help the teachers record learning.

### **Revisiting outdoor environment**

After dedicating a huge amount of effort and PTA funding towards IT in the past year, the committee and the Head made a decision in the summer to refocus our fundraising efforts to improve the school's outdoor environment. We are still in the process of drawing up plans, but what is clear is that this will be an ambitious project. Given our success with the focus on IT, we are confident that this new aim will continue to motivate parents and also local businesses to support us.

We want Milton Road Primary School children to have access to a playground that fires their imagination, inspires creative, active play, and is a safe space that we can all be proud of. The plans include new play areas in both playgrounds. We'd also like to include special features like friendship benches, quiet corners, and sensory spaces. The revamp will also consider the safety and aesthetics of the playground, replacing broken pods, scruffy bike sheds, poor lighting and damaged surfaces. The project is likely to cost well over £100k, so we'll be working hard to secure grants and approach local businesses to help fund this incredible project.

### **The Fundraising Team**

With the school's plans becoming ever-more ambitious, one important achievement this year has been establishing a fundraising team. We put a call out to parents to recruit those with relevant experience in the public sector funding landscape and in writing winning bids, and we are pleased to have formed a small team of volunteers who are now focusing solely on attracting external funding to boost that raised by the PTA and School Fund. This should really bolster our capacity to attract extra money both through grants, and donations from local businesses.

### **Special thanks to the Coop**

Throughout the year, one organisation has supported the PTA more than any other – the Coop on Mitcham's Corner. They have willingly supplied, completely free of charge, donations for every event, including: all the prosecco at the auction of promises, three very generous Christmas hampers at the Winter Fair, ice cream and lollies for all the ice-cream Fridays, cakes for the school disco and games afternoon, water and bananas for the fun run, and all the strawberries and cream for the Summer Fair. Their donations have made an enormous difference to the amount we have been able to raise across the year, and we thanked them with an official letter in July. We hope that they will continue to partner with us in the coming year, while we await the result of our application to become an official 'Co-op cause', expected this October.

### **With thanks to...**

The PTA Committee 2017-18: Helen Butler (Secretary), Yung-Chin Oei (Treasurer), Jane Matthews (Events), Raquel Silva, Jane O'Beirne, Chris Wilson, Lydia Aers, Miriam Kubica, Dany DuBois

MRPS staff: Dr Catchpool, for tirelessly attending every PTA meeting and fundraisers meeting, and Fi, Renata, Julian and Carol, who really make things happen for us!

Our class reps: Sue Guthrie, Georgina Evans, Jane O'Beirne, Hermione Fairbairn, Dany DuBois, Katie Bardes, Mateja Jamnik Bierman, Raquel Silva, Debbie Morley, Philippa Millerchip, Sophie Whitbread, Becky Howland and Liz Godfrey.

And finally, a huge thank you to all the parents and families who support us in many ways: by volunteering at our events, baking cakes, donating prizes, and most of all coming along, having fun and helping us to raise such an incredible amount.

Liz Simmonds

Chair, MRPS PTA

September 2018