

Friends of Our Lady and St Joseph's School

1. Who are the Friends?

The Friends of OLSJ is a voluntary group of parents who are actively engaged in running social and fundraising events to support the school.

It is a lively autonomous organisation but works closely with the Head Teacher and teaching staff to develop and build a fun and vibrant school community beyond the classroom.

Each year the Friends plan an annual programme of events and activities. These typically include: the Christmas Fayre and Summer Fete, quiz nights, children's discos, international evenings, cake and pancake sales after school etc.

Money raised by the Friends is allocated to specific projects agreed with the Head. In recent years funds have gone to support PA equipment for the school hall, disco equipment, chocolate eggs for the children at Easter and have subsidised celebration events such as the Cuban night and 150th anniversary party. Donations have also been made in support of local and international children's charities. The Friends has its own bank account and makes transfers to the school as necessary.

2. How do the Friends work?

General Friends meetings are held in the school (evenings) at least once a term. The group also meets more regularly (often in the pub) when planning events.

The Friends work largely through a network of 'Class Reps' and enjoys the support of a wider group of volunteers from within the school who are invaluable when it comes to delegating tasks around events.

3. Formalising the Friends

To date the friends has been run on an informal basis with a small group of 'older' parents coordinating the work. For 2006/7 we would like to formalise and improve on this structure by:

- a) Introducing rotating elected posts for key roles – chair, treasurer etc.
- b) Extending the role of class representatives.
- c) Inviting a staff representative onto the Friends – teacher rep - to facilitate information exchange between Friends/staff.
- d) Identifying more concrete ways of working with the school on particular campaigns or projects.

In addition to the above, priorities for 2006/7 will also include:

- e) Establishing a lively and timetabled programme of social and fundraising events for the year ahead.
- f) Carrying out commemorative activity for the 150th anniversary of the school.

4. Elected posts

It's often been suggested that the Friends establish a simple but more formal organising committee to improve transparency and the overall effectiveness of the team. The idea is not to overload a small group of people or concentrate the power of the Friends in the hands of a few but rather to be clearer about responsibilities and create more opportunities for people to be involved as their children move through the school. It is essential that as many people as possible feel the commitment and responsibility of ensuring successful events. We would aim to rotate the roles to maximise opportunities for involvement.

We propose the following posts be created/elected in line with best practice.

| Title | Responsibilities |
|-------------------|--|
| Chairperson | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calling and chairing meetings Overseeing events Liaison with head teacher Recruiting and engaging new members Supporting existing membership Cheque signatory |
| Treasurer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping simple accounts Counting and banking money after events Floats for events Authorising spending Cheque signatory |
| Secretary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of meetings Cheque signatory Coordinate class reps |
| Marketing officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicity and PR Liaison with website and school newsletter Liaison with local businesses |

Any of the above roles could be shared between two people. It would be good to agree the parameters for election/office and assign these tasks at the next meeting.

5. Class Reps

The system of parent representatives in each class has worked well and should be continued with renewed vigour in 2006/7. The responsibilities currently include:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Class Rep | Informing and engaging other parents from class in Friends activities and events, eg ticket sales, help on stalls Liaison with class teacher for Friends events Conduit for taking ideas from class to Friends meetings |
|-----------|---|

We might also consider extending the class rep positions so that each year group is allocated particular tasks on an annual basis eg Class Reps for Year 1 co-ordinating all aspects of raffle sponsorship for one year; Year 2 responsible for co-ordinating food management, keeping and adding to list of trusted suppliers of food for events (bbq's, cake sales, international food, caterers etc) and so on. As with the 'committee members', files would be kept and handed over at the end of each year to the new class rep so that experience and expertise is built upon.

NB We need to investigate possibilities for establishing a Friends shed/lock up on the school premises.

6. Teacher Rep

Recent experience suggests that the most popular and successful events held by the Friends are those which engage the whole school community. Having a staff team at the Quiz night or soaking a teacher on the ducking stool at the fete have made for great fun but also built the sense of community. The Friends would like to develop this by having a nominated staff representative to participate in the Friends, nothing arduous, but symbolic. A job description for the role might be

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Teacher Rep | Attending Friends meetings – 1-2 times a term Feeding in and back to teaching staff Engage teaching staff in Friends events Help identify areas where Friends can better support the school |
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A different teacher could be nominated annually perhaps. The job could also be shared between two staff members every year.

7. Joint working on projects or campaigns

The Friends are a valuable resource not just for raising money but could also be engaged more actively in supporting school activity, in and outside the classroom. For example, Friends could help fund and perhaps even provide the muscle for school gardening projects; Friends funds and resource could support a walk/cycle to school policy or help develop environmental consciousness within the school (green audit; recycling campaign etc).

Rather than raising money with no particular aim or goal in mind, the Friends would value being part of wider school objectives, for example, the healthy school plan, and make a more strategic contribution to overall goals.

Formalising the structure of the Friends and improving liaison between the organisation and the school, could help move this forward and enable the Friends to play a more strategic role.

8. Events programme 2006/7

To be discussed at next meeting. Ideas already on the table include:

Dec

Christmas Fayre

Commemorative booklet/product for 150 anniversary (Xmas)

Jan

Burns Supper/Ceilidh

Feb

Pancakes after school

Spring

??Quiz Night

Easter eggs

July

Summer Fete

9. Commemorative 150 years activity

We agreed at the Pageant that this should be the start of a year of celebration to commemorate 150 years of the school. We would like to remain true to this and explore together the best way of marking the occasion – what kind of commemorative product would be feasible and appropriate.