

Thriplow Primary School PTA

Terms of Reference

Introduction

Welcome to our school. This Terms of Reference document has been compiled by the PTA for its members, active members of the committee and Trustees. It gives a more in-depth explanation about the PTA. It should be read alongside our adopted policies which can be found on the PTA page of Thriplow Primary School website. If you have any questions that remain unanswered, please contact one of the committee members (Chairman, Treasurer or Secretary) via the school office or speak to a member of school staff.

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 (originally registered with the Charities Commission in 2002). In its time, the PTA has raised thousands of pounds which has been spent on equipment and resources to enhance our children's education and whole school experience as well as 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 also fun and a great way to get to know other parents and make friends - 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 Thriplow School PTA when their child joins our school.

Thriplow School 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. The PTA financially assists events aiming to give the children extra learning opportunities and experiences both at school and on school trips.

Charitable status

Charity law requires voluntary organisations such as ours with an annual income in excess of £5,000 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 financially as well as an entity. The constitution was last updated in 2023. If you would like to see a copy of the constitution, please look on the PTA section of the school website or contact a Committee Member or the school office. Our Charity Commission number is 1084152.

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, and;
- apply for Gift Aid.

We are also required to file appropriate accounts annually and these can be viewed online via the Charity Commission website.

Links with the local community

We have, over time, developed strong links with the local community and are always well supported by residents, businesses and other local charities, for which we are very grateful. Many of our local businesses and local shops are very generous, providing donations for raffle prizes, auction items etc.

We are also extremely grateful to the local businesses who have participated in charity matched giving schemes and donations.

As a school, Thriplow Primary is actively involved in the Daffodil weekend, providing space for stalls and tea rooms and running the school tea room with parent and teacher volunteers across the whole weekend. Whilst our commitment to the Daffodil weekend reflects the community-spirit which is so central to the school's ethos, as a school, we have been extremely grateful for the numerous grants awarded to the school by the Daffodil Committee for essential facilities such as a mini-bus, new playground equipment and so forth. In recent years, Daffodil Weekend Committee has kindly agreed to allow Thriplow School PTA to benefit from the takings from the school tea room which has been a significant source of income for the PTA. This has made a huge difference to our fundraising efforts and we hope this close relationship will continue for the foreseeable future.

Role of the Committee

Our PTA committee consists of three Officers: Chair or Co-Chairs, Treasurer and Secretary all of whom are trustees, as well as at least three other members. This is a minimum requirement for a charity however there are active PTA members who form other dedicated branches such as the biennial event Committee which is the main PTA fundraiser and the Cornerstone Committee which was formed to raise funds for two new classrooms at the school.

The current committee are:

Chair	Meghan Bonner
Treasurer	David Aston
Secretary	Helen Joyce

The Committee meet on a regular basis usually once per term, with smaller working groups meeting

as necessary when we are planning larger events.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Our Annual General Meeting is held in the spring term 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. Following 2023 changes to the constitution, the Chair can only sit in post for a maximum of two years.

Support from Parentkind

Our PTA is a member of Parentkind, which is a national charity and membership organisation for Parent Teacher Associations. The PTA pay an annual membership fee which gives us lots of member benefits including comprehensive third-party insurance cover for all PTA run events, support and advice on running the PTA plus fundraising ideas and good practice hints and tips.

As all families are members of the PTA when joining the school, all families can benefit from Parentkind services. Families should sign up directly via the Parentkind website free of charge.

How we raise money

Like most PTAs, the majority of our funds are raised through the events that we run. Some of our most popular events are:

- Christmas cards/ tea towels;
- Ice cream sales/ cake sales;
- Quizzes;
- Welcome drinks at school events (nativity, summer production, sports day etc);
- Movie Nights, and
- Discos.

There is always something going on!

We always try and respond to the children's requests via the School council; 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. Parents can donate time, money, items for sale, raffle prizes and auction lots or offers of services and skills.

We are also able to claim back Gift Aid and regularly make Gift Aid submissions to HMRC.

How we spend the money we raise

Following a fundraising event, the money is banked straight away.

We have a Google Form which anyone can access and make requests for PTA donations. Usually, our Head of School will have a consultation with the children and staff to discuss items that the school would like the PTA to consider funding and this is also added to the form. The form asks for details of what is being requested, which children it will benefit, what the beneficial outcomes will be and what the cost would be. At every PTA meeting the list is discussed and members present vote on whether to support the donation requests or not.

In addition to equipment, the PTA usually subsidises school trips to make them more affordable for parents and thereby more inclusive.

Ultimately, 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.

We always endeavour to spend our funds in ways that will benefit all our children across all areas of the school and curriculum. As a PTA, we try to ensure that all year groups benefit similarly for the funds raised. Therefore, where we have financially supported an event for one year group, we seek to continue supporting that event in future years so all children benefit as equally as possible from the PTA's donations.

The money we raise is usually spent fairly quickly. That way, parents can be sure that in supporting our school, parents' child/ren will feel the benefit, along with everybody else. Of course there will be times when we may have to fundraise for a large project in the future and most recently this has been raising £350,000 for the Cornerstone Classroom Project. The PTA is clear, however, that despite the need to raise funds for major projects, there is a continued duty to support the children and their everyday learning experiences and therefore the PTA funds are held separately from the funds for major fundraising projects such as Cornerstone. Importantly, events are clearly advertised as to which cause they are supporting.

Gift Aid

If you are a UK tax payer, we are able to claim 20p in every pound that you donate to our PTA for events that are for sponsorship only. There are strict guidelines as to what can be claimed and further information is found on HMRC website.

A form for an event will have a tick box option to donate and your name and address will be required. This can then be applied on mass at the end of every 3 years or so and the donation received. HMRC prefer to deal with hundreds of pounds rather than tens of pounds for Gift Aid reimbursement and therefore Gift Aid claims are made every couple of years

Company matched giving

Company matched giving is 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, and;
- 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 committee members, or ask in the school office.

How we get information to you

The PTA endeavor to communicate to its members in the following ways:

- All PTA letters are sent to parents via the school email with hard copies available for those not on the internet.
- PTA events are posted on the PTA notice board, which is situated in the school grounds by the gate.
- We also use the PTA Facebook page and class whatsapp groups to let people know about upcoming events and to ask for volunteers
- For 2023-2024 we are trialing a new Class Rep system where we have one or two class reps responsible for a single event throughout the year. These reps are responsible for securing parent helper volunteers from their classes
- For Daffodil Weekend, we have a Google Sheet Rota in which we ask for Parent Volunteers to sign up.
- Reminders are included in the school's weekly newsletter.

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 cannot come into school. There are always jobs that can be done from home if you have half an hour to spare e.g. preparing raffle tickets, ordering tuckshop items in your Tesco shops 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 active 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 direct donations as mentioned before.

A Message from the Head Teacher

The PTA helps to ensure that Thriplow School is a nurturing, dynamic and aspirational community, by raising funds to benefit the children's education and by providing social events for children and adults. It is a vitally important organisation, that truly makes a difference to our children's lives.

Lucy How, Headteacher, January 2023

A Message from the PTA Committee/Trustees

We hope you now know a little more about your Parent Teacher Association and policies. 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.

Meghan Bonner, PTA Chair, January 2023

Signature	
Signed by	Meghan Bonner
Role	PTA Chair
Date	25th January 2024