

## Diary of a PTA CHAIR



### November

Hallowe'en falls on the Sunday at the end of half-term, so we ask pupils to bring in their pumpkins for a 'Pumpkin Parade'. They are placed at the front of the school where the whole community can see them. We receive some lovely feedback and plan to do it again next year.

We also decide to create a Christmas tea towel. Nearly every family orders one, raising over £300 for the school. Any parent who wants a tea towel but can't afford it can talk to a trusted school staff member and the PTA will provide one for them. Being inclusive in this way is important to me as a child who grew up with little money.

At the end of the month, because of increasing Covid cases, the school introduces some restrictions. The measures mean a complete rethink of our Christmas fair. As a new PTA who took over during the pandemic we are used to last-minute changes, but that doesn't lessen the disappointment that Covid remains such a key factor in all our events.

We hold an urgent meeting. The school is really supportive and helps us make alternative plans, but it's not the grand fair we'd hoped for.

### December

At the start of December, we hold a Christmas movie night, with popcorn and pizza delivered partway through. Pupils watch the film in their classrooms, and we ask parents for a voluntary donation, but make it clear that every child can attend. The same evening, we run a remote Christmas raffle. Local businesses have given us some outstanding prizes, and we make hampers from items donated on a non-uniform day.

With support from the staff, we run a Christmas craft event during school hours. Pupils make lanterns, decorate gingerbread men, and design wooden baubles for the school tree. Each class also takes part in a craft activity and pupils can take their creations home. We combine it with a Christmas jumper day and a surprise visit from Father Christmas, who arrives on a tractor and gives every child a Christmas present – a book from Santa and the PTA elves.

**Charley James**, PTA chair at Sandford Primary School PTA, Sandford, North Somerset, on the joys of getting together and the challenges of new restrictions

### September

The term starts on a high note. Our 'Big Get-Together Picnic', postponed from July, can finally go ahead. We're worried a downpour could ruin it and that no one will come. But our abandoned attempt last term feels like a practice run, and that gives us courage.

After school one Friday, families bring picnic blankets, food and drink to the field for a relaxed afternoon in the sun. We have a cake sale, a bouncy castle and a raffle, and at the last minute, we're offered a Yeo Valley ice-cream van complete with a generous donation of 100 Yeo Valley ice-cream tubs!

Attendees are invited to write down things they're grateful for on

a 'Giving Thanks Table'. These are later displayed around the school. Everyone's having so much fun that when the head says it's time to leave, parents say that they have settled in nicely and would rather stay! It's more of a community event than a fundraiser, but we raise almost £700, and it's a joy to see so many smiles.

### October

Our new committee and supporting parents can now meet face to face, so we make the most of it by gathering in a local pub. It's lovely to really get to know one another and makes for an enjoyable night out. We start planning the Christmas fair, hoping it can take place inside. We're hoping to have food and booze in the main hall and themes for each classroom, such as pamper room, pre-loved room and games room.

The PTA holds a fancy dress 'Fairies and Scaries' disco at separate times for Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils. We're delighted to see so many happy and excited children dancing together. Some younger children have never experienced a school disco because of the Covid restrictions. However, I underestimate how sensitive small people can be, and a few – including my own – are rather scared and don't enjoy it as much as I'd hoped.

