

PPA Chair's Report 2023

This has been my second year as the chairperson of this terrific committee. I really do not know what happened to the 2022-23 academic year! After a challenging start, due to IT issues, it has been a full throttle 12 months for the PPA.

It's always useful to remind ourselves of our purpose which is to advance the education of the pupils of the school by providing and assisting in the provision of facilities for education at the school. Although the emphasis of this statement is very much on fundraising, we could not do this without growing a community to support our events. Indeed, this is what I am most proud of.

As a committee we are very mindful that the economic landscape is currently difficult for many families. From the outset, our focus throughout the last year has been on nurturing our supportive community - growing our pool of volunteers and diversifying our committee members. In terms of the former, we were aware that many of last year's Year 7 cohort travelled a significant distance to get to school and we were keen to reach out to parents who may not have become involved with the PPA as their child joined Pate's during the Covid-era (It's fab to say that's now fully over). This is still an ongoing challenge, but I think joining Facebook is helping us to reach new audiences. In terms of committee membership, I'm thrilled that our 2023 team included two proverbial unicorns – men! The other feature of committee life I was keen to tackle was the need to attend meetings in person. We have a wealth of parents who want to 'give back' to the school but are stymied by geographical distance. Thanks to the power of Teams, we have had 2 committee members who have usually attended meetings online – this pattern will continue next year. While running hybrid meetings can be a technical challenge for the Secretary and myself, I really value the contributions made by these committee members. It's vital to ensure that we represent and reflect our community; therefore, it's important that we do this.

I now move on to an overview of the year. We have provided refreshments at a plethora of events – Year 7 and Year 12 parent information evenings, House Music, House Drama, school production of Sweeney Todd, carol concert, junior concert, autumn concert, spring concert, lunar new year...and I'll have forgotten the odd 20 or so other events. We decided to not hold a spring fair. However, it will return in 2024 – it will be a biggie as we look to celebrate and commemorate the 450th anniversary of Pate's. Please look out for ways to join in with the event – we will need lots of volunteers.

In addition to supporting school activities, we have also organised our own events. The spring quiz – which is the most competitive event in the world...ever. In 2023, the same team was victorious...again!

We trialled moving the quiz to a Saturday and this worked well – we were able to start and finish earlier, which was kinder to school's neighbours. This will be repeated in 2024. Yes, I have already been contacted by parents keen to reserve their table! The PPA online Christmas raffle has become one of our main fundraising activities. This year we decided to add a second one. The summer raffle had a change in emphasis – all prizes were gifts that could be enjoyed together with friends and family members. We are very grateful to the local businesses and organisations who donated prizes; their generosity is incredible juxtaposed with the tough times many businesses are experiencing. We ensure that we reach out to them after the raffle to share with them the difference the contribution has made to the Pate's community.

Adding a second raffle hasn't been the only raffle-based change we've made this year. At school events we no longer raffle hampers packed full of items donated by parents – it was felt that too much plastic was being used to decorate them and not all winners were able to enjoy the tasty treats they contained. We now buy gift vouchers as raffle prizes – the winners can choose how they use them. We have also adapted the stock purchasing process – we now buy in bulk from Booker, freeing up a committee role – time spent purchasing items and many hours of driving between shops. Next year, this will become a marketing position. Lastly, we also held a vision session to consider the future direction of the PPA. I want to revisit this soon.

Now to the Uniform Shop – just wow! It's a huge revenue stream for the PPA. More importantly, it's a vital service for many of our families – quality uniform at affordable prices. It also helps us as a community to be more environmentally mindful – which is important to an ever growing number of us. I'll return to embarrass the uniform heroes later.

Some eagle-eared listeners may have noticed that I haven't mentioned, so far, the total money we have raised this year. This was 100% intentional. I'm keen to get away from this being the AGM headline. I firmly believe that our greatest achievements of the year have been the ones highlighted so far – growing and supporting our community. However, it would be remiss of me to not mention money. Without stealing the Treasurer's thunder too much, we generated an incredible £40,588, of which £32,463 was profit. We donated £36,600 to school – Aidan will go into this in more detail.

I want to move on to thank everyone who has been part of the PPA success story this year. Thank you to all PPA volunteers – it's terrific to have you here. At information evenings, I always say that if you can only help at one event for half an hour, we value this as much as those who can give more time. I stand

by that. Now, to the committee in general. I'm painfully aware of my strengths and weaknesses. Thank you for putting up with my loudness and the chaos of my life. We've all balanced each other throughout the year. Although I stand on stage and get recognition at PPA events, nothing we do would be possible without you all.

Specific – thanks I'll start with thanking the school team:

Front desk – random requests you get.

Phil and Anthony – of the Estates Team – we couldn't function without you. Thank you for the humour, humping and dumping and locking up – please don't shout if we overrun tonight.

Debbie and the refectory team – thank you for letting us invade your space and use your tills – you don't know how many parent volunteers love the opportunity to be let loose with the touch screen and fingerprint payment!

Development Office – you are such staunch supporters of the PPA

Alex – we've inveigled you into helping out at more events. Thank you for your support

Sarah – you couldn't do any more for us than you do. Thank you for always being on the end of a phone. For keeping us...me...on the straight and narrow. Supporting all crazy ideas...I can't wait to see what we come up with for next year.

Beth – the keeper of the balls...to clarify the 100 Club balls. I really admire your passion for making the world a fairer place for those who are less fortunate. No matter how busy you are, you always make time for us. I love how every meeting starts with us complimenting new hairstyles and clothes etc

That never happened in the time of the former keeper of the balls...

Stephen – thank you for your continued support of the PPA. I really value your counsel. Thank you for your help with all things financial. Very much missed – a small token of our appreciation

Committee members

Libby – I really value your counsel and your calmness – thank you so much for keeping it real.

Rachel – thank you for just ensuring that I don't need to worry about the 100 club. Having one less tab open in my mind is brilliant. I am really grateful.

Emma and Chloe – I was going to say I need to stop being so effusive about you. But that would be ridiculous – you give so much. Thank you. So glad that Chloe is joining the committee as VC – no escape!

Those who are abandoning us...I mean resigning

Nirav – first unicorn - not here tonight. Thank you for your ideas.

Emma – we joined committee at the same time, some would say I press ganged you...I think I'm just persuasive. 100 Club, Events – worked tirelessly behind the scenes – you've been brilliant and will be so missed. I know this isn't a goodbye.

Aidan – the second unicorn. You have been vice chair and more recently treasurer. I think you've enjoyed your time being one of the girls. Thank you for your hard work – from accounts to vision session. I will really miss your candour and fresh perspective – 100% genuine, not a backhanded compliment. Always welcome, please, please come back.

Lastly, but by no means least, Helen. Helen first joined the committee 100 years ago, only joking. You have been a stalwart member of the PPA for nearly a decade – throughout her boys' time at Pate's. She's helped in so many ways. Your work as treasurer has been incredible. Last year I said that I really admire your perspicacity – I reiterate that and want to add so many other lovely compliments to this, but the others might get jealous. Instead, I'll say this – because you never leave a stone unturned, I'm giving you your own stone to keep turning so you always remember how much of a super star you are.

That's enough emotional eulogising.

Looking ahead – I want to consider ways we can continue to build the PPA community. That's all I would like to say, except – let's bring on 2024 when we get to celebrate like we're 450!