

Chairman's report 2023 / 2024

Welcome everyone and thank you for attending this year's Friends of Crockerne AGM. The AGM is the PTA's only formal meeting of the year which covers committee election, Chairmans report and Treasurers annual financial report.

2023/24 brought us another new change in our headship where we said farewell to the lovely Sue Elliott who was only with us for 1 year and welcomed the wonderful Emma Bray to the Crockerne family. I'm sure many share my thoughts, that Emma has fitted in brilliantly. Within a very short window she really got to know the Children and Parents and having a school gate presence has really helped the parents to feel that the leadership team are indeed approachable, accessible and a welcome smiley face in the morning. She is leading the school with compassion and integrity and a wonderful healthy mix of passion and focus. Her incredibly positive and vibrant appearance and attitude is definitely rubbing off on the children and we are all seeing extraordinary outcomes. Long may this wonderful collaboration continue, as it can only inspire our generations of children and those that follow. I personally cannot thank Emma enough for her brilliant input and giving us 'free reign' with our ideas with resources and the school grounds which have undoubtedly helped to not only raise the amount of money we have this year but to see an overall difference within our School. That said we raised just over £12,500. What an incredible achievement for our humble little school.

Overview of the year

The events

This year we changed things up a little. Our Easter Egg Hunt took place off site throughout the village during the Easter holidays giving families a chance to do it at their leisure. We held our first Race night and Silent Disco, both of which were a huge success and events we will run again next year. We have also steered away from the events which take up a huge amount of manpower, organisation and effort, these are namely the Summer and Christmas Fayre. We held smaller versions of both this year that took place straight after School for a couple of hours which proved to be a lot less work for those of us involved. The kids appeared to have a wonderful time especially with our resident Snow Machine, the infamous Pill Owls and the gorgeous Signing Choir. In the Summer, we had a lovely simple summer event planned, again with minimal stalls which was supported brilliantly by our school community as they came in their hundreds and showed the support that makes Crockerne so brilliant. Our continued relationship with Ben and Steph at Bags 2 School provides a great boost to the funding pot and the continued Hot Choc Friday and Ice Cream sales saw funds trickle in throughout the year by selling these refreshments. Not a fundraiser but a very wholesome event nonetheless was our Multi Culture celebration day. Parents and Carers from all cultures and ethnicities were invited to share their wonderful traditions to educate us all on their cultures. It was a truly humbling experience. Our biggest money maker this year was by far our Christmas Raffle and our thanks need to go to the sensational **Lou Meek Hopkins** who pulled out the stops to gain monumental amounts of high-ticket prizes. Thank you so much, your valued input has been immeasurable.

Grant Fundraising

We are continuing to seek and apply for numerous grants to help with the various projects we have. We were fortunate to win a Jazz Apple Award for £200 to buy some more sports equipment. We were also gifted a generous £500 from the Community Parish Forum to help towards either Transportation or the Lease of a minibus. We are very grateful to **Abi Murray** who is working really hard with us to secure further grants.

Taking to the streets

As we all know, the education system is in crisis and funding has hit an all time low. The Friends of decided to be pro-active and we took to writing letters. Letters to residents and letters to businesses. On foot, a few of us would weekly letter drop the surrounding areas informing them of the terrible state of our education

budgets. The school, led by our wonderful Emma Bray created a Go Fund Me page supported by a video featuring many of our children talking of the lack of funds they have for transport and experiences. We will not allow our children to miss out! We added the info into the letter and within a few short weeks helped to get the amount raised to a whopping £7000. Not only did we get some traction with the residents, but we had an overwhelming success with many businesses wanting to help us. We have formed some really lovely relationships with a few companies who are now also working with us to fundraise. An exciting new partnership comes from The Bristol Port off the back of our contacting them and Emma Bray has forged an exquisite union of the two parts. We are beyond grateful for these opportunities and will continue to help the school in any way we can.

Ongoing projects to fund

Nursery and the Early Years will be getting a sand delivery to top up their Sandringham palace which we hear they love. The KS1 playground, now stripped of its condemned boat is set for a new and exciting overhaul with new play equipment being installed imminently. We are also creating an exciting and creative 'Storyville' area which will house lots of visual additions to help inspire those curious and imaginative KS2 minds. We finally managed our DIY SOS Day where we saw lots of jobs finally being ticked off. Benches were painted, the sensory garden was re-vitalised, and the general improvement of the outdoor space has vastly changed. I can't thank the parents and volunteers who came to join us on that day enough. It was a really fun day and one we hope to do again. We'll continue to carry on with projects like these so we can ensure that our school ground provision enables our children to have exploratory, independent and imaginative play.

Fundraising

As well as the previously mentioned events, the online purchasing app, Easy fundraising is proving to be a gentle trickle of funds. This, along with match funding is such a simple way to earn money for the charity. Huge thanks to **Jenny Lake** and **Laura Antolic** at Lloyds for match funding over £750 between them against our recent events. How incredible is that! We will continue to advertise these avenues.

Where has the money gone?

Charlene has laid this out in her report, so I'll leave this to her to explain. (Please see the Treasurers report)

The working of Friends

The website is proving to be a great success and a much simpler way to document payments. The card machines have been a game changer at our events too. The Whats App year groups have continued to be a great source of communication along with Facebook and Twitter which are appearing to be a successful way to distribute information to a wider audience and encourage the village to attend external events.

Although I am the Chair, I do not stand here alone. In fact, it's because of the unbelievably gracious and quite simply formidable team of people I have alongside me which has, without any doubt, made for the success of this Friends team and its fundraising to date. Everyone needs a wingman and I have nothing but praise and admiration for mine. **Sian Bannister, Kat John, Vicki Merrin, Ruth Cotton, Charlene Coles, Caja Price** and **Louise Meek Hopkins**. Thank you, ladies, for always juggling your time to help and your unwavering support. They are accompanied by our fabulous extended team of volunteers who have helped us enormously this year. I would also like to extend my thanks to the ladies in the office, **Deb Brennan, Sharon Rowles** and **Katie Rowles** for their constant support whenever I'm in there asking for 'stuff' like bluetac, printing and generally housing donations when they come in. A special mention to **Julie Howarth** who worked so brilliantly with our Treasurers Ruth and Charlene in paying for items to avoid us having to pay the VAT. Deb and Julie have both moved onto new and exciting adventures and we wish them both our love and luck. We thank **Zac Coley & Sarah Spencer** our Chair and Vice of Governors for being a reliable source of guidance. We wish Sarah well as she steps down this year. Finally, not forgetting our dedicated **Sonya Crutchley** who continues to be the lifeline and incredible link to the school and staff. We really couldn't do it without you. There are many parents who have helped us and the school out by clearing

drains, cutting trees and mounting new pieces of equipment. We really do have the best bunch of people surrounding us.

Current Committee

Chair – Charlotte Kaszubski

Co Vice Chair – Sian Bannister & Kat John

Secretary – Vicki Merrin

Treasurer – Ruth Cotton (stepping down) & Charlene Coles

Social media role –Caja Price (stepping down)

Whilst the handover has been happening for most of the year it is with a heavy heart that my brilliant Treasurer Ruth, who started this 'Friends of' journey with me some 4 years ago is herself standing down this year. I have had nothing but support and dedication from this lovely lady and I can't Thank Ruth enough for her support over our time in committee together. Time to now enjoy your retirement finally. Anyone wishing to step up into a role can be nominated shortly at today's AGM.

It has been my absolute pleasure to lead the Friends team again this year and whilst it's not without its challenges, it's so worth it to see the impact the work we do has on the school and more importantly the children. To see the little ones swinging in their hammocks, toasting marshmallows on the firepit or playing in the mud kitchen screams exactly what this school is about. Whilst our humble little school isn't bright, shiny and new like so many others around us, nor do we have the latest tech or brand-new play equipment, what we are is a reflection on reality and this village. Pill always seems to be classed as the underdog and our school, and our kids are often looked upon as the same. We all know that you do not measure anyone's worth by what they have. What we do have in an abundance is a collective community of parents and staff who really care about the children in this school and go way above and beyond to make sure our children are safe, happy and loved.

Surrounded by a true sense of real life, will help our kids grow into well rounded, kind human beings who will be able to step alongside anyone from any walk of life. Its these strong values that will help them want to be a better person. It can make us all mighty and we have an enormous amount to be proud of.

I for one am unbelievably proud my daughter is a Crockerne Kid and although we don't have an endless supply of funds, we do have plenty of good will and an incredible community and that is invaluable.

Charlotte Kaszubski

Chair