

Involvement in school life

There are many volunteering roles that you can do that puts you at the heart of school life and offers valuable support, resource and expertise. Schools need and will welcome parent volunteers.

Parent Governors/Parent Trustees work alongside the Board of Governors to keep the Headteacher accountable and set the strategic direction of the school.

PTAs and 'Friends of' groups are voluntary groups that work alongside the school to offer the best possible educational experience for all pupils. What a PTA does varies from school to school but according to our research they consider their main roles in order of importance to be:

- To raise funds or other resources for their school (72%)
- Holding events and other activities to build the school community (63%)
- Enhancing communication between parents and school (66%)
- Helping parents have a voice at school (70%)

Parent volunteers can offer both regular and committed or ad hoc support. It varies from school to school and between individual and individual. But in general, all and any help is appreciated.

Being part of the PTA

We all want our children's schools to be the best they can be. Parent and Teacher Associations (PTAs) are enormously important to achieving this. Research has shown that there is a correlation between an active PTA and a happy and successful school. Plus, educational research on the involvement of parents in schools shows that children achieve higher levels when parents and teachers work together.

PTAs are voluntary groups that work alongside the school to offer the best possible educational experience for all pupils. They raise extra funds for their school through a wide range of fun and creative initiatives, events, and much, much more. Last year, the top five areas their fundraising contributed to were: school trips, educational materials, outdoor learning areas, playground equipment and IT equipment.

A PTA also acts as a conduit between parents and the school and another instrumental role for them is to help bring that wider school and local community together.

Regardless of the educational stage or type of school, all schools can benefit from the introduction of a PTA.

The PTA is run by an elected committee of volunteers supported by other general volunteer members. The committee have responsibility for managing the association, but the more general volunteer members that actively help, the better.

If a PTA already exists at your child's school, then you are automatically considered a PTA member regardless of the level of involvement you do, or are able to, contribute. In most cases PTAs are always looking for additional help.

There are many reasons why people join the committee or get involved with a PTA. These can include wanting to make a difference, to meet new friends, to add to a CV, being new to the area and wanting to integrate into the community, feeling like you have skills that will help, or wanting to be more involved in your child's school experience. Whatever the reason, the evidence is irrefutable, it will not be something you regret.

Six benefits to being part of a PTA

In busy lives, it is easy and forgivable to see volunteering for the PTA as something that will take a lot of time. But this is not the case. You can give as much as you are able. The ethos of a PTA is always collaboration and cooperation. Parents who do get involved never regret it and here's why:

- Friendships. PTAs are great fun. They offer a great way to meet other parents and build solid friendships with like-minded people.
- You get a valuable 'Inside Out' perspective. Being on the PTA does offer an insight into school life not normally seen by parents. It makes your understanding of school dynamics and mechanics much easier to understand, which in turn will benefit your child.
- It feels good. Helping to organise a successful event that enhances the experience children have at school, feels satisfying. You feel part of something bigger than you and you feel your time makes a difference. Because it does.
- PTAs enhance the school experience. We all want our child's school to be brilliant. The experiences that the children have while at school include what's run (and paid for) by the PTA.
- Model the behaviour you want to see. There's a lot of evidence that talks to the fact that when parents are engaged in school life, a child's attainment is improved. Children love to see their parents in school and being involved shows that you think school is important.
- Role in the community. Being part of the PTA roots you not just in the school community but the wider community too. It sends a message that you care and are invested in the area. Which in turn can open doors and offer opportunities for other community events and groups that otherwise you may not have come across.