



Welcome to The Friends of Trowse School (FOTS) Information Booklet



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Introduction

A very, warm welcome to our school.

This booklet has been written by FOTS especially for you, as a new family within our school community. We realise it can be strange and a little nerve-wracking joining a school, and there always seems to be so many questions to ask. This booklet aims to set out all the information you will need about our Friends of the School which is a major part of our school life.

If after having read it (and we apologise for the length, but there is so much to tell you) you have any questions, please do get in touch with one of the FOTS committee members, or ask via your class teacher, class representative, or the school office.

Why Do We Have A Friends Association?

We are very fortunate at our school to have a Friends Association that is becoming an integral part of the school community for many. FOTS aims to raise funds which will be spent on improving equipment and resources to enhance our children's education and the facilities in school in general.

However, the Friends of Trowse School is about much more than just fundraising. It exists to provide closer links between home and school, and is an excellent way to bring staff, parents and friends together socially in support of the school, working towards a common goal. It is fun too - just ask any of the FOTS committee members or helpers! Obviously as in any organisation, there are times when it is more 'challenging', but with the continued support of parents and staff, our Friends Association hopes to always succeed in its efforts.

All parents and members of the school community can get involved if they want to, even if they only have a small amount of time available, and all parents are automatically members of the FOTS when their children join our school.

FOTS is extremely conscious of the ethos and morals of our school, and we try very hard when organising and planning events to respect these.

Why Are We A Registered Charity?

We are not currently registered as a charity. However, it is a legal requirement that organisations such as ours, with an annual income in excess of £5,000 register with the Charity Commission and should we achieve this, our Constitution allows us to fast-track our application for charity status.

As a Charity we would then abide by Charity Commission rules and regulations and we are already bound by our constitution, which sets out rules about how we

operate as a Friends Association and how we conduct ourselves. A full copy can be provided on request from one of the FOTS committee members.

Being a Registered Charity would give us many extra benefits:

- We would be able to apply for Gift Aid, which can earn us an extra 28.2p in every pound donated to the PTA, out of earned income;
- We could raise funds more easily from grant giving trusts, local businesses etc;
- We could take advantage of charity matched giving schemes.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves!

Our Friends History

FOTS is a very young group. It officially launched on the 11th May 2009 with an enthusiastic and motivated committee of parents. In addition, a number of parents have volunteered their time to help with events such as the summer fete and children's disco. Before FOTS, a number of parents held occasional and one-off social and/or fundraising events but there was no central pool of resources or a focus for new parents when trying to get involved in the life of the school. FOTS hopes to remedy this and is grateful for the experience these parents have offered to the early FOTS events.

Links with Local Business

We hope, over time, to develop strong links with the local community - both residents and businesses.

Role of the Committee

Our committee consists of four Officers (Chair, Treasurer and Joint Secretary). We also have a number of other ordinary committee members to make up the full committee. Numbers of Committee members may vary over time, depending on who wants to get involved and what skills are on offer.

The Committee meet on a regular basis usually once each half term, with smaller working groups meeting as necessary to organise larger, more complicated events. The Committee meeting dates are published and held in school. Meetings are open to all Friends and we would welcome your attendance.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Our Annual General Meeting is held at the beginning of the academic year (September) and this is an opportunity for all parents to come along and hear in more detail about events run, funds raised and how the money has been spent.

It is also the occasion when we elect our new committee and class representatives.

Class Representatives

Our class representatives undertake a very important role. There are usually two representatives per class who provide a link between individual classes and parents and the FOTS committee. The support from class representatives is vital when it comes to organising our main events. They are the point of contact for ticket request and sales. They oversee their individual class stalls for the summer fete. They also act as a point of contact for other parents, and support for parents new to the school or the education system.

A list of current PTA committee members and the classes they represent is at the end of this booklet for your information. Updated lists are sent out each year after the AGM. If you are interested in joining the committee, please do not hesitate to contact/talk to the Chair.

Support from the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations - NCPTA

FOTS is a member of the NCPTA, which is the national charity that advances education and supports PTAs, throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our association is one of 13000 in current membership of the NCPTA. We pay an annual membership fee to the NCPTA which gives us lots of member benefits including subscription-linked insurance cover, support and advice on PTA and fundraising matters, opportunities to meet with other PTAs to discuss and share experiences, regular newsletters and the PTA magazine, both of which will be displayed on the FOTS notice board (when we've raised the funds for one!), a special banking package to help us make the most of our funds, and an extensive list of PTA information and resources. In addition, we have a valuable web-based resource at our fingertips – www.ncpta.org.uk

www.ncpta.org.uk is also a valuable resource to you as parents, with signposts to useful, relevant web-sites on subjects such as bullying, school funding, special educational needs, homework, and much more. To access www.ncpta.org.uk you will need to register using our NCPTA membership number, which is 20896. You can then create your own unique login, to give you access at anytime. Do have a look.

How We Raise Money

Like most Friends Associations, the majority of our funds are raised through the events that we run. A summer fete has been a regular feature for some years, and we also plan to hold a range of events including children's disco, ladies' night, race night, auction of promises, quiz and chips, art exhibition and perhaps

if we feel really ambitious a summer ball! We have received other ideas including printed calendars, tea towels and mugs, producing our own recipe book, fashion shows, theatre trips, 'family photograph' session, class and whole school photos. We might also run children's fun afternoons and craft sessions. We always try and respond to the children's requests for events and it is truly the icing on the cake to see them having fun at the events or enjoying using a piece of new equipment that the Friends has donated.

We are fortunate however to have other opportunities open to us to raise money. Donations are extremely important. These can be time, money, items for sale, donations for raffles or offers of services and skills. Also if you have any suggestions for events please do approach the committee with them.

We also run a nearly new uniform scheme. If you have good quality items that you feel you can donate to us, please hand these in to the school office. They will be offered for sale at modest prices at the school fete, new parents' evening and other occasions. Should you require a particular item, please email friendsoftrowse@hotmail.co.uk and we can check the stock and see if we can help you.

We are also registered with schemes which generate us a small income in return for a useful service. We are registered with www.easy2name.com who provide name tags and also www.tickred.com, which is a website providing free local money-off vouchers direct to your mobile. Spree books are also available to purchase from committee members.

How We Spend the Money We Raise

Once money is raised from events the funds are banked straight away. It is at our Friends Committee Meetings that the decisions on how to spend the money are made.

Usually, Stuart Odell, our Headteacher will have a 'shopping list' of items that the school would like to purchase, often compiled after consultation with the children through the School Council. Teaching staff also have input into the compilation of the 'shopping list' and the combination of teacher and child-led consultation always results in some excellent ideas! We are hoping to provide wet playtime class games boxes and picnic tables for the playground in the foreseeable future. Both these suggestions came through the School Council. At other times funds will be used to purchase resources to improve a particular area of the curriculum or school environment. In the main the FOTS funds are for the 'extras', not provided by the school budget, that make our children's learning experiences so much more fulfilling and exciting.

FOTS funds are not generally spent on improving the fabric of the school building as this is the responsibility of the school Governing Body. Our Constitution

commits the FOTS to spending money on things that will benefit the children directly.

We always endeavour to spend our funds in ways that will benefit all the children across all areas of the school and curriculum. The Headteacher and school staff play a key role in our consultation process and the money we raise is usually spent fairly quickly. That way, you can be sure that in supporting our school, your child(ren) will feel the benefit almost immediately.

Of course there will be times when we fundraise for a large project, but we always endeavour to contribute to smaller projects whilst this is going on.

FOTS also make regular contributions during the year such as the provision of Christmas crackers for the children's Christmas parties and also presents from a certain VIP when he visits the school just before Christmas.

In future we will include a regularly updated list of items donated to the school during the previous two years, amounts raised from various events, and items purchased with the proceeds.

How We Get Information to You

FOTS newsletters include information on forthcoming events and dates plus requests for assistance when we are planning large events. Following a FOTS event, we always write to let you know how much was raised, and if we can, we will tell you what the money will be spent on. News of FOTS can be found in the school newsletter and also in its own section on the school website.

FOTS newsletters will be posted on the playground notice board once we have raised the funds for it!

We are currently trying to establish a list of parents' email addresses, so we can also keep you informed electronically. If you would like to hear from us by email, email your details to friendsoftrowse@hotmail.co.uk

How You Can Get Involved

There are lots of ways you can help and support your child through the FOTS.

Offering to help before events or at other times during the year is so valuable – it really is a case of 'many hands make light work'. It doesn't matter if you can't help on a regular basis, or even if you can't come into school. There are always little jobs that can be done from home if you have half an hour to spare e.g. wrapping gifts, preparing raffle tickets etc. We really couldn't achieve what we do without the unseen 'army of help' that exists in school.

You can of course, if you feel able, volunteer to be a Committee 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 – every little bit helps! Please email friendsoftrowse@hotmail.co.uk if you are able to help in any way, no matter how small and we can add you to our helpers register. And finally, we are always extremely grateful to receive donations as mentioned before.

What FOTS Means to Our School

Because FOTS involves the whole school community, and indeed the wider immediate community as well as grandparents, we thought you would like to know what others think about FOTS.

From our Governing Body

“Financial support through fundraising enables us all to create a richer learning environment for our children. Items may be on a wish list, but without the fundraising efforts of the Friends, would remain there for a long time and could never be purchased so quickly. The wide variety of social functions, allow us all to get to know one another in a more relaxed setting. The children see their parents and the school staff working together for their benefit. They appreciate this united effort and it adds to their feeling of security. Our school learning environment will certainly benefit due to the enthusiasm, commitment and hard work of the Friends. All of us in school are very grateful to them.”

From our Head Teacher,

“As a new member of the school myself, joining as Head Teacher in January, I am overwhelmed by the support of the parents at the school. The ‘Friends’ is a new venture for the us, as you have already read, and activities will not only provide us with exciting calendar of social events for the school and local community, but also raise funds which will have a direct impact on children’s learning. I am extremely grateful to all ‘Friends’ for giving up their time and expertise for the benefit of the children in the school and look forward to continuing this valuable partnership in the coming years and, more importantly for me, seeing the impact the fundraising has on the education of the children.”

Thank you for taking the time to read our brochure. We hope you now know a little more about **your** Parent Teacher Association. On behalf of all the children we would like to thank you for your very valuable support which enriches their learning experiences and makes their time in school so enjoyable.

From all the PTA Committee

FOTS Committee (May 2009 – September 2010):

Arabella Beckett	Chair
Andrew Hopkins	Treasurer
Antonella Foglia	Secretary
Nicki Margand	Secretary
Elke Huismans	Class 1 rep
Caitlin Notley	Class 2 rep
Jo Cullen	Class 3 rep
Ally Windsor-Waite	Class 3 rep
Lorraine Walters	Class 4 rep
Julie Young	Class 4 rep
Kerry Furness	Committee member
Katie Murphy	Committee member

All FOTS committee members can be contacted via friendsoftrowse@hotmail.co.uk or through messages left at the School Office. Specific numbers may be given out for specific events.