Chair's PTA AGM Report 2024 – Speldhurst CEP School

It's been another busy but very successful year for Speldhurst School PTA. After anticipating a slightly quieter 12 months following the completion of the new school kitchen at the end of 2023, this didn't really materialise as 2024 saw us take on the long-awaited challenge of transforming the old school hall (most recently, the ICT suite) into our new Arts Space. This renovation was the third major project in 15 months for the school and our PTA - no mean feat so therefore it was extremely special to have our efforts and hard work recognised at the National PTA Awards 2024 in November, where we won the 'Changing the Life of the School' award. The PTA awards cover all primary and secondary schools across the UK so it really was a fantastic honour to have been selected as a winner.

Of all the awards to win, the 'Changing the Life of the School' award feels the most significant as the one thing we strive to do as a PTA is make a difference...a difference to our children's school life, to the staff at the school, and to the families who make up our school community. To be recognised as having achieved this by the judges means a great deal and has given us all renewed inspiration and energy for the year ahead.

Here's a rundown of the events we ran in 2024 and funds raised:

Lego Competition (January) – £43.75

Whilst not a big money-maker, we look forward to the Lego Competition every year as it's wonderful to see how much effort the children put into creating their builds. The money raised covers the costs of the prizes (vouchers and a trophy for the overall winner/Lego Master) with a small profit on top. Thanks to Mr Howe for taking the time to judge the entries again – over 50 children took part and their creations were all fantastic so it wasn't an easy task!

Valentine's Own Clothes Day (February) - £184.50

It's always great to end the term with an own clothes day and this time around, we went with a theme of 'Wear what you love' – there was a sea of football kits and colourful clothing and we're looking forward to repeating this day again in 2025.

Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon Volunteering (February) - £400

We were very grateful to the organisers of the Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon for offering us the opportunity to provide volunteers to act as marshals at their event. We were able to find 4 willing parents who gave up a couple of hours of their time on a Sunday morning to help direct people and traffic. As a 'thank you' in return, the organisers donated £100 per marshal to our PTA. This is a great chance to raise additional funds for our school without the work of organising a large event, and we are delighted to be taking part again in 2025.

World Book Day (March) – TOTAL £642.88

Wonderlicious Bars £444.40
Second-hand Book Sale £63.48
Photos £135

World Book Day turned into a busy time for our PTA 'Oompa Loompas' (as we became known!) after we decided, rather last minute, to sell 'Wonderlicious Bars' with Golden Tickets hiding inside as a fundraising activity. We managed to secure a great number of children's prizes, including days out at local attractions, toys and treats, and it was a joy to see the reactions of the children who found a Golden Ticket inside their bar. With over 500 orders in the space of a week, this was a fairly labour-intensive initiative but definitely a successful one, which not only raised money for our school but also brought a little bit of magic to the day.

In addition to the Wonderlicious bars, we also ran a second-hand book sale in the playground, and Chloe kindly took photos of the children in their incredible costumes which were shared with parents with requests for optional donations. A 'wonderlicious' World Book Day all around!

Wine & Cheese Evening (March) - £386.46

This was the second year of running our Wine and Cheese evening, and it was another great success! We were joined again by a wine connoisseur from The Secret Cellar, who also provided the wine for tasting, and cheeseboards were supplied by The Cheese Shop Tunbridge Wells. Puddings were also provided by parents for the pudding auction…always a popular add-on! Bookings were slightly down on last year so we have agreed to maybe mix it up and not run this event annually but still a great profit was made and a lot of fun was had by all who attended.

Mini Marathon (April) – £3821.42 plus Gift Aid

(NB - Gift Aid still needs to be claimed for this event)

After the weather caused chaos for our 2023 event, we were lucky to have it behave for us this year! The new April 'slot' for this event (the first Friday after the Easter break) seems to work well and also coincides with the London Marathon weekend which is an added bonus. The event was so well planned and went off without a hitch! It's always such a joy to see all the school families coming together to kick things off with the warm-up on the playground (led by our wonderful teachers and mascots), and for so many parents to then turn their hand to marshalling or running with the children to help make sure everyone completes the course safely. Even the most reluctant runners gave it their all and finished with smiles on their faces. Huge thanks also to the local businesses who sponsored the event and made it possible for us to treat the children to a snack and a keepsake.

Family Fun Day (May) - £1614.92

The Family Fun Day feels like it's become one of the most important events in our school and PTA calendar as it really brings our whole school community together in the wonderful setting of our school grounds. And how lucky we were with the weather for the third year running – absolutely glorious sunshine all day, plus a display of the Northern Lights in the evening!

Once again, our focus was on making sure the entry ticket prices were as low as possible to make the event accessible to all families, but thankfully, the popularity of the bar and BBQ resulted in it being another great fundraiser for the school.

This year, we had a record-breaking 110 school families join us (including a good number of new Pippin 2024 starters). Alongside tried and tested activities such as Beat the Goalie, Tug of War, arts and crafts, and inflatables, this year we also showcased a number of the clubs we run at the school, with displays of dance, kickboxing and more taking place on the field.

Another very special day for our school community with a superb sum of money raised.

Pippin Dads Walk & Pippin Raffle (June) - £3655.35

Little did 4 new Speldhurst School Dads know that a conversation over a pint in the pub would lead to a 100km walk across the South Downs and a phenomenal amount of money being raised for our school PTA! The incredible efforts of Damian, Doug, Ed and Owen captured all of our hearts as they set off after Sports Day in the sweltering heat and spent 27 hours completing this challenge. We are so grateful to them for taking the initiative to follow through with the spark of an idea they had and for raising a truly fantastic £3655. Special mention too to Katherine who also organised a last-minute raffle which boosted their fundraising further. We know a new challenge is currently being plotted for Summer 2025 and we can't wait to see what it is!

Sports Day Café (July) - £879.50

Another bumper year at the Sports Day Café with a profit of nearly £900 – an incredible result for a few hours' work! Huge thanks to all of the parents who helped out with making teas and coffees, and keeping the cold drinks flowing as temperatures soared. The berries supplied free of charge by Driscolls UK were a huge hit yet again, and the pastries sold out. Another wonderful day in the school calendar which was enjoyed by all.

90s Coco Bongo Disco (July) - £405.66

Coco Bongo made its third appearance at the Village Hall in July and although numbers were down on previous years, the levels of fun had were still super high! The 90s outfits are always a sight for sore eyes, especially when throwing shapes on the dancefloor. The busy bar helped to boost profits, and the pre-orders of hot dogs proved popular. Coco Bongo will be taking a break in 2025 to make way for a different type of social, but we have no doubt it will be back in good time.

School Discos (July) – £294.36

The KS1 and KS2 discos are the perfect way for the children to let their hair down at the end of the school year and celebrate all their hard work and achievements with their friends. The more enthusiastic dancers loved copying the dance routines demonstrated by the D2Dance team, whereas others enjoyed freestyling with their own moves. The children all behaved beautifully and had a huge amount of fun.

Bag2School (September) - £40

September is always a good time for a closet clear-out as we transition from Summer to Autumn clothing, and we were fortunate to have a good number of bags returned full of items this year. Less fortunately, we found out after the collection that Bag2School have halved the rate they pay per kilogram collected, resulting in us receiving half the payment we were expecting. We will be looking at other similar alternatives for 2025.

Quiz Night (October) – £647.11

Always a great way to kick off the new school year, it was wonderful to welcome a number of new Pippin parents onto Quiz Teams this year, as well as welcoming back an array of 'old' faces. Jon Virgo did another sterling job of putting the quiz together and we're very grateful to him for continuing to give up his time for us each year to compere this event. As we are sure you have heard already, the teachers triumphed and finished in first place this year – we believe the celebrations are still ongoing…

Waterproof Clothing Sale (October) - £635

Before Summer, we were very lucky to be contacted by a former Speldhurst School parent who was friends with the local distributor of 'Reima' outdoor clothing – this friend was moving back to Finland and needed to pass on her unsold stock, which we agreed to purchase for £150. This proved a very profitable decision - we ran two tabletop sales in the playground and ended up making a profit of over £600. We also made a donation of £50 to Parentkind's 'No Cold Child' campaign, which provides new coats to families who can't afford to buy their own. All leftover stock will also be donated to a local charity this month.

Bonfire & Fireworks Night (November) - £7678.10

This year's fireworks event broke all the records – a combination of a slight increase in ticket prices and a bit of cost-cutting where possible, and even perhaps a change in day from Sunday to Saturday, led to us making our biggest profit yet of an incredible £7678. The event ran seamlessly with even the weather playing ball. The Fireworks Committee did a superb job with the planning ahead of the night, and we are extremely grateful to all the parents who gave up their time to help out on the day, making it a real team effort all round.

Christmas Events (December) –

Total after costs = Loss of c.£115 (TBC after Christmas cards payment)

Christmas Jumper Sale - £68.50

Christmas Wreath Workshops – £225

Christmas Grotto - £459.22 (takings £854.22, costs £395 including crackers)

Carol Service Mulled Wine donations –£23.90 (takings £76.55, costs £52.65)

Christmas Cards – c.£360 (awaiting payment)

Additional costs - £650 pantomime, £206.78 drinks and snacks for film

Christmas really is a magical time of year at Speldhurst School and we do all we can to ensure all of the children enjoy their final school weeks of the year and are able to join in with a variety of festive fun. The money we raise through our Christmas initiatives is entirely spent on funding Christmas activities for our children, including the wonderful pantomime by The Cat's Grin Theatre company, providing Christmas crackers for their lunch, gifts from Father Christmas on Grotto Day and a special snack and drink to have with a festive film on the last week of term.

Whilst most of these activities used to be funded by Grotto ticket sales alone, we are now incurring higher costs of running the Grotto as donations of gifts for it are significantly down and much lower than the number of tickets sold. This leaves a 'gift deficit' and means PTA money has to be used to purchase additional gifts. We do need to say a special thank you though to the wonderful families who stepped in and provided extra gifts this year when we knew we were short - their generosity was so greatly appreciated.

The class Christmas card orders always help to boost the Christmas budget, despite the money raised from orders being almost half what it was two years ago – we will look into other alternatives for 2025 but this may just be a side effect of the current cost of living.

In addition, this year, we also ran a second-hand Christmas jumper sales, helped with the Christmas Wreath workshops run by Vicky Trifiletti and Naomi Green, and served mulled wine and mince pies at the KS2 carol service, all of which were a great success.

Other:

Cake Sales - £821.18

The class cake sales continued to prove popular, with most sales making between £100-£150. Money raised from cake sales allows teachers to purchase extra resources for their classroom.

Pre-loved Uniform – £348.26

The pre-loved uniform team continue to do a fantastic job with their table-top sales every term. These now take place in the Arts Space which works really well. Sales have historically been once every 'long term' (Autumn, Spring, Summer) but the team are now moving to twice a term to hopefully shift more of the stock, especially as storage space is limited. This is an important eco-offering for our school community which also makes a great profit for the PTA and helps parents out with the cost of uniform.

Our School Lottery - £884.10

Our School Lottery continues to be a great source of regular 'income' for the PTA, with over £800 raised over the course of this year. We will start to promote the lottery again in 2025 to hopefully continue to increase numbers who are signed up to it. There is a winner from the school every week and, more often than not, the winner donates their cash prize back to the school, thereby adding to the total funds we receive.

How the PTA supported the school in 2024

Through the events outlined above, the PTA has raised **£24,766.17** for our school in 2024 and has donated a huge **£19,505.84** towards a variety of vital school projects.

The largest donation of the year was **£9407.50** to the renovation of the old school hall/ICT suite into a **Multi-Purpose Arts Space** – a space which has already made such a difference to both pupils and staff by providing an additional large room for music lessons, choir, clubs and more. Despite a few hiccups, as you would expect with any old building, the renovation was completed in full over the Easter break and the transformation is quite incredible. We were so fortunate to be in a position to go ahead with this long-discussed project this year thanks to the success of our fundraising in 2023, and we hope this room will be enjoyed by many more Speldhurst School children in years to come.

We have also continued to contribute **£500 per month** towards the school's ongoing **counselling and wellbeing** programme, with donations for the year totalling **£4000**, and also **£3000** towards the cost of **school trips and experience days** – this equates to **£14 per child**.

Other lower value items purchased using the PTA money included:

- **Pippin Book Bags**
- **KS2 Sustainability Workshops**
- **Year 6 dictionaries**
- **Contributions to the Year 6 yearbooks**
- **Pencil cases and stationery for Year 3 students**
- **An OPAL Storage Box**

The treasurer's report details all costs and proceeds.

Looking to 2025, we are opening the year with a very healthy bank balance of just over **£18,000.**

As agreed with Mrs Hayward and the staff, there are a number of priority projects which will require funding support from the PTA this year – these include:

- **The OPAL Play Project** – estimated cost c.£5000
- **New iPads** – estimated cost £11,000
- **Upgrading the School Running Track** – estimated cost £1000
- **Continued support of the Counselling & Wellbeing Programme** – estimated cost £5500 (£500 per month excluding August)
- **Contributions toward school trips** - £3000
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We continue to be incredibly proud of everything we are managing to achieve as a small PTA team. The energy and enthusiasm brought to every event and opportunity doesn't go unnoticed - we therefore need to say a very big thank you to all our committee members and event leaders for the hard work they put into making every event a success, and for the part they play in bringing our school community together.

Our motivation as a team continues to be seeing for ourselves the incredible difference the money we raise makes to our school, our children and the staff. However, there's no doubt that most of the work we carry out falls on too few heads, and that is why one of our PTA priorities for 2025 is to try to recruit extra hands to help and to support our work, whether it be new committee members, or simply people who are able to volunteer at events or offer a skill which will make our lives easier. Our current team have been running things for several years now so fresh energy and new ideas are much needed.

Before closing, it's important to acknowledge the support we continue to receive from our school families and local businesses who have contributed to and volunteered at our events to make everything we do possible.

Last, but by no means least, a very big thank you to Stephanie Hayward, Simon Howe, Martin Steibelt, Georgie Bailey, Katie Harle, the office team and all the teachers for their ongoing support, enthusiasm and encouragement.

Rebecca Willis, PTA Chair (2024)

Confirmed 2025 Event Dates:

Friday 31st January - Lego Competition entry deadline

Friday 14th February – Own Clothes Day/KS1 & KS2 Valentines Parties after school

Week beginning 24th February - PTA Online Auction

Friday 25th April (morning) - Mini Marathon

Saturday 10th May - Family Fun Day

Thursday 19th June (reserve 26th June) – Sports Day Café

Friday 11th July - Parents' Summer Social

Saturday 1st November – Fireworks Night

To be confirmed:

Creative Arts Week including Art Exhibition
End of Year KS1 & KS2 Discos (July)
Quiz Night (October)