

Amazing ideas for autumn

Get the new school year off to a flying start with guidance from these PTA success stories



Treasure hunt

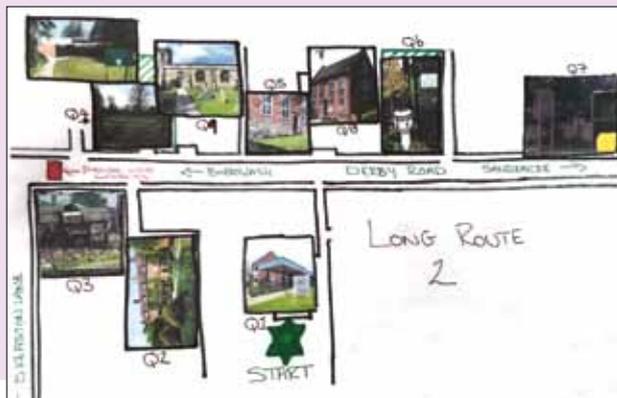
'We noticed that profits and attendance for our Christmas fair had been declining over the past three years, and enthusiasm was low, so we decided to take the plunge do something different. Our Chair suggested a treasure hunt around the local village, which we all agreed would be good for all ages.

We sold tickets in advance for £4 per person, and advertised through our newsletter and Facebook, as well as banners on the school gates and outside the village hall. We bought tickets from cheapticketprinting.co.uk so we could monitor the number of attendees, as we could only have 200 due to health and safety. We sold out!

We created six different routes around the village. Three of the routes were shorter and didn't involve crossing roads. The maps had photos of buildings and areas as clues. Once visitors found the area, they had to answer a Christmas-y question. On the longer routes we added an anagram that spelled a Christmas-themed word.

After the hunt everyone came back to the village hall for a hog roast and a live band. We boosted profits with Santa visits and a few stalls and games. We raised £1,563 in total, and we had a wonderfully positive response from the families and teachers who attended!'

Kirsty Izzard, Chair, Friends of Risley School Association, Risley, Derbyshire (133 pupils)



Gin tasting

'To fundraise for new library books, we decided to hold our first gin tasting event in September last year. We began advertising the evening at the start of the new school year, which gave us a whole month to promote it. Posters were displayed around school to remind parents to buy their tickets.

One of our parents, who owns a wine store, put me in touch with one of his colleagues, who holds gin nights regularly. He normally charges £350 for such events, but he waived the fee for us.

We sold tickets from the school office for £20 per person, which covered admission and samples of six different gins. By selling tickets in advance we could ensure there would be enough guests to cover costs.

We held the event on a Friday night in the school hall, with doors opening at seven. We offered a bar selling prosecco, wine and beer before the gin tasting started at 7.30. We set up tables for guests, with flowers and canapes on each. The evening consisted of a brief talk on the history of gin, followed by the sampling of a variety of different types, including some of the best gins around.

To boost profits we held a bottle raffle. We also had a bag on each table that contained a mini bottle of champagne and a bath bomb. Whoever had a raffle ticket under their chair won the bag!

A total of 40 guests attended, plus four teachers, including the Head. We had a great turnout and it was enjoyed by everyone! We made a profit of £651, which will do wonders for our library!'

Paula Westerman, PTA Chair, St Thomas CofE School, Lydiate, Liverpool (211 pupils)

Printed products

'We run our extremely popular Christmas printed products fundraiser through Class Fundraising (classfundraising.co.uk). We order the templates in March, and they're sent to us just after October half-term. These are handed out to all pupils via teachers as soon as we get them, giving everyone plenty of time to create their masterpieces! Pupils draw their designs on the form, which is then handed back in to school. We set a two-week deadline to ensure products are back in time for Christmas.

Class Fundraising sends out sample cards of each design so parents can see exactly what they will receive. Parents pay online via our PTA Events page, which is where they detail which items they would like to buy, and how many of each. The children's designs can be printed onto cards, mugs, gift tags, tea towels and tote bags. Once all orders are in, we download the list of quantities and send it off to Class Fundraising along with the templates.

The orders are turned around in about ten days. A volunteer packs everything up, ready to send to parents via the school. Each item has a set cost, for example £3.65 for a pack of cards, which we then sell on for the recommended price of £5 to give us our profit. We had 97 orders in total last year, giving us a profit of **XXXX!**

Eleanor Long, PTA Vice-Chair, Evenlode Primary School, Penarth, Glamorgan (450 pupils)



Sponsored bounce

'For our sponsored bounce, we contacted our local bouncy castle hire firm and secured two large bouncy castles at £120 for three hours. We worked out these would accommodate up to 15 children each, which was perfect for our classes of around 30 children. A few weeks before the bounce took place we sent letters and sponsorship forms home in book bags, asking for the forms to be returned two days before the bounce.

Our Vice Chair Harriett secured the help of ten volunteers to usher the children to the hall on time and count their bounces. A timetable for the day was given to teachers in advance, which helped keep things on track. The interaction between the children and adults was fantastic throughout the event – it really was great fun!

Those taking part in the sponsored bounce jumped for one minute as a group, with volunteers counting their bounces and recording totals on their sponsor forms. After the minute was up, the rest of the class joined them for three minutes of bouncing to ensure no-one missed out on the bouncy castle fun! It was a great success, and we plan to make it an annual event. In a small school where not everyone was sponsored, we raised £1,371! Everyone really embraced it, including the teachers and Head... there's something about bouncy castles that brings out your inner child!

Sarah O'Shea, PTA Chair, Harold Court Primary School, Romford, Essex (413 pupils)

Christmas quiz sheet

'We chose to offer a take-home quiz last Christmas, as we had tried a quiz night but it was poorly attended. With a quiz sheet, everyone could take part, and no babysitter was required!

It didn't take much planning and could be organised in a relatively short time. We wrote the questions to ensure people couldn't Google them, and they were a mix of anagrams, cryptic clues, true or false and general knowledge.

We offered bottles of wine as a prize, and these were donated by local businesses and supermarkets.

We spread the word through the school newsletter, our Facebook page and posters in the playground. We started promoting a week before we sold the quiz sheets to remind everyone to bring in their money! We charged £2, and PTA members took it in turns to sell the sheets in the playground.

Some of us also took them sell at our workplaces. Sheets were then returned after 1-2 weeks to a wrapping paper-covered box in the school office.

We always run the quiz alongside the Christmas fair to boost funds, and while it's not a massive earner, we raised £80 with no costs and little effort!

Sam Sadler, PTA Chair, Wethersfield CofE Primary School, Braintree, Essex (94 pupils)

Quiz night

'This year one of our committee members suggested we hold our first ever quiz night. As it was something new we were concerned it wouldn't be well supported, but we combatted this by sending out letters in book bags, posting on our Facebook page and advertising in the school newsletter.

After reading about another school's quiz night success in the autumn issue of PTA+, we were inspired to try something a bit different for the refreshments. We decided to serve pizza, as it's cheap, quick and easy. We included this in the £5 ticket price for adults, with children attending for free. We set a maximum of four adults per team.

To increase profits, we bought a TEN so we could run a bar, plus a lottery licence so we could sell raffle tickets.

The night was a great success, with more than 60 people attending. Our quizmaster Nick has previous experience of running quizzes, which made for a fantastic event.

The quiz contained an assortment of questions, with rounds such as "remembering 2017", famous people, general knowledge and even a picture round. The event raised almost £500 and it is an event that our PTFA would definitely consider doing again.'

Diana Kay, Chair, Friends of Dean Gibson Primary School, Kendal, Cumbria (165 pupils)



Christmas tree sales

'We were approached by the company Trees for Christmas, which offers a Christmas tree-buying initiative to schools. We ran it for the first time in 2016. We began organising last year's event in September as the orders had to be in quite early. We started promoting to parents in October through leaflets and order forms in book bags, posts on the PTA and local community Facebook pages and posters in local businesses. The trees had to be pre-ordered to ensure we only purchased the stock we needed. The trees were priced as follows, excluding VAT:

- 3-4ft cost £16, sold for £20
- 5-6ft cost £22, sold for £35
- 6-6'6ft tree cost £29, sold for £40
- 6'6-8ft cost £37.50, sold for £50

We promoted the event to the wider community, but the majority of orders came from the school. Trees were delivered to my house and buyers were offered two time slots over two weekends to come and pick them up, which they specified when placing the order.

The feedback has been amazing.

People felt the trees were beautiful shapes and didn't drop at all. For anyone thinking of holding a similar fundraiser, it's important to price the trees correctly and also to start early! It can be tricky to begin with as people can be wary of the quality of the trees, but once it's established as a

fundraiser it's well worth it.

We raised about £350, and next year we will be increasing our prices to boost our profits, as the trees will still be very good value at £5 more.'

Lily Cook, Co-Chair, St Mary's School, Chiddingfold, Surrey (220 pupils)



Wine tasting and auction of promises

'In March we held our third bluffers' wine tasting and auction of promises event. Combining wine tasting with an auction makes the event one of the highlights of our school calendar. The auction offered more than 30 lots donated by school families, teachers and local businesses. We charged £15 for a ticket, which included dinner.

The evening began with the wine tasting with a difference.

A panel of four parents presented six wines to the audience. Much like the TV show *Call My Bluff*, for each wine one of the panel was telling the truth, while the others were telling tall tales. Teams had to note down whether they believed that the wine was, say, a flat Cava or a Malbec from a community vineyard in Argentina. The winning team won a case of all the wines.

After dinner, we held the auction of promises, compered by two budding amateur auctioneer parents. Promises included museum tickets, the chance for a pupil to choose a learning topic for the day, a Zumba party, professional decluttering, a violin-making workshop, a weekend in Denmark, an evening's babysitting, and much more. All the lots went for well over their starting price. People who were unable to attend were able to bid online.

We raised more than £6,000 and we are already looking forward to next year's event.'

Clea Relly, Former Chair, Friends of the Free School, Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Temple Grove Free School, London (300 pupils)