



St Francis' School Association
Whyteleafe Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5ED

St Francis' Catholic Primary School
Diocese of Arundel & Brighton
Surrey County Council

Head Teacher: Mrs M Wheeler

Welcome to Your School Association A Guide for New Parents

Introduction & Welcome

A very, warm welcome to our school, St Francis' Catholic Primary School.

This booklet has been written by our Parents School Association 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 for the first time and there always seem to be so many questions to ask. This booklet aims to set out most of the information you will need about our Parent Association, called the St Francis' School Association, which is a major part of our school life.

If after having read this, as there is a lot to cover, and you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any of the committee members, class teacher, class representative or the school office. There is also a form at the back this guide for your completion, which we'd appreciate your assistance with.

Many thanks, from all of us on the Committee

Why do we have a Parents School association?

We are very fortunate at our school to have an association that is, and has been, such an integral part of the school community for many years. In its time, it has raised many thousands of pounds, which have been spent on improving equipment and resources to enhance our children's education and the facilities in the school.

Our association is much, 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 our members – but like any organisation, there are times when it is more 'challenging', but with the continued support of parents and staff, we have always been able to succeed in our 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 St Francis' School Association when their children join our school.

We are extremely conscious of the ethos and morals of our school and we try very hard when organising and planning events to respect this. Not all our events are run as fundraisers, and sometimes our children's discos and parents events are a way of thanking families for their continued support throughout the year.

Why are we a Registered Charity?

It is a legal requirement that organisations such as ours, with an annual income in excess of £5000, register with the Charity Commission.

As a Charity we must abide by Charity Commission rules and regulations and we are bound by a constitution. Our constitution sets out rules about how we operate and how we conduct ourselves. As a Registered Charity :-

- We can raise funds more easily from grant giving trusts, local businesses, etc.
- We can take advantage of Charity matched giving schemes

Links with Local Business

We have, over time, developed strong links with the local community and are always well supported by both residents and businesses, for which we are very grateful. Many of the local Caterham shops are very generous in their donations of raffle & tombola prizes and some have taken part in our Christmas and Summer Fayres. We have also been extremely grateful to the local businesses who have participated in charity matched giving schemes, which has had a huge impact on our fundraising.

Role of the Committee

Our PTA committee usually consists of 6 elected Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretaries). We also have a teacher representative and the head teacher at our meetings. All other parents are also invited to attend which enables us to make decisions about the activities that we would like to carry out.

Registered Charity No 294760

Officers of the Committee: Dominique Sturgess (Chairperson), Adam Merrett (Treasurer), Wendy Cunningham and Francesca Wall (Joint Secretaries)

The Committee meet on a regular basis, usually once per half term, with smaller working groups meeting as necessary to organise larger or more complicated events.

➤ Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Our Annual General meeting is held at the beginning of the academic year and this is an opportunity for all parents to come along and hear in more detail about the 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 for the forthcoming year.

➤ Class Representatives

Class Representatives undertake a very important role. There are usually two representatives per class who provide a link between individual classes parents and the committee. The support from class representatives is vital when it comes to organising our events as they :-

- are the point of contact for ticket sales
- co-ordinate their class stalls & class volunteer rota for both the Christmas & Summer Fayres
- help organise volunteers and donations at events
- keep their class parents and teacher updated of forthcoming PTA appeals or events
- pass any messages from the class teacher on to their class parents

Without the help of all our Class Reps, we could not manage our events, and their role and support they give is invaluable!

A list of our current Committee members, class representatives are available from any of the Committee. Updated lists are sent out each year after the AGM. If you are interested in joining the Committee, acting as a class rep or volunteering, please do not hesitate to talk to any member of the Committee.

How we raise money?

Like most Associations, the majority of our funds are raised through events that we run. Some of our most popular events are the Fayres, Children's Discos and Cake Sales. We have also raised money in the past from printed calendars, tea towels, mouse mats and mugs, produced our own cookery book and fashion shows. Other popular events, organised previously have been Race Night, Film Night, St Patrick's Family Disco, Quiz Night, Children's Bingo, Bags to School, Bonus Ball, Cheese and Wine Events and Nearly New Uniform Sales!

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There is always something going on, and we always try and respond to the children's & parents requests for events and try to provide an affordable and entertaining event for all the family. After all the hard work is done, it is truly rewarding to see the all the children having a great time at events and even more so, when they are able to enjoy using new equipment or resources that have been donated by the association.

We are fortunate, however, to have other opportunities open to us to raise money. Set-up a few years ago, a web portal called '**Give as you live**' donates a percentage of any sales purchased on the internet when using their web portal from vendors such as Amazon, M&S, Debenhams, John Lewis, Boots, plus, lots, lots more! If you shop online, we could received a percentage of the value of your purchases, and at no extra cost to you - visit <http://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/st-francis-caterham>

Donations are extremely important, and these can be in any form besides money, such as your time (helping as a volunteer), donating items for sale or raffle prizes or your skills and services to aid the school's facilities.

Charity Matched Giving

Charity Matched Giving is a very simple practice. Companies and businesses pledge to donate to a charity, such as ourselves, an amount of money relating to the amount that an employee(s) donates or fundraises for us. We have been helped enormously in the past by this type of donation

If you think that your employer has a matched giving scheme already in operation or if you would like further details about setting up a scheme please talk to one of the Committee or ask in the school office.

How we spend the money we raise?

We are able to consider how we would like to spend the money we raise and this is usually done when we meet throughout the year. However, we usually take direction from the Head Teacher from their 'wish list', which could improve a particular area of the curriculum, school environment or for 'extras' not provided by the school budget. As long as it makes our children's learning experiences much more fulfilling and exciting, we are happy to invest the money we raise.

We always endeavour to spend our funds in ways that will benefit **all** our children across all areas of the school and curriculum.

The money we raise is usually spent fairly quickly, that way, we can be sure that we are supporting our school as effectively as possible and our children will feel the benefit along with everybody else.

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Of course, there have been times when we have been fundraising for a large project and in the past, we have supported special projects as the new Infant and Junior outdoor shelters (in 2010). In 2011 and 2012, the focus was on a Play Safety Surface in the Infant playground. In 2013 our fundraising went towards the purchase of a new PTA shed to house the many items we have accumulated over the years, and to safeguard them for the use of future generations. In 2014 most of our fundraising went towards the purchase of new laptops so that there are now enough laptops for a whole class. More recently in April this year the money raised at our ever popular quiz night went towards purchasing additional digital cameras so that each class teacher now has a camera.

We have also made ongoing commitments to the following :-

- We provide £150 per class in September for discretionary use by each class teacher as to what may make a difference for their pupils in class.
- We provide Christmas Crackers and squash for the children's Christmas lunch
- We meet the cost of a Leaver's Yearbook for the Year 6 children, to help commemorate their time at the school and the friends and achievements they have made here
- We provide frozen ice-pops to the children, on Sports Day

How we let you know what is happening?

As long as you provide us with your email, we will keep you informed of what is happening.

However, any information that needs to be relayed to parents is usually included within the weekly school newsletter in the children's book bags,

We also have a dedicated notice board by the school gate, plus display posters in class windows and notify all members via email.

How you can get involved?

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

It really is a case of 'many hands make light work' and sometimes what is asked for can really take up very little time to get these done.

It really doesn't matter if you can't help on a regular basis or even if you can't come into school.

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There are always little jobs that can be done from home, if you can spare some time, eg. wrapping gifts for Santa's grotto, taping tickets to tombola bottles, creating flyers, printing posters, baking cakes, etc.

We really couldn't achieve what we do without the unseen 'army of help' that exists in the school.

You can, of course if you are able, volunteer to be a Class Rep or Committee Member. Also we would love to know if you have any "special" skills that we could make use of.

However, on the simplest level, support the association and your school by attending events and getting involved.

We would love to see you at our AGM in the Autumn Term (details to follow) and give us your ideas for fundraising events, as this is the time to ask questions and voice your opinion!

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Useful Information for New Parents

As we said we are aware that starting a new school can be daunting, everyone knows the ropes and you can feel a bit like a fish out of water. With this in mind please find below some information to help you settle in to the daily routine of school.

The school gate is open from 08:45 every day and most Reception parents bring their children into the infant playground at the start of the school day (junior children go directly to their own playground without parents). The infant playground is for children in Reception, and years one and two only.

In the morning the children lay their bags in lines in the playground according to their classes and then usually run off to play while waiting for the bell. Parents waiting in the infant playground are asked to wait behind the yellow line by the infant shelter (you will see this when you come into the playground). This is so that the teacher on duty can have an unobstructed view of the children on the playground, and is for the safety of your children. Scooters should not be brought onto the playground, and children should not climb on the play equipment. It is requested that you keep younger siblings with you whilst waiting for your child to go into class.

If it rains then children go directly to their classrooms, parents should drop them at the door.

Teachers are not available to talk to parents in the mornings and parents should not enter the school in the mornings. If you need to get a message to the class teacher you can put a note in your child's book bag or write a note in their reading record.

The PTA run a drop off scheme every morning with a rota of volunteers. This enables parents to safely drop off their children to go into school and eases congestion and parking around the school and surrounding roads. Drop off can be used by anyone in the school as long as your child is able to get out of the car safely by themselves and is confident to go into school on their own. There are some general rules of etiquette:

- *Drop off is available to any child in the school from Reception to Year Six*
- *Volunteers will be available from 8:45am when the gate is opened and a teacher comes on duty*
- *Volunteers will, where possible, open your door and help your child exit the car*
- *Parents are asked to drive around the horseshoe to the farthest volunteer on the horseshoe before stopping and before any child exits the car – this ensures up to four cars can unload at the same time*

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- *Children should be ready to exit the car and holding all their belongings*
- *Children should only exit on the passenger side not on the driver side – if this is not possible please park and walk your child to the gate*
- *Children should not be dropped off before the zebra crossing, as this halts the flow of traffic*
- *Adults should not exit the car to open doors or boot*
- *As soon as children have been dropped off please move forward to allow those behind to drop off, please do not wait until your child has entered the gates to move on*
- *If adults are being dropped off with children who require supervision please do not use the horseshoe area please do this elsewhere on the grounds*

We also ask that you please note the following:

- *Volunteers are giving up their time to do this voluntarily and they take no responsibility for children that have been dropped off, in particular those left before the gate opens and the teacher comes on duty. Please treat them with respect*
- *Mr Coyler, the school caretaker is on duty on the gate to ensure children do not exit the school and that those dropped off go straight into school*

Please do try to follow the above guidelines and also pass this information on to anyone that may be dropping off on your behalf so as the system continues to move swiftly and not cause congestion in the mornings.

At the end of the day the school grounds get a little congested with people parking to collect children. Audley school finish their day at 3pm so our parents should not come on site before then to park.

Reception children finish school at 3:15pm and the rest of the school between 3:20pm and 3:30pm. The times are staggered to allow for parents to collect their children and then leave the school grounds before the junior children are collected.

The gate will be opened at 3:15pm and you will come on the playground to collect your child from outside their classroom. Siblings should not be allowed to play on the play equipment, and again no scooters should be brought onto the playground.

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If you need to ask any questions of the class teacher you will be able to talk to them at pick up time.

Your class teacher will let you know about your child's day but to give you a general insight. Infant children have three breaks - mid-morning, lunchtime and mid-afternoon. They are given a snack of fruit in the morning and also milk if you opt to pay for this (it is free for under 5s and is a good way of making sure they drink!). If it rains at any point they will stay in the classroom and play games.

All children at St Francis are put into a 'house' and your class teacher will be able to tell you which 'house' your child is in. At the end of each term the children from the house that gets the most house points over the term come into school in their house colours. There will be a notice from the school about this at the time. At sports day in the summer your children will also compete in their house teams and wear their house colours.

After school clubs are not available to Reception Children until the summer term (after Easter). If this changes the school will let you know.

If you know that your child will regularly be picked up by someone else the school need a written note of this, so it is prudent to send in a list of anyone who may collect your child so that the school have this to keep.

Parent helpers are very welcome in the school and if you can give any time to help in the classroom then talk to your class teacher about when suits you and them. Forms to get a drb disclosure are available from the school office.

Finally a note on sunscreen, in hot weather if you apply this to your child before they come to school as teachers can not apply it. Your child will also not be allowed on the playground in hot weather if they do not have a sun hat.

We hope you find the above useful, and there are probably other points that we have omitted, but if you have any questions you can always ask any other parents on the playground or email the association.