

FRIENDS OF DOWNS VIEW

Chair's Annual Report for the year September 2021 – August 2022

Another challenging year for the FODV where the ever present threat of Covid curtailed our face to face events on site once again. While it was the sensible thing not to have large groups of people together indoors, it was disappointing from both a fundraising and social perspective.

However, with a little bit of creative thinking, a fundraising event was held at the end of the Autumn term which was really well received and more on that in the events part of this report.

As always, tribute must be paid to the stalwart members of the Friends Committee who continued to give their time and energy in a variety of ways to support the work of the charity. Their enthusiasm has kept things going during these tough times. Sadly, our numbers have declined, which means more responsibility has fallen on them and I am so very grateful to them for stepping up.

Post holders Peter Mapledoram, Treasurer and Michelle Edser, Secretary have been amazing in their roles once again and given great support to me. A great deal of what they do goes unseen, so a huge thank you to both of them.

Likewise Keely Lewis has continued her excellent job of keeping the school website updated and creating eye catching posters for us. Also this year, she took on responsibility for our Facebook page after the decision by Harriet Rafferty and Lana Hall to step away from the committee. Huge thanks to Keely and also to Harriet and Lana for all that they did prior to their departure.

Nickie Poulton, the longest serving member of the committee continued her tireless support for The Friends and provided continuity and communication between the committee and school staff. As such, we are aware that a huge amount falls to Nickie and we are very grateful for her boundless enthusiasm and willingness to take on so much.

Cath Bailey has become a firm member of the committee which is fantastic and has been very supportive and proactive in helping Peter with financial matters where possible and generally coming up with ideas and solutions to keep the Friends moving forward.

Happily this year we were able to reinstate our much loved Summer Fun Day which was the first event with Vanessa Hickey as Executive Head that we've been able to hold. Our thanks to her for her support on the day and in the lead up to it. Vanessa has also attended committee meetings via Zoom throughout the year and made it possible for our May meeting to be a face to face one which was really important after so long.

Adrian Carver, our Honorary President also came along to the Fun Day and pitched in doing whatever tasks needed an extra pair of hands. It was great to have him there and super helpful too. We look forward to more involvement from him in the coming year.

The most significant thing to include in this annual report is the difficult decision that was taken at the May committee meeting which was not to proceed with the trampoline room. It had been the Friends major fundraising project for four years, begun under Adrian Carver's headship. This decision was not taken lightly, but given the impact of the pandemic on staffing and budgeting, Vanessa Hickey could not see a way forward with the project and was concerned that, if built, it would go unused due to issues around staffing it and safety. Modifications to the original plans were looked at, but these offered no solution either. Unable to provide a start date for the build, two charitable organisations that had pledged significant donations to us pre pandemic specifically for the trampoline room, decided it was more appropriate for them to reallocate the funds. However, we could approach them again in the future with new funding applications.

Hugely disappointing as this outcome was, it made us reflect on the work of the Friends and reconsider how the money raised by our families and wider community could be more appropriately used in the current climate. Smaller, more manageable projects that would be beneficial to the students and workable with existing staff were agreed as the best way to proceed. A letter explaining this decision was sent to all parent/carers.

What follows is a breakdown of what we have achieved during this reporting year and shows the continued commitment of the committee members and wonderful generosity of DV families and their friends. A huge thank you to you all!

Fundraising Events

- At the beginning of December, a Christmas wreath making workshop was held at Al Campo Lounge, led by Cath Bailey and supported by Harriet Rafferty and Lana Hall. It was a really lovely and well attended event and much needed on a social level and also raised money for the Friends. Such a great idea and a flexible event in terms of where it could be held.
- The Christmas raffle was a great success once again, largely organised by Nickie Poulton from school in terms of tickets, but supported by Lana Hall who made up two wonderful hampers as prizes, plus donations made by other committee members, staff and DV families. Always a winner!
- Nickie also organised an Easter raffle for the staff which raised some money too and was a nice addition to our fundraising events.
- The Bonus Ball competition was kept running by Nickie as well.
- The BMW 10K was able to take place in April as usual which was great news and our runners did us proud as they always do, raising a fantastic amount of money. They are amazing.
- Special mention and thanks must go to Tony Clarke who ran for us in both the Brighton Half and Full Marathon! A brilliant achievement for him and he raised a huge amount along the way.

Events for Families

It was great to be able to offer these again, starting with a playground play date in April which was enjoyed by several families, old and new. Also as already mentioned, the welcome return of the Summer Fun Day at the end of June. It was really well attended and the atmosphere was great. A big thank you to Nickie for pulling it all together with her dedicated group of staff who helped on the day and in the run up to the event. Also all other committee members who gave their time to make the day a success. We hired a burger van to take the pressure off ourselves in terms of catering and the owners did a fantastic job of feeding everyone, but it took a long time, so something to consider and

perhaps do differently next year. With more volunteers and the flexibility this would bring, we could consider reinstating our own barbecue!

Donations

These have continued to come in and show the kindness and generosity of our supporters and in the main, were from individuals taking on a challenge and using it to raise money.

Friends was also the lucky recipient of a cheque for £333 from Waitrose last Christmas as part of their Give A Little Love scheme and the money was distributed between the classes for Christmas treats.

Funded by the Friends

As in the previous year, we purchased the Drusillas Park pass as it is a popular destination for most classes and a really valuable resource.

My thanks again to **all** members of the FODV. You are greatly valued and despite another odd year, you have kept things ticking over, the committee afloat and money coming in! I look forward to more in person meetings and events and finding ways to grow FODV to secure its future and the much needed fundraising it does.

Lisa Burgess, Chair.