

Friends Association

This briefing sets out the formal wording for a 'Friends Association (FA)' and those roles we wish to fill at our AGM on 24 September 2021.

Although the information can be quite a lot to take in and feel like a big commitment, we do spread out the events across the year and plan ahead as much as possible. The events we have held across the school year in previous years have been:

- School discos (Halloween, Easter, Summer)
- Gift Sales (Mother's Day / Father's Day)
- Summer Fete / Fawbfest
- Christmas Bazaar
- Music Bingo
- Christmas Cards & Tea towel sales
- Help at Christmas performances
- Refreshment sales at parents' events

As a committee member, you would not be expected to attend every event, but we would like at least one committee member at each event with a team of volunteers. Sub-committees can be formed with at least one formal committee member and a group of volunteers to organise an event such as a disco or parent gift sales.

Our committee

The committee is a team of volunteers who are elected at the association's Annual General Meeting (AGM) to manage the association on behalf of the members. There are two types of committee member, Officer and Ordinary (or Other) member. Officers have specific roles such as Chair, Treasurer or Secretary. Ordinary Committee Members play a vital role working alongside and supporting the Officers. All committee members have equal voting rights, except for the Chair, who has an additional casting vote, should this be needed.

It is normal for the size of the committee to vary, depending on the size of the school. The minimum number with which it is possible to operate is two, usually a Chair and a Treasurer. There is no restriction on the maximum number of committee members. However, it is in the association's interest not to make a committee too large, as this may prove to be unmanageable.

Additional support – Volunteers & Friends Ambassadors

In addition to the elected committee, it is valuable to have a list of volunteers/helpers. We would also like two Friends Ambassadors for each year group, who are willing to support the work of the committee. It would be acceptable for such volunteers to attend committee meetings, but they would not have a vote; only elected committee members (Ordinary and Officers) can vote. Being a nominated Friends Ambassador and Volunteer can be a gentle

introduction to the committee and such volunteers may well go on to being a fully elected committee member with full voting rights.

Members

The Friends Association the members may be Parents, Carers, guardians of pupils currently at the school, any staff employed by the school plus any persons wishing to offer appropriate support or help to the school/association who is deemed suitable as a member by the Committee e.g. grandparents, members of the local community.

Members are not legally responsible for the actions of the association. It is the elected committee members who are legally responsible for the management of the association.

Trustees

As our association is a registered charity, all the elected committee members (Officers and Ordinary) automatically become Trustees of the association (charity) and have a legal duty to ensure that the association (charity) acts lawfully and is managed properly.

Whilst Trustees have a legal duty it is important to remember that all decisions should be made collectively by the committee. No one individual should take sole responsibility for a committee decision or activity.

The roles within our Friends Association

Chair - Main purpose of the role

The Chair directs your meetings, making sure everyone's views are heard and everyone is involved in the meeting. He or she should make sure all committee members are familiar with the association's constitution, and their role and responsibilities as a committee member and trustee (all committee members are automatically trustees if you are Charity registered).

Duties and key responsibilities

- Prepares for meetings (with the Secretary)
- Invites committee members, parents, and staff
- Suggests items for the agenda
- Identifies outstanding items from last meeting
- Prepares introductions for any new members attending
- Sets the ground rules for meetings and makes sure they are inclusive and efficient
- Delegates tasks to other members and volunteers, and checks they are completed
- Liaises with the school and requests a 'wish list' for the committee to agree what to fund
- Ensures the committee fulfils its role in respect of governance of the association as set out in the constitution, for example holding an AGM, election of committee, working with the Treasurer to ensure annual returns are completed if the FA is Charity registered
- Ensures any decisions made are clear, fit the objects of the association and by agreement of the committee as per your constitution.
- The Chair cannot make decisions alone - all decisions are made by the committee.
- Writes the annual report for the association (with the Secretary)
- Can be a signatory on the FA bank account (along with at least one other committee member)
- Making sure the association is GDPR compliant

Key skills

- Confident and assertive –able to control meetings and call to order when necessary, making sure everyone has an opportunity to speak.
- Ability to remain impartial – make sure contributions are brief and ensure everyone's views are respected.
- Calm, friendly and approachable – as the main point of contact for the FA for the school and parents the Chair must be inclusive and make sure everyone feels welcome.
- Organised and able to delegate – most FAs have lots of activities going on and the Chair should make sure the workload is shared and tasks are completed as agreed.

Secretary - Main purpose of the role

The Secretary supports the Chair to build effective communication links between the school and the association and maintains accurate records (see below).

Duties and key responsibilities

- Prepares for meetings (with the Chair)
- Takes minutes at meetings, recording attendance, action points, decisions, and proposals
- Circulates approved minutes, along with a reminder of any actions agreed
- Maintains association records
- Making sure that the association is GDPR compliant
- Updates trustee details with Charity Commission (as appropriate)
- Assists the Chair writing the annual report for the association
- May be a signatory on the FA bank account (along with at least one other committee member)
- Handles written and email correspondence received for the association

Key skills

- Organised and efficient – keeps accurate records in a format that can easily be handed over to successor.
- Good listener – able to identify key discussion points, actions, and agreements at meetings to accurately record in minutes.
- Calm, friendly and approachable –able to communicate confidently with the school and committee.

Treasurer - Main purpose of the role

The Treasurer ensures accurate financial records are kept and best practice procedures are followed for counting money, banking, and making payments. He or she should keep the committee updated with regular reports and ensure end of year reports are completed for the association's AGM and (if applicable) the Charity Commission annual return.

Duties and key responsibilities

- Keeps up to date and accurate financial records.
- Presents financial updates at each committee meeting.
- Manages the FA bank account and holds the association cheque book.
- Arranges changes of signatories on the association bank account.
- Ensures all bank cards, cheque books and paying books are accounted for and obtained from any individual leaving the FA.
- Ensures best practice procedures for counting and banking money after events are in place and followed.
- Makes approved payments.
- Ensures procedures for making approved payments and claiming approved expenses are followed by all committee members.
- Prepares annual treasurers report for AGM and arranges an independent examination of the association accounts.
- Completes the Charity Commission annual return.
- Manages Gift Aid (or assists the committee member responsible for managing Gift Aid).
- Ensure you have read a copy of your associations Insurance Policy Summary, detailing cash cover and adhere to any guidelines.

Good Financial Governance Practices

- Review financial statements every month.
- Financial Position reporting is a standing monthly agenda item.
- More than one person can access bank statements online.
- If you have online banking or have opted out of receiving paper statements, consider getting paper statements reinstated from the bank to feature in monthly update.
- Fully review financial position at least quarterly.
- Check all expenses and receipts tally to Balance Sheet / Accounting software.
- Adopt an acceptable, universally agreed financial thresholds (see suggested matrix below).
- Ensure proper financial reporting routines are observed and understood by all members.
- **Important:** Charity law requires all charity trustees to prepare annual accounts for their charity.
- These accounts are subject to an independent review.

Key skills

- **Basic understanding of bookkeeping** – able to maintain accurate records of income and expenditure.
- **Organised with an eye for detail** – big events involve counting a lot of small change. The Treasurer leads the 'money' team, making up floats and collecting money from various stalls.

- **Calm, approachable and a team player** – it's a busy role. The Treasurer must be able to remain calm during busy times and ensure he or she does not work in isolation by communicating regularly with the rest of the committee.

Role of Committee member

All committee members are elected by the members of the association at the AGM and hold their position for one year until the next AGM. They must be members of the Friend Association, to be nominated and elected for the role.

The committee is made up of Officers and Ordinary committee members. The Officer roles are usually the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. All other members elected to the committee are Ordinary Committee members, whether they have titles will be down to the committee to decide.

The Ordinary committee members are equally legally responsible for the control of the Association, its property, and its funds as the Officer roles. They are also trustees of the Charity, if your Association is a registered charity, and can be signatories on the bank account.

As a committee member they have voting rights in committee meetings to make decisions on behalf of the Association.

This role is a good introduction to the committee for those who wish to be fully involved in the Association but maybe are just finding their feet and don't want to commit to an Officer role.

Ordinary committee members could be given extra roles to help support the Officer roles, for example managing the Association Facebook page – a Social Media Co-Ordinator, helping new parents become involved in school life or recruiting existing parents to volunteer at events, maybe as a Class Representative.

Sub-Committees are often used to organise key events such as the Summer Fete, Ladies Pamper Evening or Christmas Gift Sale. A sub-committee always has to have a committee member involved, who can report back to the committee.

It's made up of committee members (at least one) and members (your regular volunteers) and always has to have a committee member involved who can report back to the committee, the committee members still have overall responsibility and will still have to make any final decisions.

Class Ambassador

We will also be looking for a class ambassador for each Year Group, to liaise with the chair of the Friends and pass on information to the parents in the class, including those without internet. This may also involve selling tickets, distributing ordered items and asking for help for events.