

Chairs address FoNS AGM 2014

Thanks for coming

I'd like to take this opportunity to explain a few things about FoNS, it's background and how it works in conjunction with the school.

I have been involved with FoNS since my eldest son was in Reception. He is now in Yr9 at the Alun School, Mold. When I started coming to meetings they were held at the White Lion in the evening and we have about 10 mums regularly coming. Most would walk as they lived in the village and then they could have a few drinks. As their children moved on to senior school, new mums joined and so the process continued. During this period you were only required to stay in post for 2 years and then some else was expected to take over. Gradually though the demographics of the children attending Nercwys School has changed. This has had a direct affect on FoNS.

Since Daniel started his Nursery Year the rules have changed and you are no longer required to send your child to the nearest school for the Nursery year. This has proved a bit of a double edged sword for the school. Yes we have one of the biggest Nursery years in 2014/15. Nearly all of these children have come to us via Sunray (brilliant). Our children come from around 40 different families. Only half of these live with 1 mile of school. Usually at a FoNS meeting we have 5 people attending. Most people now pick up their children and drive out of the village, coming to FoNS isn't on their radar and I'm not sure how to change this? Suggestions welcome....

To clarify a few points

- Yes there is a Constitution and we are a member of the PTA-UK.
- Yes we have a bank account, it's under the name Friends of Nercwys School.
- Yes we keep minutes for each meeting. These will now appear on the new school website.

All of these, while I agree are important, are in fact of little consequence if we don't have an active and happy committee. I don't wish to put words in people mouths, but I'm sure I'm not alone in saying that I'm not interested in glory hunting or having to justify my existence on the committee. What I am interested in and what FoNS is all about is organising effective fundraising ventures that actually happen, are fun and raise money.

I also feel FoNS has become a bit of a victim of its own success. Over the last year the few supporters of FoNS have battled on, still managing to raise money, therefore things appear to be ok, so people feel they don't need to bother.

I guess I come at FoNS from a slightly different angle. Both my parents were primary teachers and for my first 10 years I lived in a small community very similar to Nercwys. The school was even smaller than Nercwys, only 25 pupils and under constant threat of closure. But it was the hub of the community. Lots of the locals had been to the school and stayed in the area. I grew up in this environment where everyone knew everyone and everyone mucked in. There was great community spirit. I suppose that is what I am hoping will happen here, people realising what a good thing we have and getting on with it. Helping out where and when needed, trying to make things better.

Earlier this year the school had its inspection. It passed with flying colours, as it deserved to. Parents need to realise the hard work that goes on behind the scenes, not just in preparing for an inspection, but generally on a day to day basis. Parents also need to realise that the staff are people too. They also have a busy home life. They also get bugs and have sick days. Please be mindful of this when speaking to people. All the staff here are professionals. They have passed many exams and undergone many evaluations of their teaching capabilities before they even get here. They know how to teach. They also have the huge advantage that we are a small school. They get to know, pretty quickly, all our children. They can recognise when they need to be stretched, need extra help or are not feeling great. And they will let you know. But please play your part by attending school functions, concerts, services and of course parent/teacher meetings.

Please don't criticise other people efforts. Everyone is doing their best, sometimes under very trying circumstances. Maybe you could offer to run/ produce that item the following year. Have a go yourself. Discover for yourself the trials and tribulations of trying to get calendar sponsors, raffle prizes, donations of gardening items or craft supplies. Please remember we are all busy parents, all trying to do our best. All these things take time and energy to coordinate and it's time and energy that most people are short of. I feel the best way forward is for people to be a bit more positive and actually offer to help out and be part of the team.

Timing of meetings. At the moment the people who are able to help out find immediately at the end of the school day the best time to meet. We used to hold evening meetings in various local pubs but on a number of occasions, having taken the time to book a babysitter and head out when all I wanted was a cup of tea, it would end up being me and one other person. If, however, a dedicated group were to come forward that preferred an evening meeting then we could re think this. Please bear in mind though staff often have other commitments in the evening.

Don't ask don't get. We need to be more proactive, going and asking people for sponsorship/ freebies. Companies are not going to randomly ring up and ask if you are needing money to print a calendar or offer raffle prizes. People need to get out and knock on doors or ask at their work if people will buy a raffle ticket. Last year I spent an evening with Adam walking through the village selling raffle tickets.

Everyone who answered the door bought a ticket. All of them, most were retired, were thrilled to be asked. All had a little chat with Adam and were delighted to hear about the school and how well it's doing. Maybe this year we could divide the village up into sections and get more people involved in doing this simple task. At the same time we could also hand out a flier to each house about the matinee Christmas Concert. I'm sure a few of the locals would love to come and see the children's play. I know it's cold and dark and often wet, but even Adam enjoyed his night time adventure.

School funding. The majority of people will not be aware of how our school is funded or how little money our school runs on. As you all know in 2012 we altered our status to that of Church Aided. Most of our funding still comes via the Local Authority. We get funding based on pupil numbers. We also get funding based on the number of free school dinner applied for. None of this means the school is rolling in cash, far from it. Belts are most definitely tight and getting tighter. Which is where FoNS comes in. Elaine will often call me and ask if we are able to pay for the bus for a school trip. This is often the difference between the trip being affordable or not. It is also a way we can benefit the most people possible. Cast your mind back to when you went on a school trip and how exciting it was. Other more substantial items such as the iPad docking station. This not only is a place for charging the iPads it is also a security item that can be locked. This type of technology is as most people will know the way the work place is heading. Therefore an invaluable asset to such a small school.

Parents are not as financially mobile as they were even 5 years ago, families don't have spare cash! Any money FoNS earn is very hard won and therefore we need to be very careful how we use this.

I'm sorry I've gone on so long, but I feel it's important for parents to know that FoNS is not some secret society. It's open to all, we welcome all parents who have ideas and a keenness of spirit.

On now to AGM business.

I was not the Chair last year. The position at the time was vacant and although there was an AGM planned, I cannot find any record of it taking place. I was made chair again in June. Nia secretary and Kathy remaining as Treasurer.

Meetings held during the last year took place in January, February, March, and June. So far this academic year we have held meetings in September and October. At these meetings we discuss and decide on various upcoming events. We look back over recently held events and discuss what worked well and how much was raised, how we could improve for next time or is it worth doing again. New ideas are often suggested. Members may have experience of something from a previous school or heard about something that has worked well elsewhere. Sometimes there

is also discussion about school in general, if someone has concerns about a particular aspect then this is talked through and a plan set out to sort the issue. For example last year homework in the Junior room was discussed and from this came a meeting for all parents to come along and raise their concerns and hear from the teachers their thoughts and ideas.

So what have we done in the last year?

- Pub Quiz
- Second Hand Uniform Sale
- Easter Bingo
- Summer Family Picnic
- Christmas Concert - Raffle, Tombola, Calendar, refreshments and for the first time we charged an entry fee for the concert.

Annually, FoNS also paid for, as usual

- Bus for Summer School Trip
- Buses for other curriculum based trips
- Yr6 Leavers Scientific Calculator
- Christmas Party including refreshments and gift from Santa.
- Ice cream at Pantomime.

Items that have appeared on the Agenda/ Minutes but are still a 'work in progress'

- Mums Night Out
- FoNS Termly Newsletter
- Wooden Notice Board for outside school
- Parents Handbook

Happy to hear suggestions for next year.