

# **Friends of Grovelands (FROGS)**

## **Annual General Meeting, Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

### **Chair's Report**

I should like to start by welcoming you to the first ever Friends of Grovelands School, known as FROGS, virtual Annual General Meeting, thank goodness for technology in these strange and unprecedented times.

The purpose of an AGM is for the current committee to report to the members, what FROGS have been involved in, the funds raised and what they have been spent on since the last AGM. It is also the time for a new committee to be voted on for the coming year, in line with the FROGs constitution.

I, as the chair, will give my report, followed by the Treasurers report, which will outline FROG finances, we will then vote on the committee for the coming year.

This Chairs report will give an overview of the work of Friends of Grovelands School for the period from September 2019 to January 2021.

I was lucky enough to be voted in as Chair for a second year and it started on a high. Our AGM was very well attended, well for a FROG public meeting, and our ranks swelled from 8 to 14 committee members, an opportunity to spread our, sometimes heavy, workload a bit further. But there was no time to rest on our laurels though, the committee were straight into the final weeks before the first Grovelands Fireworks Spectacular, already meticulously organised but the final detail and the surrounding attractions and catering needed to be planned alongside online ticket sales, a trial by fire for our Treasurer. The day finally arrived and what a day, it was pouring and the wind was blowing a hooley. Everyone crossed their fingers and luckily the rain stopped and the wind calmed and we were able to proceed safely. We were very soon overwhelmed by the amount of people from the community that arrived to support our event, which turned out to be a wonderfully memorable evening, enjoyed by all. We also managed to raise a large amount of money for the school. We were then straight into Christmas, although the annual fundraiser was already well underway. Christmas events, included our biggest ever Christmas Fair, Christmas discos, refreshments at the Christmas shows, the Christmas fundraiser, Santa's Sleigh with the Rotary Club and a visit from the big man himself, doing his last minute naughty or nice checks and handing out treats, on the last day of school. The fundraiser was a particular challenge, individual Christmas designs from all of the children printed on a variety of products, thank goodness these were all ordered directly with the company because sorting the orders for delivery was a challenge in itself. That's all without planning what we would like to do for the rest of the year. We finished school for Christmas happy in the knowledge that we were on track to raise a record amount of money that would enable the school to buy lots of precious resources.

The new year arrived and we wanted to get well ahead with the organisation of the upcoming events so dates were booked and confirmed with the schools business manager, all the disco providers were booked, attractions for the summer fair and

the next firework event were contacted and booked, Bags2school collection dates arranged, we really wanted to get ahead of ourselves, as there was a busy year of events planned. We pressed ahead with the organisation of a Race Night, a popular event that we had run in the spring of 2019, however by the end of January there were worrying reports on the News about a virus spreading from China and the sales of our Race Night tickets slowed dramatically and by mid-February it was clear that we were in for a bumpy time and had to cancel Race Night. Even then I don't think any of us could have envisaged what was to come. In March schools closed and the whole nation went into lock down. Initially we stayed positive that this would be over quite quickly and the Summer Fair and end of term events would still be possible, however as time passed it soon became clear that this would not be the case. In fact all the events we had planned for 2020 were cancelled one by one. We were lucky that we were still able to have the Bags2school collections, as we were able to do these in a socially distanced way maintaining infection control protocols and the Year 6 leavers were still able to get their Leavers Hoody's. On a positive note we FINALLY sourced a more secure, more capacious storage in the form of a shipping container, kindly donated by Taylor Whimpy, thanks to the professional connections of our Vice Chair, although this did not go as smoothly as planned, in keeping with the rest of 2020.

We have not been able to meet in person either, so our meetings have become virtual, however we have not allowed this to dampen our spirits. We have still managed to stay positive and do as much as we have been able. There was the Rainbow Raffle at Christmas, a great success and sales of tickets were revolutionised by using texts instead of paper tickets, something we really want to keep for the future and, thanks to another generous donation from Stevens and Carter, we were able to support so many of the lovely local businesses that have been so generous to us in the past, by buying vouchers from them to make the raffle baskets even more special. There was also the Christmas fundraiser, tote bags, even more complicated by the pandemic restrictions. All the year groups received a live Christmas tree of their own to decorate, the children got to enjoy a virtual panto, and we were still able to persuade Santa to take time out of his busy schedule to record special messages for the children too.

There have been no discos or leaver's prom, no summer fair, no fireworks, no Christmas fair and we weren't able to help Santa on his sleigh, however we have found new ways of doing things and our online booking system has proved invaluable.

Some of the committee members sadly had to step down, for a variety of reasons, since the last AGM however I should like to thank them and those who remain, a wonderful team who have given all they could and their commitment has continued to be exceptional, so that the children at Grovelands School could be provided with resources in order that their experience of their school days remain positive, productive and enjoyable and provide some normality in these extraordinary times.

I should like to thank Mr Goulding and Mrs Swaine, for supporting us and guiding our efforts. The kitchen staff, who made cookies for the children to enjoy at the panto, and to Derek and Alan, the Caretakers, still helping us, where they can.

Thank you to the, volunteers, teachers, parents and grandparents, who have supported us with the events we could hold, without you we would not be able to hold them, even a little makes a big difference and you are very much appreciated.

Thanks still need to go Elizabeth Evinson, who continued to use her special graphic design talents to design the artwork for our posters and event promotion materials, we are eternally grateful. To Hailsham Rotary Club for allowing us to fundraise with them with the Santa Sleigh in 2019 and for providing free, experienced marshals for our firework event, Craig Parkinson, who bought a live Christmas tree for each year group and Stevens and Carter for sponsoring the Rainbow Raffle.

The primary function of the FROGS is to raise funds for the school and because of this the school has been able to spend ten thousand pounds on new iPads, eight hundred pounds on a new shed for storage of loose parts play, nearly three thousand pounds on a new fence around the forest school, finally securing that area and bringing it within the school grounds and nearly two thousand pounds on a large amount of resources to bring history, geography and other subjects to life and make the children's studies that little bit more enjoyable. A full breakdown of our fundraising and major expenditure will be given in a moment in the Treasurer's report.

The FROGS Committee remain positive about the future and have plans ready for events, when we can finally hold them again. We are always open to new suggestions and ideas, if anyone can give a little time to support FROGS endeavours please get in touch, we are always grateful.

Thank you all very much and let's look forward with positivity to the coming year, no matter how strange it may be.

I should now like to hand over to our Treasurer, Natalie Baker for her report on our finances

**Sara Palmer, Chair - Friends of Grovelands School  
Committee 2019- 2021**

Sara Palmer - Chair

Vicky Toghill – Vice Chair

Michelle Noakes- Secretary

Natalie Baker – Treasurer

Amy Gregory – Communiactions & Social Media

Vicky Bond – Committee Member (resigned)

Penny Brewer – Committee Member (resigned)

Lucy Emmett – Committee Member

Ness Haffenden – Committee Member (resigned)

Alex Leftly – Committee Member

Liz Newman – Committee Member (resigned)

Donna Othen– Committee Member (resigned)

Becky Standen – Committee Member

Paula Yates – Committee Member