



Friends of St. Teresa's news

Welcome



This is our first Friends of St Teresa's (FOST) newsletter, written by parents for parents.

I'm Nat, and along with the team (who you can read about below) we'd like to introduce ourselves and how we hope FOST can be of help to our community at St Teresa's.

What a year we've faced! I remember when lockdown began back in March and I was trying to be super mum. I had to be organised, home school the kids, take regular walks, and just keep the kids and myself busy. That lasted around two weeks as I realised it wasn't sustainable for me or my family.

My usual career was put on hold too, due to Covid-19, and so as I was so used to being busy, I took the opportunity to help at my family's business, because being productive keeps me going. I knew if I was well and prioritised my mental health, my family would thrive, I'd be a better wife, a better mum, and a happier me.

When I'm with the kids, we do all sorts of arts and crafts, integrating education and life skills – cooking, baking, and finger painting has become a new family favourite!

I look back to how I survived the first few months in lockdown, and the biggest take away from it all was about seeking happiness, and finding the balance between work and home, and for that I am grateful.

As we head into winter, I hope that as Friends of St. Teresa's, we will continue to support one another through the good and bad times, and continue to grow our parent community in faith. Most of all, I hope we maintain the spirit of community that makes our school a special place for all our teachers, our parents, and our children.

Best wishes

Natalie Day
Chair

About FOST

The Friends of St. Teresa's is the name of our Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and aims to bring together parents, teachers, and our local community to raise funds and to support the school. It was officially formed in March 2018 and became a registered charity in 2019. All parents, carers and staff at the school are automatically members and there's a Committee to help manage the day to day running of the association. For more information, please email fosteresas@gmail.com

In this issue

Hear from Mrs Williams, Early Years Lead and Reception teacher



Parent Jenny Sereneo shares what life is like on the frontline



Words of support from Canon Michael Scanlon



Plus ParentGym tools to support your family; parent hacks; Christmas lantern competition; become a Year Rep; and lots more!

[Click here to subscribe to the latest FOST news and updates](#)

Meet the Committee

Natalie Day (Chair)



I'm a former pupil of St. Teresa's, daughter to Mrs Isaac, and a trained hairdresser. I have two children Bertie (Year 1)

and Eadie (nursery). I was elected Chair of FOST in March 2019, and passionate about creating great memories for the pupils.

Carol King (Secretary)



I have two children; Niall who is in Year 1 and Eleri who is two and a half years old. I'm a civil servant and also the FOST

secretary, helping with event planning and liaising with the school. I remember enjoying PTA events at St Teresa's myself and want my own children to be able to enjoy the same experiences.

Rachael Porter (Treasurer)



I've lived in south west London for most of my life. I have two children, Matthew aged 4 and Olivia aged 5. I'm an accountant for a

busy firm in Wimbledon and offer my skills to manage and control PTA funds.

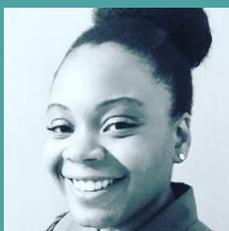
Di Williams (Teacher)



I'm the Early Years Lead and a Reception class teacher. Both my children are grown up, and I get to see my son everyday who is a

qualified teacher here at the school. My role in FOST is helping to connect the parents and teachers and making sure the FOST voice is heard at weekly meetings with senior leaders of the school.

Jodey Dean



I'm a Senior Project Manager in the design and construction industry, a keen (amateur) gardener and mum to Rae in

Reception. I'm looking forward to being part of the lovely St Teresa's school community over the coming years, helping to build the bridge between the parents and the teachers.

Iwona Kozyra



I was born in Gdansk in Poland and moved to London in 2007. I have two sons, Charlie, and Harry, and currently work for

a construction company as an Admin Officer.

Andrea Ritchie



I was born in Slovakia and moved to London at the age of 19. I studied Psychology and have been working with

children for the last 25 years. My son, Alfie, is in Reception. I joined the FOST to help our children receive the best learning experiences and quality education to reach their full potential.

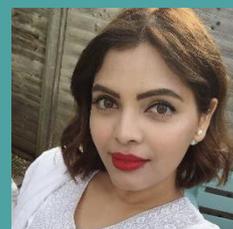
Stephanie Shaw



I grew up locally in a Latin American and British household. While studying marketing at university, I

found a passion for children and young people after taking part in a Princes Trust course. I became a youth worker for a local charity. Community is very close to my heart, and something I hope I can help strengthen at St. Teresa's.

Sarah Gill



I have three children (Year 1, Reception, and a two year old). I'm a lawyer by degree but at the moment I'm a homemaker. I

joined FOST because I wanted to share my experience and knowledge with other parents and to also be a bridge between other parents and the school.

Monica Pabualan



I was born and raised in south London to Filipino parents. I have two young boys at St. Teresa's. I manage staff communications

for the NHS and wish to provide the same support to the parents here at the school.

Ashley and Claire Robinson



I was raised in Sutton, am married to Claire, and we have two sons, Ethan and Noah. I've been a civil servant since 2000 and I'm club

captain of a rugby team. I joined FOST to help with social media, and make a special appearance at the Christmas fayre, because I want to give my kids the best possible start.



I was born and raised in Sutton and currently work as a civil servant for the home office. I enjoy being part of a team and

helping out at all the fundraising events.

Anna Scott



I'm from Poland and moved to London 18 years ago as an English language student. I have two children, Lolla and Logan, and three Pugs. I joined FOST to give my kids the best start in education.

Visit the **Meet the Team** page on the [FOST website](#) to read their full biographies.

Staff stuff



Mrs Di Williams Early Years Foundation Stage Lead and Reception class teacher

What made you want to be a teacher?

I have always wanted to work with children and then having my own two children, I fell into

working in a school. Then I went back to school myself. I have been a teacher for eight years but before that I worked in another school in various roles.

What do love about being a teacher at St Teresa's?

I have been here for eight years and the most striking thing about St Teresa's is the sense of community and feeling like you are part of a huge family.

What do you do in your spare time that makes you happy?

I have an allotment and spend any free time I have there – no phone, and no laptop!

What were the first few months in lockdown like for you?

I personally found them quite difficult. Planning for children that are not there in front of you, worrying if they are ok or not, and the hundreds of zoom meetings!

I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone for working so hard at home with their children's learning. It cannot have been easy. I wish I could have spent more time with my then Reception class but I wish them all the best in Year 1, and look forward to my time with my new Reception class.

What one thing have you learnt this year?

That it is actually OK to leave your phone in a drawer for a while.

What one thing are you most grateful for?

Over the past few months, I've enjoyed spending quality time with my husband and grown-up children that I don't think we would have had, as we are all usually so busy like passing ships in the night



Thank you to all frontline workers, and especially our teachers for continuing to teach our children during the pandemic.

From Canon Michael Scanlon



St. Teresa's first opened in 1937, and year after year our parish family has grown fostering a sense of welcome, warmth and community with sons and daughters of many nations.

At this time, every parish, every community is struggling with the consequences of the Coronavirus. Be assured of our prayers and spiritual support in these challenging times for our country, for our families and friends. Each day on earth is priceless. Our family and our faith are priceless. You are priceless, you are loved by God. You have Angels, Saints, and Our Blessed Lady, Mother of our parish with St. Teresa and St. Joseph all interceding for you day and night.

We are here for one another. Stay safe and wear a mask, and stay blessed, pray, hope, and don't worry.

Do you have a favourite local park?

Parks and greenspace not only give our children space to run around, but they make us feel better too. They provide us with the opportunity to either exercise and/or to simply clear our minds and feel a sense of calm.

We are fortunate that we have plenty of green space around us here in south London, but which is your favourite park? Please send in the name and a photo of your favourite park and reasons why you like it, to fosteresas@gmail.com and help us compile a list of local parks on the FOST website.



The Grove, Carshalton

24 hours in my shoes

Jenny Sereneo, parent to children in Years 4 and 9, shares what it's like working on the frontline and being mum.



It's Sunday night, Jenny has just started her shift at NHS St Thomas' hospital in the neonatal ward, the largest specialist intensive care centre for babies in the country.

Jenny's been working at St Thomas' for 18 years. She gained a master's degree in nursing in Quezon City, and then when the NHS began recruiting nurses from the Philippines back in 2000, she was offered a two year contract at Cambridge hospital. Although, it wasn't long until the city girl moved to London. She said, "The NHS in London is more diverse, open to change, listens and acknowledges everyone, and has given me the confidence to progress."

In March 2020, however, no training and textbook could have prepared Jenny to deal with a global pandemic that shook the world.

The NHS was buckling under the pressure, making changes to all the services. Yet as much as Jenny did her best to overcome the challenges such as the lack of personal protective equipment, she worried like everyone else about her health, her family here and her family at home. It was mentally and physically exhausting, but she soldiered on continuing to help

others, including two babies who tested positive for Covid-19 – both have since fully recovered and are in good health.

Even though some services have resumed, Jenny is constantly on her feet as the lack of testing means they are short staffed every day.

It's now 6.30am on Monday morning and Jenny is tired, yet she's just arrived at home ready for her next shift as mum.

She cooks some food which is her dinner, but it's also a heavy breakfast for her eldest child to help get through her intense morning schedule at secondary school.

By 8am, everyone is up, and the house is noisy, Jenny can hear the usual cries for her "mum, where's my...", and "mum, can you..."

After walking the youngest child to school, she returns to a quiet house and thinks back to the earlier days of lockdown. She said "Home schooling was difficult. But it was helpful connecting with other parents on Whatsapp, to hear I wasn't alone and that we were all struggling. I am glad that they are back at school and I now have a higher respect for teachers."

She squeezes in a nap and then spends a few hours doing some house chores, meal planning, and preparing dinner - another Filipino dish, which from history has Spanish, Chinese, and Malaysian influences. She says "I enjoy cooking, it relaxes me, but as it's mostly Filipino food, I encourage my children to have school meals as it offers them a variety of food that they don't often eat at home."

By 3pm, she's back at the school gates to collect her youngest. Wearing her tenth mask of the day, she smiles with her eyes and muffles a hello, but she can't stop to chat to anyone, she says "I miss the old days, the birthday parties and chatting to the other mums."

The next two hours are free time for everyone, and then the whole family catch up at dinner and talk about the day's events, homework, and news. It's a bit of normality in a not so normal world, but she cherishes this moment as it's the only time they ever get to see each other.

By 8pm, with the house clean, and the kids winding down, Jenny has a moment to reflect on the day and count her blessings, before finally hitting the pillow for some well-deserved sleep.

Filipino Christmas lantern competition

Following the release of Disney's heart-warming Christmas advert, '[From our family to yours](#)', which is about a Filipino girl and her Lola (grandmother), all families are invited to have a go at creating a traditional Filipino Christmas lantern called a 'parol'.

A parol is a five-point star lantern that symbolises the Star of Bethlehem and is usually found hanging at windows or on doors during Christmas as a sign of hope and goodwill.



Your parol can be as simple or extravagant as you like – you'll find lots of ideas on the internet, but please use battery operated tealights for safety reasons.

Then send in your name, year group, and a photo of your parol by **Friday 11 December** to fosteresas@gmail.com

The best one chosen by Mr Dachtler will win a prize. Good luck!

Upcoming activities and events

With the run up to Christmas, the team has been busy organising events for the school. Keeping in mind the Covid-19 regulations, things will be looking a bit different this year however, we are looking on the positive side and trying to inject the festive spirit wherever we can. Here are just some ideas...



Christmas artwork

Children have produced Christmas artwork which you can view online and turn into exciting gifts such as cards or mugs.

Dress up day

Dress in your PJ's, loungewear, or whatever you like and raise money for the school playground. More details to follow.

Christmas market

Our market will be moving online this year, so please email us on fosteresas@gmail.com if you want us to advertise your festive creations on the FOST website.

Parent Gym: supporting you and your family

Even at its best, being a parent can be one of the hardest jobs in the world. But in these extraordinary times, parents are under more pressure than ever as we try to keep the balance during the pandemic.

Trying to support our children in their school work, ensure our families stay physically and mentally healthy, stop arguments spiralling out of control, juggle work (if we are lucky enough to have it) and look after our own wellbeing somewhere in the mix can feel overwhelming.

Parent Gym can help by offering short online modules where you can learn quick and practical techniques, to create a calm home environment and happier family during these hard times.

Parent Gym e-workouts are free and fun and take only a few minutes to do on your phone, tablet or laptop – perfect for when you are making a cup of tea.

They also link through to Parent Gym's Facebook page, [Parenting Through Uncertainty](#), where parents can share their experiences of trying out parenting tips with other parents.

The first module - Keep Talking, looks at ways to get families communicating. Simply go to the Mind Gym Storefront by clicking [here](#), add the Parent Gym Keep Talking module to your shopping basket and although you need to purchase the eWorkout, it won't cost you a thing 😊

For more information, visit parentgym.com

Useful links

School	Supporting you	Supporting your children	Covid-19 guidance
fosteresas@gmail.com	Samaritan	Parentgym	NHS
FOST website	MIND mental health charity	GoNoodle	NHS is here for you Merton
FOST Facebook	NHS Every Mind Matters	Kooth	NHS Test and Trace app
School website	Thrive London	Online safety	Coronavirus updates
Teacher email addresses	MindEd	Storybook: Coronavirus	Government support
St Teresa's RC Church			NHS support for staff

Parent life made easier

As we continue to follow the national restrictions to control the spread of the coronavirus, we look back to the earlier months of lockdown and how we managed to keep our sanity and the kids entertained at the same time. Where we appreciate our children can continue to go to school, times are still hard, and so we thought to share some tried and tested activities and tips from other parents to help us get through the colder months.



Role play - play shops using real objects and real money; play schools using teddies; or even play families.



Perform your very own Britain's Got Talent show with your own acts and have fun voting.



Charades/Pictionary – classic games where the whole family can get involved.



Treasure hunt - hide various objects around the house and use age appropriate clues.



Boardgames (Jenga, Ludo, Who am I? Monopoly) - everyone can get involved whatever their age.



Get arty this autumn and capture the season by making a picture using leaves, acorns and conkers.



Write a story with lots of pictures or start a diary.



Discover a new local park – a change of scene and fresh air will do you good.

Parent hacks



Put a rubber band onto the dispenser to limit the amount of soap pumped out.



Meal plan – save time and money by meal planning for the week. Takes 10 mins and reduces waste too.



Brighten up rainy days with a disco light and play musical statues.



Connect with your neighbours and ask for recommendations about local suppliers.



Save yourself a few trips to the kitchen and make a snack basket for the entire day (not to replace any meals)



Buy and sell preloved items using online apps such as Facebook, eBay, and Shpock.



Use safe food/soap colouring to bake cookies, cakes, and make bath time even more fun!



Make movie time feel like a trip to the cinema with a bowl of popcorn, or why not turn it into a sleepover.

Classifieds

Wanted Year group representatives

We need more year group representatives to be the link between parents and the FOST Committee, to help send messages to the community, and gather any feedback and ideas from other parents. It won't take up a lot of your time but would be really helpful. If you're interested, email fosteresas@gmail.com

Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
Natalie Day Monica Pabualan Stephanie Shaw	Jodey Dean Sarah Gill Andrea Ritchie	Natalie Day Sarah Gill Carol King Iwona Kozyra Monica Pabualan Rachael Porter Ash & Claire Robinson Anna Scott Stephanie Shaw	
Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
	Iwona Kozyra		

Good as new uniform shop is now open!



To help reduce waste and help parents with the cost of uniform, we are asking parents to donate any preloved uniform that can be passed onto other families for a small cost, and the funds raised will go towards projects that benefit the children.

For donations: Please hand in any items into the school office, washed and pressed.

For requests: Please email your requests to fosteresas@gmail.com

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Visit [her website](#) for more information.



First Class Coders

Fun coding clubs available for 4-9 year olds. Sign up now for a trial class (tablet required) and FOST get a 10% discount on classes in December (quote AJR291). Visit www.firstclasscoders.co.uk or contact Marsha Fisher on 07944 676 239.

To advertise your business to potentially 1000 parents living in the local area, please email fosteresas@gmail.com