

The Blue Tangerine Federation

Specialist and Special Educational Needs Schools

Fundraising 2019-2020



What have been the highlights of the fundraising year?

Over the past 18 months, the Fundraising Team has delivered some fantastic projects providing us with essential washrooms, sensory rooms, reading books and IT equipment.

The biggest highlight so far in 2020 has been the opening the Soft Play area at St Luke's. It has been wonderful to see the room's transformation into a bright and energetic space. The pupils were involved throughout and were excited to get in and have a go and it remains a vibrant and popular aspect of the school. It is used as a therapeutic space, rewards area as well as for counselling and wellbeing. This project highlights the impactful work we undertake with local businesses and how important their role is in supporting our children with long-lasting effects.

What has been the best engagement project?

One of our biggest Fundraising event, is our annual Dinner Dance, which celebrates our schools and brings together some of the businesses who continue to support us. The evening supports our networking and celebrates the many engagement projects we undertake throughout the year.

As part of a local networking group (BNI) we are building a presence and gaining a strong reputation within the local and national businesses network. It is humbling to know there are many who want to work with us to support our pupils and staff at levels they can afford, whether time, resources or money.

We now have a long-term engagement with many companies including influential partners that support others to get involved with special education. Warners Bros for example, have supported the school with temporary buildings, toys for pupils at Christmas and have enabled some of their staff to undertake repairs and maintenance, saving us lots of money in the meantime. More recently (January 2020) Jarvis Building Group refurbished the lower school classrooms at St Luke's, redecorating, adding blinds and contributing to the cost of changing the floor.

Where have the pupils been best supported by fundraising?

Our pupils are fantastic advocates for the school, they have been able to support fundraising when we have had businesses and funders visit the schools – they have helped by serving tea and cake, tours around the school and participating in Q&A sessions. We always get amazing feedback about how pleasant the pupils are and how visitors have enjoyed getting to know our children and school.

In September 2019, we attended Classics on the Common in Redbourn, where we had a handful of pupils attend. They were able to help by talking to the public about their school, hand out leaflets about how people can support the school and selling cakes.

Fundraising has supported children of all ages across the schools through buying equipment, paying for trips, events and experiences. Fundraising with the Friends of Collett/St Luke's and FHEC has also enabled children to take part in the planning and organization of activities, giving them a stronger sense of value (monetary, time and appreciation) whilst providing further experiences for making appropriate and considered choices and decisions.

What has been given the biggest ‘thumbs up’ by the children?

The Soft Play area at St Luke’s and The Hideaway at Collett have been the more recent projects that the pupils have liked the most!

However, on an individual levels, the smaller things are those the children appreciate the most. For example each year at Collett they have a ‘wish tree’ where local businesses buy something from the wish list for each class – when we deliver the items, the pupils are always so excited! Last Easter we also gave each child an Easter Egg which were wonderfully received.

Where have parents been involved?

We have a number of parents who are part of the parent/teacher committees who help assist on events such as the Christmas Fair, Summer BBQ and coffee mornings. We also invite parents to attend and partake in any fundraising events. Many parents also get involved in fundraising events, such as the Fire Walks, running the London Marathon for the schools and getting involved in crowd-funding and fundraising for specific things for the school. There are different events at the schools including fish&chip quiz nights, Bingo, music and comedy nights. From September 2020, we are looking at ways we could engage even more parents with the PTAs and school events.

What’s the biggest project we’re fundraising for?

At Collett, we are currently looking to fund the building of a Sensory Garden, replace the old carpet flooring to cleanable vinyl, further the sensory equipment resources and retain our involvement in the replacement of IT (laptops and teaching screens)

Having achieved the funding for Collett’s all-weather pitch, we are now looking to create similar MUGA pitches at St Luke’s. We have already created some great play spaces but this summer will be installing a whole playground for the primary aged children. We continue to fund the removal of fluorescent lighting to ASD-friendly LED illumination. Our out-dated sound and visual equipment in the school hall are being replaced, and again, continue to support our children’s access to desperately needed IT equipment and sensory resources.

We have major projects in sight that are focused on providing work-related learning on site, including a designer café. As part of our work towards ensuring we have the evidence to push forward with this as a successful venture, we are pleased to be in a place to incorporate our Horsebox Café into the schools’ Learning Pathways curricula. The successful trials of this at Collett last year are being expanded so as to become a commercial venture over 2020/21. As part of this, we have been working with local coffee producers, Smith’s Coffee to produce our own house (or rather, school) blends of coffees and teas! The children working on the Café now have industry standard accredited barista certification, health and safety certification and hygiene qualifications, where the provision supports numeracy, communication, literacy, budgeting, leading to essential practical work experience.

At Forest House Education Centre, we are supporting the development of the outside area, replacement of the centre’s kitchen and improving resources such as IT. The lack of investment in the buildings over the years have meant the staff and students are desperate for improved and inspiring technology and resources in the attempt to keep with up their mainstream school provisions. Despite the many reviews of the centre having taken place and the tacit agreement that it is underfunded by 100%, the Federation has not yet been able to secure the appropriate and desperately needed funding.

What do people think about fundraising?

People are often shocked that our schools have a fundraising team. Most people think that because we are a school, especially a Special Educational Needs School that our taxes and the Local Authority would ensure the schools have enough money to pay for everything. It isn't until we explain more about the schools' situations, that people have a greater understanding of the challenges we face. Although there are fewer children in a special school than a mainstream provision, there are essential higher staffing levels and very costly resources, which are often bespoke for individuals. Many people do not agree that schools should be fundraising for essential resources and that we should be lobbying for better, improved funding levels. We do and although have won many arguments, this is yet to transpire in the period of austerity and now Covid!

Visitors are impressed by the projects that have been achieved and get our excitement about those we are working towards. We are delighted by the fantastic feedback we have about how inspirational the school is, how we support our pupils and the work we are doing.

Where have we had disappointments this year?

We will likely be affected by COVID-19 for a long time yet. We are disappointed that unfortunately we have needed to postpone our fundraising events including the Annual Dinner Dance. Although one of the fundraising highlights of the year, we cannot afford to put the dinner dance on as we have also had some funding pulled as a result of their crises in these unprecedented times.

How tough is it to raise money for a school?

Raising money for a school is tough! A majority of people, businesses and charitable trusts will not fund schools because they feel that it is 'statutory' responsibility. We manage to win over some businesses over time to gain their support and engagement. However, many charitable trusts clearly state that they will not fund schools or PTAs. However, we are pleased with our grant-writing returns, where we average 1 in 10 grants as successful. That said, COVID-19 and BLM have already changed some organizations' priorities, whereas other businesses are struggling so they are unable to support charities like they normally do.

What's in the fundraising pipeline for the schools?

Our current fundraising streams are:

1. Fundraising Events – We hold a number of fundraising events each year including dinner dance, online auction, challenge events, etc. These events not only raise money but are crucial to our community's engagement as we want our pupils to work locally when they reach adulthood.
2. Corporate Fundraising – We work with a large number of businesses who support us in various ways including volunteering, nominating us as their charity of the year, donations (both monetary and equipment), event sponsorship, etc.
3. Charitable Trusts & Foundations – We apply to a large number of different charitable foundation and trusts, where money granted is ring-fenced for a particular project. Grants can be from £100s to £10,000

The biggest projects we are working on are:

- The Blue Tangerine Café
- Muga at St Luke's