

NCPTA is the only membership organisation for PTAs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This year we are celebrating 55 years of service to PTAs and all other forms of home-school associations. As the leading advocate and supporter of PTAs, NCPTA is here to help you and your school get the most from its PTA.

NCPTA Membership

NCPTA membership starts from just £58 a year. Make sure the PTA at your school has NCPTA membership and is taking advantage of our unrivalled benefits package:

- a subscription linked insurance policy with £10 million public liability cover for PTA activities;
- support for charity registration including a pre-approved model constitution;
- training events for PTA committee members;
- PTA online file storage and dedicated social network;
- NCPTA National Advice line;
- support from a locally based adviser; and
- four editions of PTA Magazine a year

If you would like to set up a PTA in your school, NCPTA can provide you with a FREE comprehensive start-up pack and local support. Visit www.ncpta.org.uk for more information.

Top ten tips for starting a PTA

At a time when all budgets are under pressure, having a PTA could be more important to your school than ever. On average a PTA raises £6,500 a year to spend on advancing education. If your school doesn't have a PTA here are NCPTA's top ten tips for starting one:

1. **School Champion:** whilst the aim may be for the PTA to be parent led, the school may need to get the ball rolling. An enthusiastic PTA champion is therefore a must. Whilst ideally this would be the head it probably isn't realistic that they be responsible for supporting the PTA day-to-day during start up, so agree who will be the main point of contact for the PTA.
2. **Parent Champion:** if you are not fortunate enough to have a parent approach the school about starting a PTA, you may have to take an active role in encouraging parents to get involved. Be reassured that most PTAs operate with a very small core team, sometimes with just two committee members. Those that are successful

tend to have a band of loyal ad hoc volunteers who step in to help out when needed. If there is a parent that you feel would be able to take on this role, be prepared to invite them personally to take part.

3. **Make it a priority:** if starting a PTA keeps getting lost amongst everything else that has to get done, make it a priority as part of the School Improvement Plan. Schools which maximise the benefit of their PTA work in partnership to link PTA events and activities to the School Improvement Plan.
4. **Have a target:** don't be vague about why your school wants a PTA. Initially, agree a specific goal that you would like the PTA to achieve. Making the aspirations for the PTA more tangible can stop it seeming too daunting for potential parent volunteers.
5. **Get the kids involved:** if you really want to motivate the parents at your school, get the pupils involved. Survey children to find out what they would like a PTA to bring to their school or hold a launch event where children invite their parents to attend and then present why they want their parents to start a PTA.
6. **Come along to an NCPTA workshop:** NCPTA offers a series of free PTA fundraising and good practice workshops throughout the year. To find out more visit www.ncpta.org.uk
7. **Start simple:** encourage a new PTA to start with some very simple non-event based fundraising activities. This could be as easy as getting parents to use a charity fundraising search engine on their computers at home or raising money when they shop online. A little bit of easy and early success will quickly boost confidence.
8. **Become a registered charity:** with charitable status a PTA can immediately start applying for grants and seeking charitable donations and with help from NCPTA gaining charitable status is relatively easy. NCPTA's model constitution is pre-approved for charity registration meaning charitable status can be gained within a week of applying.

9. **Download your FREE NCPTA start up pack:** this is packed with useful information to get you started. It includes an overview of roles and responsibilities, advice on things to consider before starting to fundraise and access to NCPTA's local adviser team.
10. **Join NCPTA:** PTAs starting-up, can take advantage of NCPTA's special offer and join from as little as £25. Visit www.ncpta.org.uk for more information.

EXCLUSIVE: Parents make up their own minds about government reforms and have some messages for governors.

With education reform one of the flagship policies of the coalition government NCPTA has given parents a chance to have their say. Conducted by telephone survey, a demographically weighted sample of 500 parents gave a mixed response to the coalition's education agenda.

Overall parents are most enthusiastic about the introduction of a new primary reading test for all children in Year 1 and a National Citizenship Service, described by David Cameron as '*a kind of non-military national service – a two-month programme for sixteen year-olds to come together in common purpose*'. They also support proposals that teachers should be allowed to be anonymous while inquiries into accusations of misconduct are on-going.

Along with increased awareness of new style Academies and Free Schools, parents are also showing growing support for greater autonomy amongst schools: 56% agree that Academies should have greater independence and those that support the Free Schools concept have increased by 12% in a year up to 45%. However, this does come with the caveat that a majority of parents disagree with Academies being able to select for admissions on ability and the number of parents who report themselves as willing to set-up a Free School has decreased by over 20% since January 2010.

And there are a number of areas where parents aren't in step with Government policy. They clearly want all teachers to be registered with an external regulated body and most want regulation to be conducted by either governors or an external body as opposed to the Department for Education.

In general parents don't identify with concerns about discipline and behaviour (this is only an issue for 12% of parents). And a majority of parents are still saying that they want anyone who has contact with their child to be CRB checked.

Asked about the thorny issue of the National Curriculum, parents clearly put their faith in teachers and curriculum experts (72%) as opposed to government (10%). They have mixed feelings about whether or not exams are easier now than when they were at school but clearly don't want to return to 'old style' harder exams.

In a couple of areas, parents highlight that government policy is behind the times. In response to the emphasis on school uniform and the use of rewards and punishment to address issues around discipline and behaviour, parents report that both are already being used. Parents also seem confused by the Pupil Premium and how this will operate.

The survey highlighted some specific issues for governors. Where parents expressed concern about the safety of their children this was linked to bullying and increasingly cyber bullying. Bullying face-to-face appears an issue at both primary and secondary school (reported as an issue by around 20% of parents) where as cyber bullying is reported as an issue by around 10% of secondary parents. For those schools where teacher absence is an issue, some parents are showing interest in using teacher absence records as part of the school selection process.

Not surprisingly, the biggest challenge for parents going forward is Higher Education funding. A massive 83% of parents of Year 10 children and above, think their child is interested in going on to Higher Education but only 11% think that they will be able to pay for their child. Currently, the greatest number are unsure how this might be afforded (30%); almost a quarter are looking for their child to pay through a student loan and a further 21% think the costs will be shared between themselves and their child. Sadly, 14% already think their child won't be able to go onto University.

NCPTA is a registered charity and is therefore is apolitical. The survey was undertaken by NCPTA in its capacity of representing the interests of parents around education. A full report and the detailed results of the survey conducted in January 2011 are available from www.ncpta.org.uk

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This NCPTA information sheet aims to provide clear advice but should only be considered as a general guide. Further information sheets are available from www.ncpta.org.uk For more specific advice please contact info@ncpta.org.uk or 01732 375460. National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, a registered charity no 1072833, a company limited by guarantee and registered in England no 3680271.

