

Tell your school's story

Researching your school's past is a great way to get children interested in history, but drawing on the memories of former staff and pupils can also bring the whole community together. Once you have gathered your material, there are numerous ways of recording and celebrating your school's story



Mount an exhibition

Naburn C of E Primary School in York also turned to its local community to source old photographs for its 150th anniversary celebrations. The school received so many pictures, stories and artefacts that it decided to hold an exhibition.

'We had a display in the school hall with all the photos on a timeline, plus a slide show that ran continuously from our ceiling projector onto a big display board so people could see the photos close-up,' says Anne Clark, chair of governors.

'People brought in objects from the past to include in a display of trophies, medals, and certificates. There was an attendance medal from the 1930s that belonged to someone's grandparents, and an essay, brought in by a

little girl – about keeping the village tidy and not dropping litter – written by her great, great-grandfather who attended the school in the 1920s. The older pupils were horrified when they read the school's original punishment book!

On the anniversary day, pupils dressed up in Victorian costumes and enjoyed a tea party attended by elderly villagers, who shared their memories of the school with the children.

'The PTA paid for the cakes and teas, and some of us hired costumes, but other than that, it was very cheap to put on,' says Anne.

The event was attended by the local MP and covered by the local press and radio, helping to boost the school's profile after falling numbers had put it at risk of closure.

'It's shown we have massive support from the community,' says Anne, 'and it's been instrumental in helping us survive.'

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Write a book

If you have a major anniversary coming up, it could be worth investing in a professionally published book. Bancyfelin Community Primary School in Carmarthen decided to do this to celebrate its 150th year, using a small local publishing company that was willing to offer a discount on printing costs.

The school drew on headteachers' log books and registers dating back to the 1870s, as well as the work of a local historian who co-authored the book with headteacher Trefina Jones. They also posted on a village Facebook group and put up posters in the local shop and

church, calling for people to send in their stories and photographs.

'Around 55 people wrote something for the book – some contributed a lot and others wrote one or two paragraphs – which we included in a section on people's memories,' says Trefina. 'One individual who'd been a cook here for 40 years and was a pupil herself wrote an entire chapter.'

The book cost £2,000 to produce, and copies sold for £10 each through the school's office and the local shop. Within a few months, it had made a modest profit and the school hopes it will continue to sell for years to come.

different in the past.

'The project was cost-free as the parent offered to edit the film, and we screened it at a special assembly. It's also being made available online so people can continue to watch it in the future.'

It was an excellent way for the children to get an understanding of how things were different in the past



Hanes Ysgol Bancyfelin
1872-2022
Golygydd gan Trefina Jones
A History of Bancyfelin School
1872-2022
Edited by Trefina Jones



Make a film

Start by putting a shout-out to parents, telling them you're planning a project about your school's history and asking what skills they can offer. Wallands Community Primary School in Lewes, East Sussex, was lucky enough to have a professional filmmaker among its parent community, who offered to film students interviewing older people about their memories of the school for its 75th anniversary.

The PTA already had a strong relationship with former pupils through a Facebook alumni page, some of whom were part of its first ever intake. Alumni were invited to attend an anniversary fair, at which a space was set up as a film studio.

'At the fair, alumni could drift in and out and volunteer to be interviewed,' says former PTA treasurer Holly Aquilina. 'The children had free rein to ask what they liked and it was an excellent way for them to get an understanding of how things were

Publish a magazine

If writing a book is too daunting, try putting together a shorter 'memories magazine'. The PTA at Ecclesall CE Junior School in Sheffield decided to do this to record its history before it merged with the local infant school.

'The idea was to be less formal than a book – to have a little bit of history, but mostly contain memories of pupils and staff, past and present,' says Victoria Parry, former PTA chair.

'I set up an alumni Facebook page and appealed for former pupils and staff to get in touch with their memories and photos. I shared the request on local Facebook pages and it generated a lot of interest. I also contacted all the famous alumni I was made aware of, and all but one

provided me with a piece for the magazine, which was a lovely touch.'

For images, Victoria scoured Sheffield Archives and approached the local newspaper, which trawled its back catalogue for photos of the school over the years.

'One of the older committee members was very helpful with the editing of the magazine, and a parent who owns a printing company kindly helped me get the magazine to print. We didn't make any profit but that wasn't really the intention.

'All in all, it was a huge amount of work, but I do think it was appreciated.'

