



Tips for a hit when fete's in your hands

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BEING asked to run a school fete is enough to wipe the smile off most parents' faces.

But you can make sure you all enjoy the fun of the fair with some simple steps.

Here comic ARABELLA WEIR tells you how.

RIGHT, are you ready for my genius advice on running a school fair?

Seriously, I ran the PTA at my son and daughter's school for eight years so I'm speaking from the frontline here.

I've even been brought in as a "poster girl" for a partnership between Supersavvyme.co.uk and PTALocal.co.uk to advise parents and schools on fundraising.

That must be enough proof. Here's my top ten tips.

1. Don't worry about getting in entertainers. That juggling unicyclist will look a bit tame when the school up the road hires a man-eating tiger.

2. Don't knock yourself out trying to get a celebrity to open the fair. Unless you can get whoever's "hot" with the kids at that exact moment (and good luck trying to keep up with that). Otherwise, you'll just waste energy pursuing someone only the parents have heard of.

Having said that, what about getting one of the mums to dress up as Lady GaGa? She always wears some bizarre outfit that renders her totally unrecognisable, so who knows what she really looks like anyway? If your volunteer is prepared to walk about dressed as, say, a pickled gherkin with a veal-chop hat, you might get away with it.



Child's play ... get your kids to help out on a stall

3. Involve your kids - but don't expect them to do anything uncool like working at the same stall as you. Youngsters love being part of the day but only if they can do it on their own terms. Let them run a stall selling cakes they cooked or gifts they made. On no account suggest they dress up in the theme of the fair. Any child made to wear a Hawaiian grass skirt will be tempted to seek the help of the authorities. And they'd be right.

4. Don't be too ambitious about timing. A fete lasting four hours is ample, particularly since you'll probably have been up preparing since the wee hours.

Kids get bored after a while, too, so don't be thinking in terms of Glastonbury-style all-nighters.



(NOT) Born This Way ... ask a mum to dress up as Lady GaGa for the school fete

5. Enlist masses of volunteers. Do whatever it takes to get them to commit - and I mean anything.

On the day you'll be grateful to have as many hands on deck as possible. When it comes to getting husbands to help out, the obvious offer usually does the trick!

6. Have as many activities and stalls as possible. With fetes, it's all about quantity, not quality.

That's not to say it can all be tat but to appeal to everyone you need a huge variety of attractions - face-painting, goal-scoring against the PE teacher, music, lots of different food stalls.

One of our biggest money spinners, would you believe, is our "cuttings" stall - that's small plants, not hair.

7. Get the head or other teachers to do something where they make fun of themselves. We had our head on a bucking bronco last year. It brought the house down, made loads of money and he loved it.

8. Have fun. It sounds obvious, but make sure all the helpers enjoy themselves too. Get the music going and have a boogie, even if the kids are dying of shame. It'll keep your energy levels up plus that's what we're here for - to embarrass our little darlings.

9. Ask local businesses to help. It doesn't have to be money, it could be a free haircut or manicure or a week's worth of vegetables.

In return, make posters advertising their good deed. It's great business for them.

10. Don't have a "well deserved" drink until the clearing up is finished. Trust me, untangling bunting is no joke when you're a couple of sheets to the wind.

Video: Arabella Weir's tempting fete

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Parenting

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Last year I made the mistake of "tidying away" the left-over Pimms. I don't remember much after that but I do remember the other helpers being a bit miffed the next day. So pull your weight, not your pints!

• **Arabella is working with supersavvyme.co.uk and ptalocal.co.uk to help parents and schools be more savvy in their everyday choices. See supersavvyme.co.uk/pta for more information.**