

case study

Ovingdean Hall school In profile

Raising money can be a challenge sometimes – particularly for smaller schools. Amy Griggs takes a look at Ovingdean Hall School, which recently raised £9,000, and finds out how it overcame its size to become a fundraising success story.



Ovingdean Hall School is a specialist school, for severely and profoundly deaf children from the age of nine to 19. It is registered as a non-maintained special school and as a charity. Children who attend the school receive support in the form of speech and language therapy, physical therapy and one-to-one literacy classes.

Using Justgiving

Like many schools, Ovingdean Hall does not have a huge fundraising budget, or the resources to organise big events. Nevertheless, it has been extremely successful at raising money for a range of projects, including re-surfacing its outdoor sports court.

In the past it has raised money through simple yet effective initiatives. By organising a poster campaign in local gyms, shops and health clubs, the school found four cyclists to take part

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in a sponsored 500km 10-day bike ride through Vietnam and Cambodia in February, raising £9,000.

'We're a small fundraising office with two people, one of whom is part-time,' says Ovingdean Hall fundraiser Amanda Jordan. 'I felt that there was real potential to raise more money from new sources through sponsored events, so we joined Justgiving and contacted a specialist charity challenges travel company (Charity Challenges) for the Saigon to Angkor Wat bike ride and set about advertising it in our local area.'

Amanda is impressed with the money the school was able to raise through Justgiving: 'Three of the four people who responded created Justgiving fundraising pages. The majority of donations came in through Justgiving – £7,477 of the £9,000 total, which was incredible.'

Amanda believes that online websites, like Justgiving, can be a great way to recruit new supporters, and because they process the donations and reclaim the Gift Aid, the school's administration burden is significantly reduced.

This year it is taking part in another charity challenge by organising a trek through Tanzania, with the Masai tribes people as guides. This is to raise money to renovate a classroom and to build an arts theatre.

Charity Challenges are something that all schools could do to raise money. By taking part in a chosen adventure, whether it is horse riding in Mongolia, or kayaking in Brazil, fundraisers can raise considerable amounts of money for their chosen charities. The Charity Challenges website is user-friendly, and has lots of fundraising ideas and advice.

Currently, only adults are able to take

part in these challenges, so while they are something that PTA members, governors, teachers or alumni (as well as companies) can do, they are not suitable for children. However in 2008, Charity Challenges is hoping to extend its programmes to families, so that children aged 12 and above can take part with a parent or guardian.

However, this is just one way that Ovingdean raises money. It is a member of the Fundraising Standards Board and its own website, which is clearly laid-out and easy to navigate, provides information on a number of different ways potential donors can give to the school. There are accessible details on how to make a single or regular donation, how to leave a legacy, and corporate giving.

Giving a single or regular gift

Regular gifts are encouraged because they help the school to plan ahead, and Ovingdean is quite flexible, in order to encourage donors to feel comfortable giving in a way that suits them. A gift can be made by direct debit or standing order each month, quarter or year. One-off gifts can also be made over the telephone.

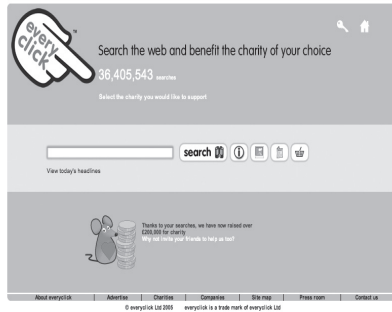
Each form includes a Gift Aid Declaration, which enables UK taxpayers to increase the value of donations by almost a third. This means the school can make a considerable amount in extra funding.

Leaving a legacy

The website provides a link – legacyleaflet.doc – that gives information on the different types of legacies that people can leave in their will. This is obviously not something which will provide immediate results, but schools may be able to approach long-term donors who have been cultivated over a number of years – whether they



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be alumni, families of children who have attended the school, or people interested in the school's work.

Corporate giving

Ovingdean has support from both local and national companies. The school encourages these companies to visit, take a tour of the school and sit in on lessons. This positive and welcoming approach helps to forge good relationships, and ultimately results in greater contributions – both in terms of time and money.

Companies are encouraged to help by making Ovingdean their 'charity of the year', making the school the beneficiary of company charity events, setting up a payroll giving scheme, signing up to EveryClick, or taking part in charity challenges.

Some companies elect to make donations instead of sending Christmas cards, while others prefer the payroll giving scheme. This is simple to set up, and popular because participating employees benefit from income tax relief.

EveryClick is another easy way for companies to contribute. It is both a social enterprise and search engine that donates 50 per cent of its profits to charity. Each active charity receives

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a proportion of that sum, dependant upon how much its supporters use the website relative to the supporters of other active charities.

It is free to sign-up, employees nominate a charity and then every time they use the search engine, a donation gets sent to this charity. All website activity is measured by reference to the number of searches that users make – in other words, every single click contributes money to the chosen charity.

Small schools like Ovingdean do not make a huge amount in this way – although of course every little helps – but the potential for larger secondaries is tremendous. EveryClick can be used by pupils, parents and teachers, as well as outside companies, so a school that has a high number of pupils can raise a much greater sum of money in this way.

'People want their "giving experience" to be as hassle free as possible, and Ovingdean Hall achieves this'

Other ways you can help

Ovingdean Hall also has an 'other ways you can help' page which provides really useful links for anyone wishing to donate publicly quoted shares, auction goods on eBay, or nominate donations on tax returns.

Having a good website

The school does not do anything radical, but there can be no doubt that a business-like attitude, good organisation skills and website presentation are key to its success.

A good example of this is its presentation of one current fundraising project – to build a performing arts theatre. The proposed theatre may be viewed through a visual, online tour of the architect's plans. This way, not only can potential donors see the project as a serious proposal, they can also see

exactly where their money will be going – which is more inspiring than simply reading about it.

The school has a CMS website, which allows it to put new photos and text on straightaway. The advantage of having this kind of structure is that it can be updated in-house, without involving a designer, making it easier to keep all the information topical and relevant

There is an up-to-date, welcoming introduction by the headmistress, which invites the reader to find out more about the school, and conveys a level of professionalism that businesses will respect. The website is clear and easy to use, which encourages potential donors. People want their 'giving' experience to be as hassle-free as possible, and Ovingdean achieves this.

All too often schools fail to make the most of what they have, but this is not something that Ovingdean Hall can be accused of. They proudly make use of every asset they have – there is no better illustration of this than patron Dame Judi Dench's eloquent appeal for funds on the website.

While it is true that non-maintained schools have access to a greater number of funding sources and find it easier to attract high profile patrons than maintained schools, they are disadvantaged in other ways. It is all about making the most out of the resources you have – and this is something Ovingdean Hall does in spades.

View the website at www.ovingdeanschool.org.uk

For other useful information:

Justgiving
www.justgiving.com

EveryClick
www.everyclick.com

Payroll giving scheme
www.payrollgivingcentre.org.uk

Charity Challenges
www.charitychallenge.com

