



Governor Newsletter

SIR JOHN BARROW SCHOOL

December 2020

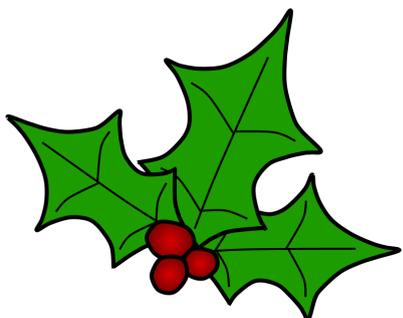
Governing during the Pandemic

Everything has been changed by the Coronavirus and its impact on how we all live. School governance is no exception and we have all moved online for virtual meetings and visits. Most of the response to the situation has been at the level of day to day problem solving, and is done by our school staff, with minimal involvement by governors.

The school's challenges have involved working out how to respond to the guidance we get from local public health and the government, and make it work in our own school with our own community and its individuals' needs. Governance, and the longer term monitoring and planning that this involves has taken a bit of a back seat to allow staff to focus their time on dealing with the urgency of the current situation.

However, there are still issues for us to address, and the most prominent of these include:

- **school finances:** Covid response has incurred extra expense and at the same time, reduced some of our usual income streams which we rely on to keep the school budget healthy. We have had to think imaginatively about our finances, this has included lobbying our MP and local council leaders about realistic financial planning, and rethinking how we do fundraising for school
- **learning gap:** the gap in learning resulting from time out of school last year has been in the headlines, and as at all other schools, we have been overseeing planning to make sure that we are taking every opportunity to make up for lost time in the classroom. We know that staff and pupils are all working very hard to make up for lost learning time last year
- **parent/carer dialogue with school:** one of the positive things to come out of the changes we all experienced during the 1st lockdown, was the increased involvement of many families in their children's learning. The July 2020 Parent/Carer survey results were overwhelmingly supportive of measures that were taken to help parents/carers support pupils. We are working on how to learn from this experience and to build on this new way of working with parents and carers... see the next paragraph for more details!



Developing support for home learning and parent/carer involvement

We have been getting updates from our staff about the huge impact that parental/carer involvement in pupil learning can have on child development. We recognise that this can be challenging in many ways:

time, capacity and also just the nuts and bolts of knowing exactly what to do! However, in spite of these challenges, parent and carer feedback suggests our parents and carers are very enthusiastic about being more involved in their children's learning. Staff have been working on different ways to connect with parents and carers, and to support home involvement in pupil learning. We hope to see this as an area for ongoing development of blended learning over the next weeks and months and really hope that you will engage in this, and give us your feedback on what works best for you and your family.

New Governor Recruit

At SJB, we are lucky to have a board of governors from a wide range of backgrounds representing parents, our local community, our staff and local business. We are delighted to welcome our latest recruit to the governing body, **Mr Andrew Paterson** who will fill one of our "Co-opted Governor" places on the board. Andrew works as a Business Improvement Analyst at BAE Systems, and will join our team to help us with scrutiny of school finances, health and safety, risk management and strategic planning. In his personal statement applying for the role, he said:

I want to help foster an education system that tells young people: if you aim high, we'll provide you with all the support required to give you every chance.

This is what we care passionately about at SJB, and we are looking forward to working with Andrew as part of our team.

Parent Governors

We are sorry to announce the departure of Helen O'Neill from the Governing Body after five years of membership. Helen served three terms of office as Vice-Chair and made significant contributions as Health and Safety Governor, Sports Premium Champion, as well as her membership of the Finance committee. We thank her for her huge commitment and hard work for the school.

We have five parent governor positions on our board, and Helen's departure triggered the process of electing a new parent/carer to the vacant position. We had a single candidate and so no ballot was needed to decide the outcome. We are delighted to announce the election of Commander Matthew Lister, parent of Isabell (Year 4) William (Year 1) and Jack (Nursery). We are looking forward to welcoming Matthew to the board and working with him over the next months and years.

Best wishes for the Holiday Season... see you in 2021!

2020 has been the strangest and most challenging of years, but part of how we have got through this has been through our strong sense of community and team, and by looking out for each other as a school. We would like to thank all of our school community for their support and resilience to the circumstances, and would like to take the opportunity to wish you a safe and enjoyable break over the Christmas holidays!

