



# Governor Newsletter

## SIR JOHN BARROW SCHOOL

December 2023

### Succeed enJoy Belong

#### Season's Greetings and Yuletide Joy!

**Behold, in this edition we bring you good news! If the weather outside is frightful, we hope you'll find this medley of info delightful - get ready to raise a toast to all SJB pupils and staff members as we approach the end of another successful term .....**

#### Governor visits

Autumn term has flown by! Governors were delighted to see that both pupils and staff started the new academic year brimming with enthusiasm and commitment. Pupils quickly settled into their new classrooms and built strong relationships with their new class teacher. The highlight of our role is coming into school to visit our link class (we do this at least once a term), we really enjoy speaking with pupils and their teacher. Our remit as governors is to see the school 'in action' and ensure that high quality education provision and pupil performance standards continue, particularly during such exceptionally challenging times. That said, we really get a glow of pride to see the confidence and laughter that accompanies learning across the school and throughout the school day. And, we recognise the dedication and determination of teachers to go the extra mile to enable all pupils in their class to reach their full potential.

Each term we have a different focus; autumn was 'understanding our class'. Without getting personal, we want to know that individual pupil needs are being identified and appropriately responded to; how pupils with additional needs are supported to access all parts of the curriculum; and how successful partnership working is between pupils, staff and families/community. Following our class visits, governors meet to strategically discuss what areas can be improved, what are the barriers that restrict progress and how can we help to overcome these? Governors have agreed this year's priorities for the School Improvement Plan are to improve writing skills and to embed practice that support pupils' academic and/or emotional resilience both inside and outside the classroom – we know this is key in creating sustained long-term success. We look forward to seeing term by term progress and associated benefits for pupils/class in our future visits.

If you would like to know more about the school governor role, and/or you would like to join the SJB Governing Body and play a part in the school improvement journey, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

**Charlotte Wraith ([cwraith@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:cwraith@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk)), Provision Committee Chair.**

## **PE & Sport**

As the PE & Sports Champion, my role is to note how government grant funding is being used to build resource capacity and teaching capability within school for sustainable quality PE, sport and physical activities. We want both current pupils in school and those joining in future years to benefit from the school's investment plans. I am very impressed with the extended range of sport activities and efforts to encourage all pupils to find, take-up and become passionate about a sport. I commend the recently approved SJB swimming policy to prioritise/provide further opportunities for Year 6 pupils if they do not meet national curriculum requirements – very aware that the lock down during the pandemic limited swimming opportunities for them. I routinely follow with keen interest the continuing sporting triumphs of SJB pupils. Their hard work and commitment to further develop their skills is very evident. Credit and a big thank you is given to Mr Maher for his zeal and energy, which is highly inspirational and definitely impacts positively on the children's team work and determination, securing one success after another.

**Craig Lavery, PE & Sports Champion.**

## **Emotional Well Being**

It has been a real privilege this term to work with a small group of staff and parents to think about how to improve the Emotional Well Being of the school community. There has been great enthusiasm shown, and we are looking forward to taking forward some of the ideas early in 2024. So, watch this space!

If new parents or staff members are interested in joining the group who are thinking about Emotional Well Being we would love your input. The group meets twice a term at the moment, but also communicate by email in between. You don't need to be an expert in mental health. You just need to be interested in thinking about how to help children, staff and parents improve their Emotional Well Being. Just let the school office know and they will pass the message on.

If you are interested in developing your Mental Health First Aid Skills there is a free (government funded) online course currently available. This gives you skills to support adults who are struggling with their mental health. This online course takes on average 6-12 weeks to complete, based on 4-5 hours of weekly study. To find out more email Chelby at Learning Curve Group (email link below). This is one of the government funded organisations providing emotional wellbeing training.

[Chelby.Coupland@learningcurvegroup.co.uk](mailto:Chelby.Coupland@learningcurvegroup.co.uk)

Christmas is coming! It is well known for being potentially both great fun, and also very challenging. There can be such high expectations for Christmas, and those can be hard to live up to. I can think of lots of childhood Christmases where I ended up in tears because it wasn't as perfect as I thought it should be! This year especially may be hard with the cost-of-living crisis. MIND have a page of useful information to support people manage the pressures of Christmas:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/christmas-and-mental-health/christmas-and-mental-health/>

**Liz Bolt, Mental Health Champion.**

## **A Term in the Life of a SJB Governor**

And to help with our quest to recruit new governors – currently we have a few vacancies – here are my autumn term diary notes for a visual insight into the role...

## **September 2023**

First meeting of the year and always a blizzard of legally required actions – electing the Chair and

Vice Chair, agreeing Committee Terms of Reference – not the most exciting bit of the role. Always quite amusing is the divisions of roles and responsibilities for the year; who is linked to which class and which specific roles we will all take on. We are all a bit reticent at volunteering but soon all governors are putting their names forward for roles and suggesting others who would be good at specific tasks. I keep the same class and agree to the role of SEN Governor.

Then onto the interesting part of the meeting. Work undertaken over the summer. The Headteacher's Report and discussion of the School Improvement Plan. The meetings are always interesting - we ask about anything we are unsure about and constructively challenge if aspects can be improved. It's great to be part of an effective team.

### **October 2023**

In school for the afternoon for my class visit. This term it's just about reacquainting myself with the staff and pupils although I got some great feedback on writing from the class teacher which showed how the School Improvement Plan was already having an impact. I'll feed that back to the rest of the Governors. The pupils were as ever a joy, really engaged in their work and as always I learnt some new things from them about the topic they were studying. Popped into the Headteacher's office just to say how much I'd enjoyed the visit.

### **November 2023**

Two meetings today. First my termly meeting with the Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCo) then the Provision Committee meeting. This Committee looks at the curriculum, teaching and learning. The meeting with the SENCo lasts about an hour. We looked at data showing how well pupils with SEN are doing (I never see the names) and what action the SENCo proposes to intervene where pupils are doing less well. There are also some whole school initiatives that have started which we will talk about throughout the year. Finally we discuss some of the challenges in accessing external support services. I'll write a brief report (mostly very positive) for the Governing Body meeting, but also highlight some of the challenges.

The Provision Committee was interesting. Everyone's class visit seems to have found evidence of impact from the Improvement Plan which is great so early in the academic year. We agree how we will monitor some of the other areas of the Plan in visits during the year. I was relieved we were going to get some training on meta cognition!

### **December 2023**

Full Governing Body meeting. As I can't actually get to school I join the meeting remotely through Google Meet as do several other governors. It's one of the positive developments following the pandemic that we can now have face to face, virtual and hybrid meetings. They seem to work well. This meeting is far more focused on how the school is performing. The budget is on track but very tight, progress is good on the School Improvement Plan, OPAL is showing promise. We keep a close eye on pupil progress. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative is looking very promising in supporting a happy and healthy school. It's been a good term and it's great to be part of this friendly team supporting and challenging the school.

### **Why not join us?**

Just get in touch if you have any questions about this report or the governor vacancies, we would love to hear from you. No experience is necessary. Training opportunities are available.

**John Barrett, Chair of Governors.**

**SJB governors wish you all the best for the festive period and for 2024.**