



Governor Newsletter

SIR JOHN BARROW SCHOOL

Summer 2024

Succeed enJoy Belong

**Unbelievable – we are at the end of another academic year.....
welcome to the summer term and year-end newsletter!**

Governors are very proud and grateful for the unrelenting dedication and determination across the whole SJB community to support pupils' wellbeing and aspirations. We know that without this SJB school would not have the exceptional ongoing successes term on term, year after year. Everyone's contributions are highly valued, and despite just being words here, we really want to applaud and give you one and all a big, sincere, *from the heart* 'THANK YOU' from all of us on the SJB Governing Body.

It has been an unusual year, with many challenges relating to local and national issues. Huge credit is given to all staff members for successfully overcoming the adversities – their creative thinking and perseverance empowered pupils to thrive even under some difficult circumstances!

Collaborative working across the sixteen Furness Peninsula primary schools has had a notable improvement in phonics outcomes for KS1 pupils. This is most welcome as KS1 pupils' speech development was notably disrupted by the covid pandemic lockdown. Governors are pleased to report that, building on this success, close collaborative work will continue next year. Research into evidence-based teaching methods for the best learning outcomes will support improvement across all sixteen schools.

Another important success is that ongoing monitoring of SJB's development of an outstanding curriculum confirms (to our delight) that pupils' learning experiences extend beyond traditional classroom teaching – many examples are pictured on the [school blog](#). OPAL (Outdoor Play And Learning), in particular, inspires, engages and equips our pupils with a robust foundation of skills and knowledge, as well as nurturing their wellbeing and confidence to overcome many varied barriers that can impede learning.

As an 'Outstanding' school (Ofsted inspection, March 2023), governors' focus and commitment to drive ongoing school improvement continues unabated. Plans are in hand for a strategic change in SJB school leadership and governor monitoring activities for next year. Much respect and gratitude is given to Orcina (a local business) - without their support SJB's successes this year would be significantly less. Insufficient finance is the most debilitating factor in the education of the next generation of Ulverston (*and even perhaps beyond*) leaders. SJB, along with the other Furness Primary Collaborative schools, are skilled at identifying and effectively responding to early indications of potential learning difficulties. This gives a timely boost to overcome what may otherwise be a life-long impediment for individual pupils - but this is

expensive to maintain both in time and money. Orcina very generously provided the financial wherewithal for schools to work together to share best practice teaching skills and resources to support individual pupils' additional learning and/or emotional needs. All pupils across the locality have benefited in numerous ways from the opportunities and developments created by Orcina's philanthropic vision to improve the life chances for local children. Governors hope (but they also have a risk mitigation strategy plan) that a collective bid for another (2024-2025) Orcina grant is successful to enable this effective partnership work to continue.

Governors also appreciate the important role parents have in their child's success. Reading with/to children at home in the evenings/weekends/holidays is enormously beneficial in inspiring a child's curiosity and motivation to learn new skills and interact with the world around them. There are so many ways and opportunities by which adults can help a child to develop a love of reading, and thereby extend their child's vocabulary, grammar, comprehension and communication skills. Reading can include any subject, any books or other text forms – all contribute to effective and lifelong articulation and learning skills. As a priority for all FPC schools (Furness Primary Collaborative), Orcina funding was invested in upgrading and extending each school's books/other reading resources. Everyone (governors, Orcina, teachers, subject leads, pupils; yes everyone!) will be positively 'over the moon' if pupils make good progress with their homework and work through the entire stock of new reading resources next year – and, most especially, if both pupils and parents ENJOY the resources. So 'Go parents' !

Another focus for all schools is good (96%) pupil attendance over the academic year. It is now a national priority to make sure all pupils are in school (relates to 'lost' children during the pandemic). All local councils are tasked with monitoring attendance (including Westmoreland and Furness Council – they have employed new officers with this remit) and have the authority to issue fixed penalty notices (can amount to £160 fine/family) for unauthorised absences in some circumstances. Schools are required to report pupil absences; they are not involved in decisions to fine parents/guardians. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise family holidays in school term time.

As governors, we fully endorse good attendance – we recognise pupils will benefit from successful, progressive learning if their attendance is regular and punctual. Teacher's wellbeing is also important to us, and we are aware their workload increases to provide effective catch-up if/when pupils miss lessons that are carefully planned to introduce/consolidate sequential learning. The Governing Body also understands the daily dilemma parents can face (we have parent governor members). Which is why the Governing Body closely monitors attendance and challenges whether the school can do more to help overcome practical difficulties experienced by some families. We are particularly proud of the strong interaction and supportive network the school has built-up with parents; also, we consider SJB is very fortunate to have an experienced, extremely conscientious and pragmatic SENDCo and Safeguarding lead (Miss Robinson). We commend Miss Robinson for her tenacity to go more than that extra mile to assist families who may be struggling and to ensure children's safety remains paramount. This makes us hopeful that good attendance will continue in the future. We would urge parents/carers to discuss attendance challenges or potential future issues with school staff as soon as is possible – we know that all staff will try their very best to help and support where they can.

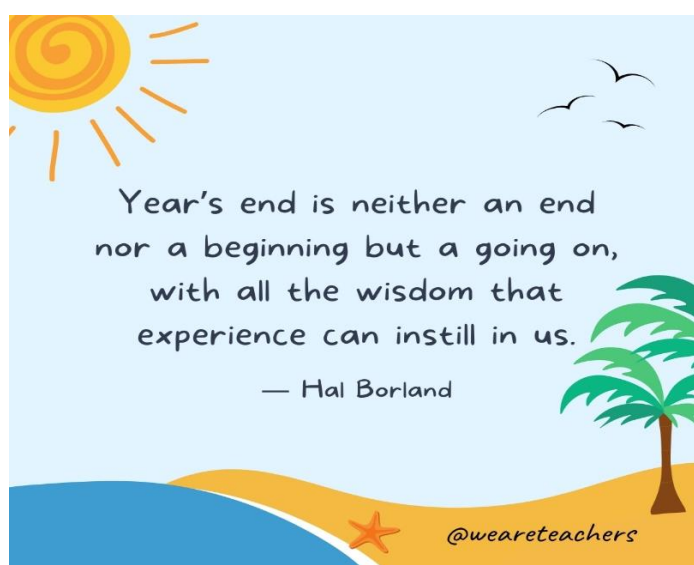
Now the sad part - saying goodbyes. We wish Liz Bolt (governor) as well as Year 6 pupils, the very best of luck and success with your future plans. Thank you for all your hard work – governors feel it was an absolute delight to have spent time with you in school. We hope you all will enjoy happy memories of belonging to SJB and, Year 6 pupils, you will find the knowledge learnt here will stand you in good stead for the rest of your lives.

The Governing Body continues to be a small but effective group full of zeal! We have recruited two new governors for the autumn term. If anyone is interested in joining us, we still have some vacant governor roles that we would love to discuss with you – just get in touch with John Barrett (Chair of Governors,

jbarrett@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk). Previous experience as a governor is not necessary as training and support is provided. Indeed, we welcome hearing from any member of the SJB community on any aspect of the school day, what is working well and where improvements could be made. Email the Chair of Governors, or Clerk to Governors: klittle@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk. All feedback is very valued and much appreciated. Thank you.

We close this academic year with our encouragement for everyone to enjoy the summer, relax, have fun - take a rest, chill out... so we all return next term raring to go, as energetic as ever – focused on onwards and upwards towards next year's improvement aspirations. We look forward to working with you all again in September, just to leave no doubt – governors are *absolutely passionate* about providing the very best education and learning experiences for our pupils!

Finally, we thought you would appreciate a tip for a good summer family read, especially if you like dogs... '[The Dog Who Came to Stay: A Memoir](#)' by Hal Borland. Hopefully, you find his quote below inspirational in preparing for next year's 'going-on'!



The SJB Governing Body

[Find our details here](#)

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