

## **Succeeding enJoying Belonging**

### **2024-2025 Academic Year – Here We Are!**

You may have wondered why no newsletter last term.....the start of a new academic year is always 'full-on' for governors, but autumn term 2024 was incredibly so! 'Well done' to staff and pupils for settling into new roles, new classes, and learning new skills.

The Governing Body have been a tad busy working through some challenges and changes. We are delighted to have Mrs Fletcher (Acting Headteacher) on board to cover Mrs Pearson's secondment and (following two governor resignations) very pleased to welcome two new governors: Mrs Laura Hamilton (parent governor) and Mr David Smith (Co-opted governor). We recognise valuable new/additional skills and experience will strengthen the Governing Body's plans for ongoing school improvement and best outcomes for pupils. Mr Barrett (Chair of Governors) unfortunately had to take 'time out' – rest assured a rousing reception is planned for his return! Of course all governors stepped in to ensure continual support for Mrs Fletcher and team SJB, but with his return, we will be right back into 'full steam ahead' mode!

### **Setting School Improvement Priorities for 2024-2025**

The most important focus for the autumn term was to set the priorities for the 2024-2025 School Improvement Plan (SIP). The Governing Body approved five objectives – SJB staff are now working on specific actions that will improve standards/outcomes for all pupils from Nursery to Yr 6 in five priority areas: writing, maths, the wider curriculum (non-foundation subjects), SEND provision and continuous provision in Early Years.

Our role as governors is to monitor that key milestones/progress is achieved towards the specific targets for each of the five objectives. Individual monitoring remits were enthusiastically divided up in line with personal interests and/or requests. Governor links continue with the same class group as they moved up a year; Mrs Hamilton is now Yr 1's

linked governor and Mr Smith is Yr 6's. Governors enjoy spending time with their class getting to know pupils and the teaching staff, as well as the opportunity to see the practical application/impact of the strategic decisions made in Governing Body meetings. There is no higher reward or better job satisfaction than seeing class/individual pupil's success in overcoming learning barriers knowing that your contribution made that possible. Needless to say, the Governing Body (as well as the whole school) were delighted with the [2024 KS2 SATs results](#) (last year's Class 6) – we were very, very pleased that the whole class, *all pupils*, left SJB well equipped to start their secondary education. These pupils were the ones most affected by the Covid pandemic – it was evident year on year that lockdown at a such critical development age had significantly restricted their learning experiences.

## Committee Meetings, Autumn Term 2024

[The Provision Committee](#) met twice last term. The first was in September to discuss the 2023-2024 year-end pupil performance data. Respecting it had been a full team effort governors sent grateful 'thankyous' to all staff members for their dedication and support over the previous six years that enabled (now ex-) pupils' very impressive achievement. The many factors that contribute to a successful end of primary stage education were discussed – e.g. core skills, curriculum knowledge, as well as confidence and motivation. Pupils need a mature mental health and resilience to prepare for and sit exams. Governors' focus now is to ensure plans and practice are in place to identify and support current pupil cohorts to overcome specific or generic learning barriers.

The focus of the second meeting in November was to discuss progress with the SIP actions. The following strategic details were noted:

- Continuous professional development (CPD) enables staff to identify and support resolution to the 'dips' in pupils' knowledge.
- Reading for Pleasure – SJB is well stocked but extending the range would be more motivating (especially for reluctant readers) than re-reading the same books. New funding (donation/grants) is required to progress this.
- There is a wide disparity of writing skills within and across cohorts. The principle is to embed elementary skills by sharing practice that is proven to overcome issues.
- Outdoor behaviour during playtimes has significantly improved since the new play equipment was installed (OPAL funding). Governors are delighted that pupils LOVE the bigger go-carts and that the 'five ducks for a turtle' scheme is so popular!
- Support to maintain pupils' positive mental health continues - assemblies every other Monday focus on what an emotion word looks/feels like. If pupils can name a feeling, they can more easily understand/explain how they feel, especially for complicated emotional situations.

[Points agreed for follow-up at the next meeting \(March\) include:](#)

- Pupil attendance/absence and link to pupil progress data (especially maths).
- Impact of interventions applied (either for catch-up or as 'push' for pupils to reach

their full potential) on outcomes, e.g. pupil performance data for maths.

- Recognising there is a considerable difference in learning style between Early Years and KS1 lessons (pupils can be phased by the more formal approach to teaching and assessment in Yr 3 compared to Yr 2), details are requested on how pupils are supported both before and after their transition from Early Years to KS1.
- Feedback on plans to offer parents/carers direct help and advice on how to promote reading for pleasure (especially for reluctant readers) and opportunities to raise any concerns relating to their child's learning and development.

[The Resources Committee](#) met in November.

Much angst and concern expressed – delayed information from Westmorland & Furness Council (unconfirmed carry forward from the 2023-2024 financial year for the school's delegated budget) meant that budget build/monitoring was challenging to say the least! Once the carry forward was confirmed, it was a great relief to be in a better position than the scenario governors had prepared for. The SJB Finance Team (Mrs Jordan, School Business Manager, Mrs Pearson and Mrs Fletcher) were commended for their excellent financial planning and management skills. Efficient school finance tracking and record keeping enabled the right decisions to proceed despite all the uncertainties.

That said, SJB finances remain tight. All schools are struggling to provide an inclusive quality education from their national (delegated) funding. Governors repeatedly acknowledge the generosity of a local business and thank them for their ongoing financial support. SJB is one of fourteen schools in the Furness Peninsula that collectively apply for grant funding. Annual bids have been approved for progressive/new projects involving collaborative working between the schools to enhance teaching/learning and enable better future life chances for local pupils.

In addition, Governors are very grateful to the SJB PTA for their ingenuity and diligence. Their initiative and determination to find new ways of raising money is truly unbelievable! Also, parents and carers of pupils in school are thanked profusely for supporting the PTA's events and contributing towards the extras that the delegated budget can't stretch to. This year all donations will be invested in IT equipment – the intention is to have individual IT pieces for every pupil so all families will be able to access Showbie and view pupils work remotely.

The Resources Committee's remit is to ensure best value for money, and that opportunities are offered and learning requirements are understood for all pupils, irrespective of their background. We monitor, and are pleased to report, that no pupil is held back due to discrimination or disadvantage– the school offers help in multiple ways *discretely* to pupils and their family who struggling or in a crisis. The Committee approved the [Accessibility Plan](#) to reduce and eliminate barriers for pupils to access the school's curriculum, physical access across the site and delivery of written communication. Monitoring regular site/building maintenance work is also an important remit – the new site manager (Mr Bellamy) is very effective in the role; his offer to accompany governors on site inspection audits is much appreciated.

Points agreed to follow-up at the next meeting (March) include:

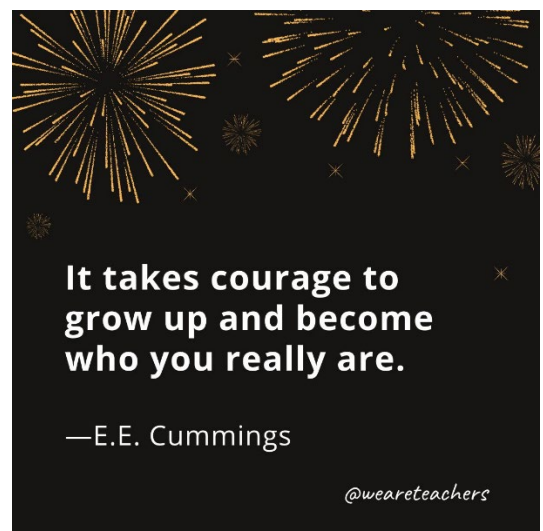
- Ongoing budget monitoring - value for money discussions
- Staff wellbeing – how best to provide ongoing support for their positive wellbeing
- New income generation - grant applications/donations

Thank you for reading this far - we will report back on governor discussions and developments during the spring term in the next governor newsletter. Do get in touch (email the Clerk to Governors, [klittle@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:klittle@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk)) if you have any questions on the information above, or to provide feedback on specific school practice that is working well and/or what (and how) could aspects be improved. All feedback is valued and will be respectfully considered and responded to.

Finally to close this newsletter with a golden opportunity for parents/professionals/members of the community - if you feel you would like to get involved in SJB's strategic management and be a part of this small, friendly, effective team that is so full of zeal....then why not join us? We still have vacant governor posts that we would be keen to discuss with you. Previous experience as a governor is not necessary as training and support is provided. Just get in touch with John Barrett (Chair of Governors, [jbarrett@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:jbarrett@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk)).

Thank you, enjoy spring time in Ulverston.

[Year 6 Forest Schools-SAWS, October 2024](#)



**The SJB Governing Body**

**[Find our details here](#)**

<https://sjbprimaryblog.com/>