

## Succeeding enJoying Belonging

### Reflections on the 2024-2025 Academic Year

Hello again to all parents, carers and SJB supporters in the community!

At the last Governing Body meeting in July, governors took time to reflect on a 'job well done'! We started 2024 -2025 with many changes and ended with new changes planned for this academic year....last year was a 'busy' year to say the least!

Tremendous praise and huge thank-yous are given to the whole school community for working extremely hard and managing to remain focused on the school priorities, despite the many challenges. Governors are delighted the year ended on a 'high' with much progress made and many successes for Team SJB and individuals to celebrate and build-on this year.

Governors are exceptionally proud of the positive environment and the supportive culture in school. It is a privilege to be part of such a vibrant, receptive 'can-do' community team. We very much respect that every member contributes significantly to making SJB the truly special place it is. We are extremely grateful for the collaborative effort and effective team work across the whole school community – parent/carers, staff, pupils, SLT, the PTA and, of course, governor colleagues.

So here's a '**thank you and well done**' stamp for everyone (it has been noted that stamps are very sought after; these are high status symbols in school!). A special 'thank you' is given to all parents and carers for their input and commitment last year – the impact of this is a significant contribution to the school's success. This is frequently recognised in governor meetings. Your ongoing support is generously given in many ways – helping the children at home with their reading, homework, Showbie, multiplication tables; volunteering to support reading, writing and maths in school; help with the wonderful school trips and/or at sports events...this list goes on. Governors recognise that the partnership between parents/carers and teachers is vital in enabling all pupils to thrive; long may this continue for pupils' benefit!

You will be pleased to know governors are preparing for the year ahead with the same vigour and zest as last year. Our mission is to ensure ongoing improvements and the best quality education to enhance all pupils' life chances. If you would like to join the SJB Governing Body to take an active part in the strategic leadership of the school, do get in touch with the Chair of Governors (*email address is below*) for an informal chat. New members would be very welcome; we have a couple of vacant governor posts.

So, full steam ahead, academic year 2025-2026 here we come!

Best wishes

### **The SJB Governing Body**

Find our details here: <https://sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk/governance/sjb-governors/>

Email the Clerk to Governors ([klittle@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:klittle@sjbarrow.cumbria.sch.uk)) if you have any questions for the Governing Body, or would like 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 both respectfully considered and responded to.

Please continue to read messages from individual governor below.

### **From John Barrett, Chair of Governors**

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As this new year starts we reflect on a significant decision the Governing Body faced in selecting a new headteacher to lead SJB into the future, as well taking a moment to celebrate Mrs Pearson's achievements.

It has always struck me that headship isn't a job but a vocation and one which is all consuming. As a headteacher you are never off duty and have a huge role to play in the lives of the children and staff in school, often making decisions that have potentially huge consequences for people's lives.

I first met Mrs Pearson shortly after I had arrived in Cumbria to work for the local authority. She called me about an issue affecting a child at school which needed a local authority response. There was no way that phone call was ending without the issue being sorted out for the child. It wasn't a particularly big issue but it mattered for the child and Mrs Pearson was doggedly determined that she was going to get it right for them. That determination to get it right for every child has been one of the defining aspects of her headship. Her mantra can be described as: *'Never settle for second best, keep on striving, be ambitious for every child and person in the school'*.

We have been extremely lucky to have had a headteacher like Mrs Pearson who has, every day, worked to improve the school and the experiences of the children in it. She has brought many strengths to the role; she's a great problem solver and brilliant team builder. She has always had a clear vision for the school but one which had individual children at its heart. One of her greatest strengths has been her humility; the school success has always been about the wider team. She hasn't been a headteacher who thinks she has all the answers – she is always willing to learn from others and go out and find ideas and people who can contribute to making SJB a great place to learn.

As governors we have enjoyed working alongside Mrs Pearson who has always been very

open about the opportunities and challenges in any situation and has positively encouraged governors in their role as 'critical friends' of the school. However, after thirteen years at SJB, Mrs Pearson is now ready for new challenges and we wish her all the very best in all her new ventures.

We are also looking forward to welcoming Mr Reddy to the school in January 2026. Rules around headteacher notice periods mean that January is the earliest he can start, in part because his current school wants to keep him for as long as possible, and that tells you something! Change, especially a change of leadership can be challenging but as governors we are sure that we have the right person coming into the school to build on Mrs Pearson's work. In the meantime Mrs Fletcher will continue to steer the ship with skill and confidence.

**From David Smith, Co-opted Governor**

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A never ending battle for governors is to ensure SJB high education standards are maintained and pupils continue to access motivating learning opportunities despite extremely challenging financial constraints. Governors are indebted to the SJB PTA for their ingenuity and tenacity of their fundraising activities.

But despite the PTA's ongoing significant income generation, the school budget remains very tight. Our plan is to seek additional external funding by sending letters to local industry and/or businesses requesting donations. We are hoping by explaining the squeeze on the school budget from rising costs and special educational needs, companies or individuals will recognise how they can make a real difference to the life chances of Ulverston's future adults.

It would make an enormous difference if families of pupils with connections to local businesses could enhance our 'callout' on behalf of SJB pupils and encourage a huge positive response from the local community. Financial support offers many options to enhance the current basic learning provision, but other donations could release the pressure on the school budget and are very welcome, e.g. offers of gardening items, outside furniture, carpets, raffle prizes, sport equipment, toys, etc.

All sponsors will be acknowledged on our SJB blog and Facebook page; or, of course, they can opt out if they prefer to.

The items at the top of our wish list are: I-pads, reading books, equipment for the early years children, fencing, paint, stationery and reward sweatshirts for 'star' pupils. Any help and/or suggestions from parents and carers will be most gratefully welcomed, just get in touch - we look forward to hearing from you.

**From Craig Lavery, Parent governor**

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We had another great year full of sporting success for SJB. The hard work by the children and Mr Maher during those early morning sessions and throughout the PE curriculum year

definitely paid off. Governors recognise that without the unfailing generosity and support from parents/carers, particularly with transport, the number of sporting events and competitions that SJB pupils can participate in (winning many of them!) would be much reduced. For details and pictures, see the SJB Blog: <https://sjbprimaryblog.com/2025/07/>

**Profuse thanks to SJB sport supporters.** Well done Team SJB! We have a lot to look forward to in 2025-2026.

**From Rebecca Williamson, Parent governor & Provision Committee Chair**

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Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) is a programme to provide children with richer play experiences that improve their well-being, behaviour, social skills, and creativity. The goal is to make every playtime *amazing* for every child.

Last year the OPAL team added new outdoor resources and also upgraded/improved existing play items e.g. go-karts, and they now use the running track as the old area wasn't big enough! New things have been tested (the football table has been particularly popular, so the team are planning to purchase a second one) and as always, the creative staff team are looking at going bigger and better!

What I loved was how the team described listening to the children's feedback, targeting groups of children who maybe hadn't had their needs met and asking them what they could do to improve on what was already provided.

The new OPAL information board has been added outside the Busy Bee Room and is a great way to show what's going on and to keep children on track of who are the current 'Golden Welly' holders. This is a whole class award that is presented weekly for excellent tidying, attitude and creative play.

Well done to everyone involved in making SJB school such an excellent example of how OPAL can enrich our children's time in school!

