

# CROSBY RAVENSWORTH C of E (Aided) SCHOOL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Crosby Ravensworth, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 3JJ

School telephone: 01931 715265

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## FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING 25 January 2017, Crosby Ravensworth School

### MINUTES

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Rev Stewart Fyfe	Foundation Governor, ex officio (Vice Chair)	SF
	Duncan Priestley	Staff Governor, ex officio (Headteacher)	DP
	Sarah Rogers	Foundation Governor	SR
	Becky Day	Foundation Governor	BD
	Susan Pattinson	Staff Governor	SP
	John Paul Turnbull	Parent Governor	JPT

#### OTHERS ATTENDING:

Chloe Randall	Clerk to the Governors	CR
Shirley Austin (Observer – Chair of Governors at Morland School)		SA
Liz Lindwall (Observer – prospective Governor)		LL

<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	Marion Rucker	Parent Governor	MR
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#### 1 PRAYERS

Stewart Fyfe thanked the Heavenly Father for the school, the children and the staff. He thanked Him for the services of Helen Gill as Chair, and asked God to heal her quickly and restore her to good health. He said that some might feel this is a worrying time, and asked God to give all present the wisdom, understanding and energy to give of their best.

#### 2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

##### 2.1 **APOLOGIES; RESIGNATIONS; INTRODUCTIONS:**

**Apologies** had been received from Marion Rucker.

**Resignation:** SF explained that Helen Gill had had to submit her resignation as both Governor and Chair of the Board for health reasons. He said that Helen had been a superb chair and the board was really going to miss her. She had courageously taken over the role at a very difficult time for the board and the school, a time of massive change. During her chairship she had revolutionised the board and led it with real distinction, resulting in very good Ofsted and SIAMS reports. The difference between when she came to the role and when she left it is outstanding. SF proposed a formal vote of thanks to Helen, which was immediately seconded by DP and unanimously adopted. SR passed around a card for members to sign, and explained her arrangements for a small presentation to Helen.

##### **Introductions:**

Liz Lindwall had been invited to the meeting to observe proceedings, as she had expressed interest in becoming a Governor. LL explained that she had been living in the area for two and a half years following her marriage, having moved from Lancashire. Her background was in education, and she had previously been a school governor. She has also been helping with the children's reading at Crosby Ravensworth, and very much appreciated what the school was doing.

Shirley Austin is Chair of the Governing Body at Morland School, where she has lived for forty years, and also has a background in education as a former Head of Science. She had been invited to the meeting to see if she could help to ease someone into the role of chair. She explained that she had found it to be a very enjoyable, and was very happy to share her experiences. DP said that he would welcome any creative suggestions for ways forward, and SF commented that he did not think that there would be any conflict of interest between Morland and Crosby Ravensworth – citing his own roles in both schools as an example. SA said that she felt villages thrived from having their own village school, and they shared common problems.

SF explained that both observers were very welcome to contribute to the meeting, but that of course they would not be able to vote.

- 2.2 **THE ROLE OF CHAIR:** SF explained that in accordance with the advice received from Sue Leigh (SL), Governor Services, Cumbria County Council, all eligible governors had been invited to nominate themselves for the role, but none had felt able to put themselves forward.

SF said that there were various ways the board could approach the replacement of the chair:

- by recruiting an existing member
- bringing someone straight in to the role of chair
- looking at a shared arrangement with another school
- the possibility of looking at academisation (in which the school might become part of a multi-academy group, with central control and some devolved local “governance”)

and these were discussed in turn.

2.2.1 **Recruiting an existing member:**

Whilst SF said that he was not entirely comfortable with SL’s idea of inviting governors to explain their reasons for not being able to take the role, DP thought that it was important for the board to demonstrate that they had thoroughly explored the issue. Accordingly, each of the eligible governors was invited to explain their position:

- SF said that, as he had explained when taking the Vice Chair role, he was simply too busy to take on any more responsibilities. He is a member of the General Synod, the Diocesan Synod, holds the role of Rural Dean, is a Governor at Morland, and after Easter would be moving from six parishes to ten. Whilst he would like to take on the role, he simply cannot
- JPT said he really could not give the extra time. He prioritises family and work before school governorship, and these take plenty of his time
- SR said that she was unable to do the role justice due to her increased working commitments and her husband working shifts too and unsociable hours. In addition her daughter is not a good sleeper, meaning she is only getting four or five hours sleep a night
- BD said she was a single parent with two children, and worked full time, and already felt guilty because she did not spend more time with them. She was taking on more responsibility at work and having to travel more, so could not justify taking an extra board role

SF said that he felt it helped enormously to hear each other's stories, and he recognised that everyone was under considerable pressure as modern life is incredibly busy. DP pointed out that the majority of governors were working parents of young children, and that this was a very significant factor. LL commented that she was already feeling guilty, as everyone seemed so much busier than she was!

It was said at this point, and endorsed at several other stages, that no-one should feel guilty about not stepping forward, and no-one should feel blackmailed into taking on more than they could manage. SF said that it was universally recognised that all governors were volunteers, and gave willingly and freely of their time, and the school benefited enormously from their existing tremendous and selfless input.

**2.2.2 Bringing someone in directly to the role of chair:**

Various potential candidates were discussed with the individuals identified undertaking to 'sound them out':

- David Evans, chair at Clifton who had been an associate governor for Crosby Ravensworth last year but had had to withdraw to resolve issues at Clifton (DP)
- Julie Scott, with relevant background, but thought to be currently heavily committed to a family member with serious health problems (SR)
- an unnamed member of the community with relevant experience who might be interested (SA)

**2.2.3 Looking at a shared arrangement with another school:**

SA commented that there are other ways of grouping schools currently under discussion (see 2.2.4 below), such as federations which might share jobs between heads and look at creative ways of manage the number of meetings. She said she did not think it would help if she came in to help, but she would be happy to work with the board to share the burden.

**2.2.4 Academisation:**

SF asked if it was worth revisiting the academisation route? DP said it should not be off the agenda, and BD mentioned that an academy school in South Lakes had just been rated outstanding by Ofsted, and it might be worth contacting them to learn from their experience. DP said that he had made a list of schools in Cumbria with a roll of 35 or less, and of the seventeen identified, only one was an academy – which he would contact.

SF asked if it was Diocesan policy for all schools to go through the Diocese for academisation, and SA thought that it was not, although some control would be retained. DP felt that the biggest difficulty would be finding the right mix of schools, and SF commented that he would be unhappy for the school to be the only church school in a group. Ideally it would be a mixed group, within an academy that understands small schools.

SA mentioned that the matter had been discussed at the Eden Rural Alliance and that although it was felt that forced academisation was on the back burner, finances will probably force something on to rural schools. Free schools might also be an issue. The next meeting of the Eden Rural Alliance is at Morland School, Monday, 6 March, 1900 hours, and it was thought that someone from the board should attend. BD volunteered and was thanked by SF.

**2.2.5 The immediate future:**

The question of how long the board could continue to operate without a chair was raised. CR said that Sue Leigh had advised that it would be reasonable to continue for one meeting with the Vice Chair acting, but that further advice would need to be sought. (It was suggested that Governor Services might be happier with further meetings chaired by the Vice than with no meetings at all....)

DP said that he felt the board was in a far better place than it had ever been in during his time at the school. His predecessor had left after twenty-one years taking his skill set away with him; the clerk had stepped down shortly afterwards, and he likened the policy system to a box of ropes in knots. The board had subsequently made a lot of progress with a very active chair; a new clerk, and then Helen Gill came in with Ofsted and SIAMS due when the management issues were three quarters of the way to being sorting out. Really hard work to finish the issues had resulted in a good Ofsted and SIAMS, and the board was now on an even keel.

SF asked SA to explain why she found the role to be a good one. She said that she realised that she would have been a much better teacher if she known then what she knew now. She loved seeing how things work, and with past teaching experience she can tell when something needs a lot of time spent on it, or whether it can be left. The difficulty of the role when you are working is that the teachers are not in school in the evening. It is actually easier to be a chair, as the information comes directly to you, and its gets easier. SA said she could not see any reason why there should not be a shared chairship, with maybe one person running meetings; someone else doing paperwork.

DP was asked to explain what the role of chair was likely to involve in the foreseeable future, and the following list was generated:

- Ofsted and SIAMS inspections had taken place last year, so are not critical issues
- contact with the Local Authority was minimal, predominantly via e-mails
- the policy process was running well under the clerk's management
- on a day to day basis, DP had found the weekly (usually) thirty to forty minute meeting with Helen extremely useful and practical – as a sounding board; as a conduit for information to and from parents; highlighting matters he may have missed – basically “support and challenge” on a practical level which had played a valuable role in helping him to get things right. He commented that although Helen's education background had been useful, he would appreciate talking to a “lay” person too
- the chair's role as a member of both committee meetings to provide continuity
- the figure head role, as the main contact for the board

A number of creative ways to fulfil these needs were discussed, including a “rolling chair;” holding all meetings on the same day; making greater use of monitoring visits to ensure that the “challenge” to the Headteacher was maintained. The conclusion was that most aspects of the role could be met temporarily by the following contributions from governors:

- SF said that he could offer to come in half an hour before his regular assemblies to have a chat with DP (but he said he did not always have his ear to the ground in the community in the way that Helen did)
- SR said that she was at the school gate at least twice a week and could help with the conduit role

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- SA pointed out that monitoring visits should be seen as challenges to check that systems are in place, and it was recognised that more emphasis could be placed on the structure of this programme (which had slipped a little due to the limited number of governors available). SA said that they had put a lot of emphasis on this at Morland and would be happy to share this; also to look at the possibility of comparing practices between the two schools
- the “figurehead” role would rest with SF as Vice Chair
- that DP as Headteacher was also on both committees, so continuity was to a large extent protected

SF said that as the board was clear that the role could not immediately be filled, a good basis for proceeding in the short term had been identified, which should reassure Governor Services that the board was being proactive.

<b>ACTIONS:</b>	Contact the various persons identified as potentially able to step into the chair role	<b>DP,SR,SA</b>
	Explore further the possibilities of academisation as a solution	<b>DP, BD</b>
	Discuss the situation with Governor Services and seek advice	<b>CR</b>
	Implement the interim arrangements as above	<b>All</b>

- 2.3 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 28 SEPTEMBER 2016:** the minutes had been circulated by e-mail; several comments had been incorporated, and they were ratified by the meeting.
- 2.4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** governors were invited to declare any new interests or interests pertinent to the matters on the agenda, but had nothing to declare.
- 2.5 **MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE:** DP reported on his action with the nursery, who confirmed correspondence over a thank-you had previously been sent and received.
- 2.6 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**
- 2.6.1 **RESOURCES COMMITTEE:** the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2017 had been circulated prior to the meeting. JPT explained that overall budget management is good, and income from the Trustees will be with the school very soon.

School dinner costs have turned out to be higher than originally thought, and the analysis of providing the service in-house will need to be revisited (the original analysis was based on the contract price for a minimum of thirty pupils at a cost of £2.60). JPT said that bringing the service in-house would involve capital investment in equipment, but the Trustees have previously stated that they are willing to invest in capital equipment so this may be an option. The biggest issues would be the additional management burden on the Headteacher; and the need to ensure that quality food could be provided on a sustainable basis.

A further paragraph recording discussions of a sensitive nature has been removed to the confidential section of the minutes.

- 2.6.2 **PUPIL PROGRESS COMMITTEE:** the minutes of the meeting of 11 January had been circulated prior to the meeting. SF said that the committee had agreed to challenge the head at this meeting on the following point:

**Curriculum Focus:** maths had previously been identified as a subject needing special focus, and was now the school's strongest point. Reading had been identified last year (although not because it was seen as a weakness). DP said that there are no obvious weaker suits, but he thought it would be logical to look at Writing as the next target (with Moderation due in KS2 this year). SR asked whether the school would be entering the 500 words competition promoted by Radio 2. DP confirmed the school entered numerous competitions, eg, Rotary Young Writer, and had to be careful not to enter everything around, but they would be looking at this one.

SF said that the effect that the Curriculum Focus had had on maths had been dramatic, so he suggested that the board should confirm the teachers' recommendation for Writing. He felt that this was not technically a challenge, as there was no particular weakness identified, but that benefits would be significant.

**Safeguarding:** it had been identified that SR should be on the Pupil Progress Committee, as she is the Link Governor for this subject. (For discussion of the annual audit, please see paragraph 4.3.6.)

**Special Educational Needs Policy:** there is some confusion over the review date for this policy, and the Clerk was asked to find out if it could be reviewed every three years rather than annually.

<b>ACTION:</b>	Clerk to check statutory review date for SEN Policy (Checked, and confirmed it requires annual review. CR)	<b>CR</b>
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SF complimented BD on her first minutes as Chair of the Pupil Progress Committee.

### **3 MAIN BUSINESS**

#### **3.1 HEADTEACHER'S REPORT**

SF requested that discussion should be restricted to challenges on progress and achievement. BD said that she felt that this had been thoroughly tackled at the Pupil Progress Meeting, and she felt confident that challenges were being met.

SF asked DP why he had not made predictions for academic achievement by the end of the year, and DP responded by circulating a paper giving details. He said these were very ambitious targets, but that he felt it was appropriate to have something to strive towards. He said the predictions were not impossible, but made the point that they were ambitious. SF queried the progress of Child 19 in Year 6, and was referred to the details provided in the Pupil Progress Committee, where the situation had been discussed in depth.

DP gave a demonstration of the on-line music resource “Charanga” introduced to the school by Sarah Barkway from Cumbria Music Hub, and said that the children were loving it (and, apparently, so was he!). He also explained that the children were participating in U-Dance at The Sands Centre, Carlisle, and BD mentioned that she had seen the practice sessions on the school’s new Facebook page. Arrangements were made for BD to provide a governor visit to inspect this area of the curriculum.

DP said that his action point from the last meeting to set up a Facebook account was being carried out by Louisa Raeburn, who had extensive marketing expertise, and that the Facebook page was gathering momentum. It was also noted that Diabetes UK were anxious to promote the school’s recent award for Good Diabetes Care, all of which would help to promote a positive image of the school.

DP was also pleased to report that clawback of the High Needs Funding budget would not happen, due to the actions of the Schools Forum.

DP also drew the board’s attention to the need for maintenance of the school hedge, and David Corrie’s creative proposal for starting work with the aid of the children. The safety of the hedge had been commented on during Kym Allen’s recent Health and Safety visit, and JPT commented that the proposal seemed to be very good value for money. The possibility of seeking advice from Chris Turner of Natural England who runs courses to train farmers in hedge laying was also discussed. DP was asked to compare options and proceed along the route he considered best.

**3.2 FUTURE OF THE SCHOOL - FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS’ MEETING:** DP showed the board the presentation he had given to the parents, demonstrating the need for significant financial assistance. He said that although he was comfortable with the idea of whole-school-teaching on one afternoon per week, he would be unhappy if it increased to two afternoons, and deeply concerned if it came to three. JPT commented that he liked the idea of the activities suggested for the current Friday afternoon whole-school teaching, but he and all present concurred with the view that to extend this further would be deeply disturbing.

DP explained that the “will of the parents’ meeting” had been:

- for parents to pay the going rate for school dinners
- wrap around care is a priority the parents want, even if it loses money initially, and Katie Taylor is available to start this as soon as possible
- “Friends of the School” will be re-branded and proceeds of fundraising will be targeted at supporting school budget shortages rather than *ad hoc* purchases and funding for school trips

Discussion ensued over the change in direction of the Friends’ funding. DP said that although they had had excellent support from Friends in the past, he thought there would be ways and means to fill the gaps left. SR commented that all concerned would need to work to provide for these things, and SF mentioned that the church

were happy to try to help with getting community-wide fund raising. DP said he thought the school needed half a dozen “blue ribbon” events raising about £1,000 each, such as the proposed mountain-biking event, and shifting the school fair to the green at Maulds Meaburn to encourage wider involvement.

JPT commented that the situation is not drastic yet, but that people needed to start thinking and acting for the future. The Friends currently have some £8,000 in their account, and the timing of transfers to the school needs careful planning to avoid any clawback situation.

DP said his next step was to have a meeting with the Friends Committee to action these changes, and would appreciate the presence of some Governors. BD said she was already part of Friends and would come; JPT said he could attend if the meeting was outside office hours. BD mentioned that Friends may need to look at their constitution.

<b>ACTION:</b>	DP to arrange meeting with BD and JPT available	<b>DP</b>
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SF said he would like to record a vote of thanks to DP for identifying and grasping the nettle, and to JPT for looking ahead in such an imaginative way. He said that the school was extremely fortunate to have a Headteacher as committed as DP, with what has come to be seen as an old-fashioned vocation. SF also said that he was concerned that this would put a lot of pressure on DP, and whilst he wanted him to go for it as it is the school’s best hope, the board would need to know early if it is proving too much for him. DP thanked him for this.

**3.3 SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** to be forwarded in due course.

**3.4 GOVERNORS’ OBJECTIVES AND VISITS:** it was recognised that the visits programme had lost some momentum due to the low numbers of governors, but the board were anxious to see this situation improve with new governors being appointed in the near future. The need for a Music visit was noted (SR commenting that she would like to do this, but unfortunately the subject was always taught when she was working) and BD offering to do Drama this term. SP asked why the subject had been put forward for a visit, when Drama was not specifically taught, and DP said it was part of several other subjects. BD said she was prepared to visit for any subject.

<b>ACTIONS:</b>	SA to share Morland’s experiences of monitoring visits with DP with a view to developing a programme for the enhanced board	<b>DP</b>
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**3.5 POLICY REVIEWS/CREATION:** the following revised policies had been circulated prior to the meeting and were accepted:

- .1 Charging and Remissions
- .2 School Financial Value Standard
- .3 Policy for the Act of Collective Worship
- .4 Religious Education Policy



**.5 Child Protection Policy**

JPT commented that there had only been minor changes to the first two policies and that David Nattrass would need to upload the signed School Financial Value Standard to the school portal.

SF mentioned that Collective Worship and Religious Education Policy have been significantly updated following SIAMS, and DP commented that Christian Values were now at the head of RE.

**4 STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES AND GOVERNING BODY MATTERS**

- 4.1 **STATUS OF GOVERNING BODY:** the composition of the board was discussed and LL's commitment to becoming a governor was welcomed with open arms. She passed her nomination form to SF; as did SR with her re-nomination form. DP said that a further candidate had committed (Debbie McCall) and that Neil Cruickshank's partner, Debbie Esterhuizen, had also indicated her willingness to nominate herself when Neil finished working away from home, probably by the end of this term. This recruitment drive, together with JPT's willingness to stand for re-election as a Parent Governor, would restore the board to ten members.

A brief discussion ensued over how many Foundation Governors had to be parents of children at the school at the time of their appointment. SA said she thought that the current requirement said "some." Subsequently the following paragraph was found in a Church of England document entitled "Importance of Foundation Governors:"

*"Some of the foundation governors must be parents of pupils at the school at the time they are nominated, and the Instrument of Government should be clear on who is responsible for ensuring that the nominees are parents."*

The Instrument of Governance does not state who is responsible, but happily two of our existing Foundation Governors are parents of children at the school.

- 4.2 **GOVERNORS' RAPID ACTION PLAN:** to be brought forward in due course (it is currently still with the recently-resigned Chair).

4.3 **LINK GOVERNOR UPDATES:**

- .1 **Church:** SF commented by reporting that his assemblies this term were concentrating on Christian Values, with the end of term assembly celebrating Easter
- .2 **Governor training and induction:** SR said that she would get dates for induction training for the new governors. DP also asked if a Governor Induction Pack could be kept at the school in case the opportunity to hand it out arose
- .3 **Special Educational Needs and Disability:** in Helen's absence, there was no report. LL volunteered for the role with her background in SEN, and also offered to join the Pupil Progress Committee
- .4 **Nursery:** the letter from the Nursery Manager was welcomed, as were the minutes. SR said that the Nursery Manager had confirmed that three new starters had now

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definitely signed up, which was very good news and will help to secure the future of the Nursery

.5 **Health and Safety:** MR's report was noted with thanks

.6 **Safeguarding:** SR said that she and DP had completed the annual audit. She explained that the format had changed this year and it was practically a tick-box exercise, with only one opportunity for comment under the heading "good practice to be shared." They confirmed that all boxes were 'fully met.'

Regarding the Child Protection Policy to be ratified at tonight's meeting, SR drew the Governors' attention to the amendment within it to the document entitled 'Keeping Children Safe in Education.' The existing policy refers to the April 2014 guidance whereas it was updated in September of last year. The revised policy now refers to that updated guidance. SR explained that governors need to read Part 1 of that document and that she would forward this to everyone.

<b>ACTION:</b>	SR to circulate Part 1 of the document to all Governors	<b>Sr</b>
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SR also explained that the Local Authority had recently been in touch reminding us about private fostering arrangements and that whilst not applicable in our school, nonetheless they had to be referred to within our CP policy. SR confirmed that she had checked the policy and such arrangements are specifically referred to within paragraph 13.6.

4.4 **GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER:** JPT was listed on the schedule to produce this term's newsletter, and SR undertook to send the format to him.

4.5 **BRAINSTORMING:**

**Social media:** SF asked whether the school had a Twitter account, and DP explained that Louisa Raeburn was now turning her enthusiasm towards Twitter. Some discussion ensued over the relevance of Twitter or Instagram to the target parent generation. SP asked if there was a need for some kind of insurance for the use of Instagram (drawing from comments made in another forum), and BD asked about Child Protection issues. DP said he thought that all use of social media would follow the precedent set by the website, where names did not appear alongside images, and that he thought a policy was required rather than insurance. SP was asked to consult with Kym Allan on the question.

<b>ACTION:</b>	SP to ask Kym Allan about the safe use of social media	<b>SP</b>
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**"Pop in and Play:"** SP handed out laminated notices to all present for display within the school catchment area and at places such as surgeries which served the catchment area. It was pointed out that as the Nursery takes children from two years old, a different service was being offered to that supplied by Shap Nursery, and that this might be a reason to display suitable endorsed notices in Shap itself.

<b>ACTION:</b>	DP to ask Shap School if this was could cause them any concern	<b>DP</b>
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**Lyvennet Link:** SR suggested that the school should put something in Link on a regular basis. DP wondered if Link readers should be asked to like the school Facebook page? This led to a brief discussion about whether Facebook was meant to be just for parents or for a wider audience? SF, SR, JPT and BD all said that they thought it should be the latter.

## **5 REVIEW OF MEETING**

5.1 **MEETING REVIEW:** SF said that he was pleased with the way the meeting had gone – there had been a lot to cover and we had managed to achieve it all. There was a general consensus that it had been a very productive meeting, and SA was particularly thanked for her very useful contributions.

### **5.2 ANY OTHER BUSINESS / ITEMS FOR AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:**

None.....

### **5.3 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS:**

Resources Committee	1830, Wednesday, 26 April 2017
Pupil Progress Committee	1830, Wednesday, 3 May 2017
<b>FULL BOARD</b>	<b>1830, Wednesday, 10 May 2017</b>

### **Ratified by:**

- DP: 27 and 30 January: moving of some matters to the confidential minutes; correction of the Governors allocated to various tasks; amendment of a typo (spell check apparently has no religious principles....)
- BD: 31 January: they look very good to me. I found out about the school which has been academised and has the Outstanding Ofsted report, it is Arnside Primary School, but interestingly they received their rating before they became an academy, as far as I can see! The information did come from a Daily Mail article about the Headmaster punching his ex wife's lover, so I am not sure I would vouch for its accuracy. I don't know when they are due for inspection again presumably if there were any concerns then they would have been inspected by now, as the last one was 2007. I will mention it to Duncan and see if it is worth speaking to Arnside or not.
- JPT: 1 February: amendments to paragraphs 2.6 (greater clarity of the Trustees potential input to capital investment in school kitchen) and 3.2 (current funds in Friends account)
- SP: 1 February: great stuff, thanks!
- SR: 1 February: amendments to paras 1, 2.2.1, 2.2.5, 2.6.2 and 4.3 point 6; subsequent further clarification over Safe-guarding annual audit