

# **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**

**Wednesday 7 February 2024 at 3.45pm CRVH**

### **Present:**

Barbara Wallis	(Chair)	(BW)	Foundation Governor
George Griffiths	(Vice-Chair)	(GG)	Foundation Governor
Duncan Priestley	-	(DP)	Headteacher, ex officio
Susan Pattinson	-	(SP)	Staff Governor
Tom Cripps	-	(TC)	Foundation Governor
Sylvia Evans	-	(SE)	Foundation Governor
Naomi Callaghan	-	(NC)	Parent Governor
Neil Hughes	-	(SE)	Local Authority Governor
Christena Pelmore		(CP)	Associate Member

### **Others attending:**

Andrew Clement	(Clerk)	(AC)	
Alex Barbour		(AB)	Church Representative
Jane Corrie		(JC)	Teacher

### **Apologies:**

Anna Lea	-	(AL)	Foundation Governor
Stephen Tudway	-	(ST)	Foundation Governor, ex officio
Karen Winder	-	(KW)	Parent Governor

## **1. PRAYERS**

### **1.1 Prayer**

AB offered a prayer.

1.2 Six Year 6 pupils gave a presentation highlighting their own thoughts about what the new School Vision Statement meant to them. The presentation was excellent and will be put on the school website (Action: DP). BW thanked the pupils for their input and congratulated them on their confident and interesting presentation. AB, who had been invited for this section, left the meeting.

## **2. PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

### **2.1 Apologies:**

Anna Lea and Karen Winder sent their apologies. Stephen Tudway also sent his apologies as he was unwell and unable to attend.

### **2.2 Minutes of meetings:**

Governors accepted the minutes from:  
Full Governing Board 11 October 2023.

### **2.3 Declarations of interests:**

There were none.

**2.4 Matters arising (not included elsewhere on the agenda):**

BW reminded Governors of their responsibilities for confidentiality. In particular, she reminded them that any discussion relating to possible recruitment should be considered to be strictly confidential.

Item 3.7 a report from JC regarding Rocket Phonics was moved forward to allow JC to report to Governors and then leave.

**3.7 Rocket Phonics:**

JC reminded the Governors that the School recognised the need to comply with a government-approved phonics scheme in summer 2022. It was decided to opt for Rocket Phonics, which was implemented from April 2023.

JC explained that the Rocket Phonics Scheme involved reading books and workbooks. JC stated that the reading books were excellent and that the pupils really enjoyed working through their own workbooks. Each day new word sounds were introduced to the pupils and the pupils would all be expected to write. JC confirmed that the pupils soon became used to the new system. They now worked independently as they knew what was expected from them

JC also confirmed that an Online Platform would soon be introduced to parents to allow for work to be continued at home. It was reported that the pupils would work through weekly sounds from an appropriate book but easier books would be provided if the pupil was struggling. Assessment is built in to the scheme as pupils can be assessed as Working Towards or Expected. There is no provision for Exceeding Expectations. JC also pointed out that the pupils did not move on until it was clear they fully understood what was required. JC confirmed that the assessments were a useful tool for assisting in planning and extra help was made available if the assessment indicated it was required.

GG said that she had observed the amazing progress made by the pupils when she did a monitoring visit in November. JC supported this by confirming that writing was much improved since the scheme was introduced. NH questioned if the lack of a grading for Exceeding Expectations was detrimental to progress. JC said that, as the grading was not discussed with pupils, it made no difference to a pupils' achievements.

JC added that the Rocket Phonics Scheme was easy to follow and this meant that supply or cover teachers could easily pick up what is required. There is a minimum of preparation required but this was mainly due to the efforts in setting up the scheme at the outset.

BW thanked JC for her report and JC left the meeting.

**2.4.1 Incident Report - safeguarding**

SE asked DP why there had been two incidents reported in his headteacher's report but she had only been made aware of one. DP confirmed that a second incident had been dealt with and it was only a minor issue.

## **2.5 Committee Reports:**

### **2.5.1 Resources Committee – 19 January 2024:**

TC confirmed that the SFVS, used to prove good financial governance, needed to be signed by BW and sent off to the LA. It was reported that all were happy with the SFVS.

TC reported that small changes had been made to the Charges and Remissions Policy. A note had been added to confirm that if there were any issues that required Governors to be informed, this would be done but not within 3 months.

TP noted that the budget had a built-in underspend. He said that it was important that care should be taken to ensure that any underspend did not exceed the permitted levels to prevent unused funds being returned to the LA. (Since this meeting, permitted underspend for the 2023/4 financial year has been raised by the LA to 10%, and it's been clarified by the LA that specific spending in certain areas can be carried over if approved by the LA and clearly minuted at a governors' meeting - BW

TC reported that the possibility of buying a school mini-bus and some possible new building work had been discussed at the Resources Meeting but that these issues would both be discussed later in this meeting.

BW confirmed that some of the School's income was not showing on figures as it had not been received from the LA. This included money from Parent Pay and had left the budget seemingly short of about £11,000. NH, Local Authority Governor, confirmed that he was aware that funding had been agreed but it was taking time to get funds allocated to schools.

DP relayed some information from PC relating to this issue. The following is a report from PC.

*This budget year has been very difficult to monitor this year, mainly due to the change in Councils.*

- We did not receive our monthly budget reports until period 4 (20<sup>th</sup> August).*
- Receiving our income this year is still a big issue. We are missing income from September '23. I have spoken to the finance team on numerous occasions and there is still no decision as to when we will receive our income. I have produced time sheets for the finance team hoping that this will help them reconcile our income. They are very short staffed and unfortunately Westmorland and Furness are in a worse state than Cumberland. We are owed about 11 and a half thousand pounds from my records. There could be more, that I am unaware of as yet.*
- We have had no big plans this year for expenditure. There have been no requests of spends turned down.*
- Within the last 3 months DP has expressed an interest in purchasing a mini bus for the school. This decision has become more feasible with monies still to spend in our budget and also the use of our Sports budget. The decision needs to be authorised by the Governing Body for us to go ahead.*

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TC questioned if the Council would be able to “claw back” monies not spent because they had been responsible for delays in these funds being available. It was thought this would be hard for them to do but nobody had a definitive answer.

### **AOB:**

DP asked to add an extra item to be noted. He had attended a Conference for Small School Leaders and he has been asked to lead a project to improve the curriculum in small schools in Westmorland. DP confirmed that this would result in a £5,000 grant being awarded to the School to be spent on designing and running a conference in 2024-25. This grant is provided through Grant Aid for the Learning Improvement Service.

### **3.8 Full Board Policies to ratify:**

There were none.

## **4. MAIN BUSINESS**

### **4.1 Questions arising from Head Teacher’s Report:**

DP reported that the School Facebook page was an excellent source of information about what was going on in School. He mentioned “stuffed animals” which was a reference to the huge response the School had received when Class 1 parents were asked if they might be able to bring in a stuffed animal. The pictures on Facebook show the response. DP confirmed that you do not need a Facebook account to access this information. DP also mentioned that the Weekly Bulletin was also a good way to keep up to date with events. GG asked how she could be added to the mailing list and she was asked to contact PC to arrange this.

NH questioned if the word “Solitude” in the Diocese definition of spirituality was appropriate.

*Spirituality is by its very nature difficult to put into words. It is very personal and there is no one agreed definition. However, many people would define it as essentially about recognising something other or bigger than ourselves and how we relate to that. This can be seen in an endless variety of ways... for some it might be through the arts for others through solitude, in nature or through their faith position.*

NH felt that solitude for many was enforced and he had become aware of the difficulties people find in solitude, especially in remote rural communities. DP confirmed that the reference in the definition did not refer to enforced solitude but rather some people choose solitude as an option to explore spirituality. It was considered that adding the word “chosen” before solitude may well clarify the meaning. DP reported that an expanded version of this definition is available.

DP reported that a new initiative every Friday was to set a Thinking Question for the school, under the umbrella title of ‘Spirituality...a place to be’; the first one was ‘I close my eyes in order to see – what does that mean to you?’; The thinking point will be put in the weekly Friday bulletin and discussed by the whole school the following week.

SP commented on the problem that had occurred recently in that a good number of pupils had been poorly during the week of swimming lessons. This had resulted in pupils missing their only chance of swimming in this school year. She questioned if more swimming lessons should be provided. DP

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confirmed that along with JC, it could be arranged to use Sports Funding to pay for extra swimming lessons for some pupils but this would not be during school time.

BW thanked CP for taking on the role of link Governor for Health & Safety. DP confirmed that on 17 June 2024 Kym Allan would be visiting school to complete the Health and Safety Audit.

DP mentioned some examples of the dedication that staff show for their school. He commented on how we are fortunate to have such commitment from our team:

*In January, Pauline and her husband Dik Cleasby voluntarily visited the school on a number of occasions at evenings and weekends in order to diagnose errors and re-programme the school boiler. The system had been failing to turn off beyond programmed hours: despite calling the maintenance company for urgent support, none was forthcoming. Through Dik's expertise, the system has been successfully reset and is saving the school from wasting large quantities of heating oil each day. Dik has also recommended a particular heating engineer in Carlisle who we will be contacting to review the setup of the system including the positioning of thermostats across the school.*

*Owing to a powercut to the village on January 22nd, following discussion with Chair of Governors and our H&S advisor Kym Allan, the school premises was closed for the day. On January 23rd, power was still unavailable in school, but had returned to most of the village. Following discussion with our H&S advisor, the school re-opened in Crosby Ravensworth Village Hall. This was made possible thanks to Freda Smith, our highly valued school cook. Freda refused to take any payment for our use of the facilities and made bespoke hot soup lunches using her own kitchen for children without packed lunches.*

*Sharon Thwaites, a school parent, has been our school cleaner (employed by Orian) for some weeks now. She's proven to be very hardworking, reliable and effective in the role. Earlier this week, she discovered evidence of mouse infestation in class 1. An experienced farm manager, Sharon was determined to get on top of the situation and asked permission to lay traps at night and come in early the next morning to clear them to ensure a safe environment. This is over and above what her job description entails and shows great dedication.\**

*\*The school has contacted three pest control companies and is currently waiting for replies. We intend to take professional opinion to ensure our school environment is pest free.*

DP told those present that in November he had met with an HMI Ofsted Inspector who was meeting with Headteachers of schools with less than 50 pupils so Ofsted could get a better insight into the curriculum challenges faced by those running such small schools. It was hoped that Ofsted could improve their understanding of small schools during inspections by looking at the difficulties in teaching mixed age groups in a single class, for example. It was noted that the usual format for schools is to have same age classes. DP confirmed that the inspector was very interested, took numerous notes and listened intently. He was drawing a report which he would deliver as training to HMI inspectors across England in December.

BW noted that the flexibility required to teach a mixed age class was a great strength. She also noted that Subject Leadership was a burden because the work required for a subject in a small school matched that of a large school but less staff means the work is shared with fewer members of staff.

#### **4.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Visits:**

BW noted that the report for Computing Observation was not available on the School website. AC agreed to check and add it if required.

ST was to observe History after half-term. SP confirmed that Class 1 would be being taught History on Monday afternoon and Class 2 on Wednesday afternoon. Last half-term Geography was timetabled for these sessions.

BW confirmed that a full cycle of observations had taken place since August 2021. She asked for volunteers for the next cycle. GG volunteered to observe Class 1 Maths in the following half-term and she also confirmed she would keep up to date with phonics by regular visits rather than full observations. Action: BW to circulate a list of subjects and ask for volunteers.

#### **4.3 Policies reviewed by Headteacher for Governing Body to adopt:**

##### **Admissions Arrangements:**

No children had been refused a place in the School in either 2022 or 2023. This would need to be updated by the Clerk and emailed to the LA. All agreed. It was confirmed by CP that the stated number of intake at Reception (in our case 7) was not a limiting number if there was space to accommodate other children wanting places.

##### **Missing Child Procedure:**

TC questioned if a statement in the policy "When a child....." should be replaced with "If a child.....". Everyone present agreed and the changes would be made by the Clerk.

#### **4.4 Policy Review Schedule Update:**

AC agreed to add the Mission Statement to the Policy Review Schedule with a note as to when this was agreed. A further review could be arranged when appropriate. AC also agreed to add the new statement to policies when they were reviewed.

#### **4.5 Minibus:**

DP indicated that he felt it would be a good time to consider buying a minibus for the School. He would investigate if Sports Money could be utilised for part of this as it would allow pupils to be transported to sporting events. Also, as mentioned earlier no major financial projects had been planned in the last financial year and the School had an excess to carry over to next year. Some of this excess could be used but it was also noted that if the permitted excess was exceeded, funds may have to be returned to the LA and it was better for the School to avoid this.

DP had talked to other Heads and he had heard positive arguments for both buying and leasing. One Head had told him that they had bought a 17-seater minibus with a full service, MOT and a 3 month warranty and this had worked very well. Another Head thought that leasing was a good idea too.

DP showed examples of potential minibuses that he could arrange to buy through an agent from auctions. The agent would buy the bus on behalf of the School and ensure the minibus was fully serviced and ensure the bus was guaranteed for a period of time. The auctions provided information regarding the background of the buses and buses could be sourced from companies with a good reputation of maintaining their vehicles. One example of minibuses was for a 2.2 Diesel,

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Peugeot Boxer with 9,000 miles recorded. The guide price for this vehicle was £16,000 to £18,000. Similar vehicles in Autotrader were advertised for up to £27,000.

DP had discussed the possibility of buying a minibus from an auction with a buyer. If the Governors would agree to this purchase, the buyer would need an agreed budget and he may need to act at short notice if an appropriate vehicle came up for sale.

Discussion took place as to where the bus would be kept and any implications for this on the insurance. DP reported that he expected the insurance to be around £600 to £800 per year. He also confirmed that safety check could be arranged for £80. DP suggested that it would be possible to hire out the minibus to local clubs and organisation and use any funds received to subsidise MOT and repair bills. It was not known how hiring the vehicle would affect the insurance costs and this would be considered later.

DP pointed out that a saving of over £3,000, based on recent usage in the financial year to date, could be made by not having to hire buses for school trips. This could be utilised towards running costs. DP finally confirmed that, if things did not work out, the minibus was an asset that could be sold.

CP mentioned that keeping the vehicle in a garage may have significant impact on insurance costs. TC suggested that all the revenue implications need to be gathered and this would allow the Governors to make a well-informed decision. They could agree a maximum amount that they could accept as being a viable option. It was agreed that, if governors agreed, it was important to act quickly to ensure the purchase was made within this present financial year.

It was suggested that quotes from an Insurance Broker, eg Capstick's of Kirkby Stephen, and guide quotes for servicing and MOTs from local mechanics, eg Eden Motors, be obtained. Further costs for annual mileage, training, breakdown cover and for signwriting the vehicle should also be considered. DP agreed to put together a comprehensive list of expected costs and circulate to Governors. An Extraordinary General Meeting, by Teams, could then be arranged to allow the Governors to make a final decision about this matter and notice was given for this

### **4.6 Building Works:**

It had been considered at the recent Resources Committee meeting if building work would be required to allow Year 1 and year 2 to be taught separately from the Pre-school and Reception pupils. A builder had been consulted and advice had been sought from Amanda MacDonald (AM) the LA Early Years Adviser. After meeting with AM, it had been agreed that, at present, the 2 intervention rooms could be used as a teaching space for the 5 Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. No new building was required for at least the 24/5 school year.

### **4.7 Recruitment:**

The board discussed staffing options in the light of increased anticipated Reception and Pre-school numbers. This discussion was confidential.

**4.8 SDP:**

BW noted that the SDP required Governor Comments in areas where they have been allocated responsibility. No one objected to the allocations made. She asked that Governors should send text for the document to her and she would arrange for these to be added.

**4.9 Staff Welfare, Standards and Morale:**

BW confirmed that ST had sent a summary of the recent Staff Welfare and Morale survey and read out the key points. The results and summary would be distributed to staff and be available on the website. 8 out of a possible 11 of the surveys had been completed. The survey indicated a high level of confidence in the School. There was also significant evidence that work was still required to ensure work load did not impact on staff morale. DP confirmed that all decisions now had an element requiring consideration to be taken into the likely impact on Staff Welfare by any new proposals.

**4.10 Headteacher's appraisal (December 2023):**

TC confirmed that the Headteacher's appraisal had been completed successfully and that there no financial implications as a result of this appraisal.

TC noted that David Evans (DE), who has assisted in the Headteacher's Appraisal for a number of years, would no longer be available for any future appraisals. DE has since been warmly thanked for his expert contribution to past appraisals and has been thanked for his assistance.

It was suggested that an LA adviser may well be worth considering. Alternatively, if a retired Headteacher could be found locally, this would be a second option.

BW felt that an LA adviser may well be a good idea, so as to gain some guidance for setting targets for the Early Years teaching. BW agreed to pursue this and make contact with the LA to see if this could be arranged. DE has since the meeting indicated to BW that there would be a cost attached to this option and BW will report back to governors.

**4.11 SIAMS Inspection:**

DP reported that there was no date for a SIAMS inspection. He also noted that the recent work on Spirituality would be seen in a good light in any inspection.

**4.12 Ofsted Inspection:**

The Governors were reminded that examples of questions likely to be put to Governors were available on the website. BW mentioned that a forthcoming Blue Sky Meeting, hopefully to take place in the second half of the Spring Term, would be used as a platform to prepare Governors for an Ofsted Inspection. BW commented that it may not be necessary for DP and SP to attend, although they would always be welcome, as the focus would be on preparation for Governors.



## **5. STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES AND GOVERNING BODY MATTERS:**

### **5.1 Status of the Governing Body and Governor Vacancies:**

BW confirmed that 11 of the 12 Governor positions are filled at present. She felt there was a strong board and there was no requirement for any new Governors at present.

### **5.2 Terms of Reference:**

BW is still working on new Terms of Reference.

### **5.3 Blue Sky Meeting:**

A Blue Sky Meeting would be arranged for the second half of the Spring Term. BW felt there was no requirement for it to be at lunch time as teaching staff would not necessarily be required (this decision was with DP and SP's agreement). This would be arranged to best suit Governors.

### **5.4 Governors' Action Plan:**

BW confirmed that the Governor's Action Plan required updating and would be discussed at the Blue Sky meeting. The fact that there was so much to update was testament to how much had been achieved.

### **5.5 Governor Skills Audit:**

BW reminded Governors that free NGA Training Modules were available and that the opportunity to access these should be considered.

### **5.5 Link Governor updates:**

**Church** – In ST's absence BW said that the school is liaising with AB on dates for church events.

**Health and Safety** – H & S Audit will take place with Kym Allan on 17 June 2024.

**Governor Training and New Governor Induction** – SE confirmed that she had spent time with NC. CP and SE agreed to discuss any requirements CP may have. DP confirmed that Governors were always welcome to visit School and suggested CP came in one day to observe how things worked.

**Special Educational Needs and Disability** - BW confirmed that SEND had been discussed at the Pupil Progress meeting. She noted that HL had forwarded all staff a new Teacher Handbook from Nasen. *Nasen is the National Association for Special Educational Needs. It is a charitable membership organisation that exists to support and champion those working with, and for, children and young people with SEND and learning differences.* It was hoped that lessons plans, inclusion strategies and intervention ideas would be of a benefit to all teachers and especially newly qualified teachers.

**Safeguarding** - SE confirmed that she continues to need to be informed of any Safeguarding issues in School.

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**Online Safety/Personal Social Health Education)** - SE reported that she had attended a course for Online Safety on 6 February 2024. She had found it very useful.

**Filtering and Monitoring** - It was asked that Filtering and Monitoring should be added to future agendas. GG is the Link Governor.

**Reading and Literacy** - GG has been into School to observe and as reported elsewhere has noted the excellent progress made with Phonics.

**Numeracy** - GG will be observing Maths in the following half-term.

**Emotional Resilience** - NC will arrange a meeting with TH, BW and DP. SP commented how well TH's Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) work with pupils is going and DP reiterated how he was very glad this support was available in school. BW pointed out that with the pressure on CAMHS child mental health services, all emotional support is especially desirable.

## **5.7 Governors' newsletter:**

BW agreed to write a Newsletter before Easter, given the upcoming expansion in numbers.

## **5.8 School visits/school trips:**

BW noted that there was an expectation that Governors were updated about School trips as the board 'oversees' them. DP agreed to continue to provide the required information for Governors.

## **6. REVIEW OF MEETING**

Dates for the next meetings:

### **Summer Term 2023-2024**

The following dates were agreed:

<b>Resources Committee</b>	<b>Friday 14 June 2024 10am - Crosby Ravensworth School</b>
<b>Pupil Progress Committee</b>	<b>Tuesday 11 June 2024 3.45pm - Crosby Ravensworth School</b>
<b>Full Governing Board</b>	<b>Wednesday 3 July – 4.00pm - Crosby Ravensworth Village Hall</b>

Note: Resources Meeting is at an earlier time of 10am.

**The meeting closed at 6.26pm.**

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**Signed on behalf of the Governing Body:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Wallis', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Barbara Wallis**

**3 July 2024**