

Welcome – thank you for coming to provide your support and assistance in our plans for the future of our wonderful school



Governors present, any staff, PTA committee members



We work together to nurture an inclusive family of hard-working, respectful individuals who have a lifelong love of learning.

**“Life in all its fullness”  
(John 10:10)**

2017

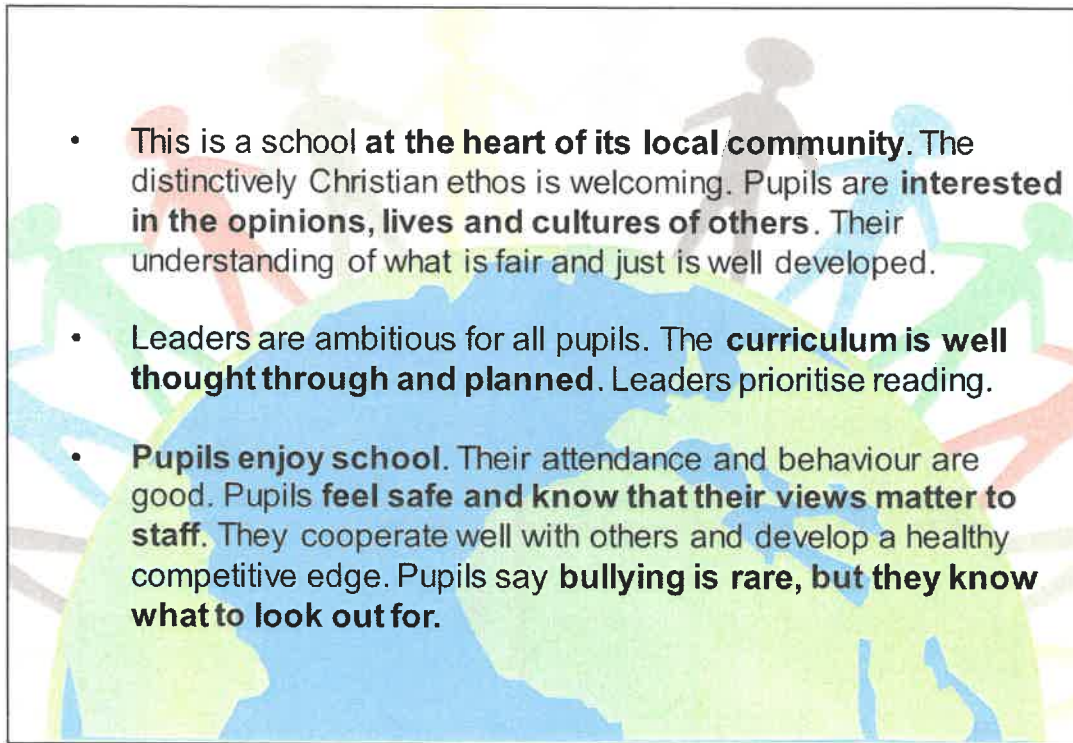
This is what we came up with and have used since. One question for you tonight is whether we still think this encapsulates what we want to achieve for our children.

**R – Respect everyone**  
**E – Encourage each other**  
**S – Speak truthfully**  
**P – Practise, persevere and make progress**  
**E – Embrace mistakes**  
**C – Consider our choices**  
**T – Thrive together as a team**

In practice, our Christian values, expectations re behaviour and attitudes to learning are summarised in our RESPECT acrostic and this is what is referred to consistently throughout school. (Previously there were various acrostics, rules, values etc which were very confusing).

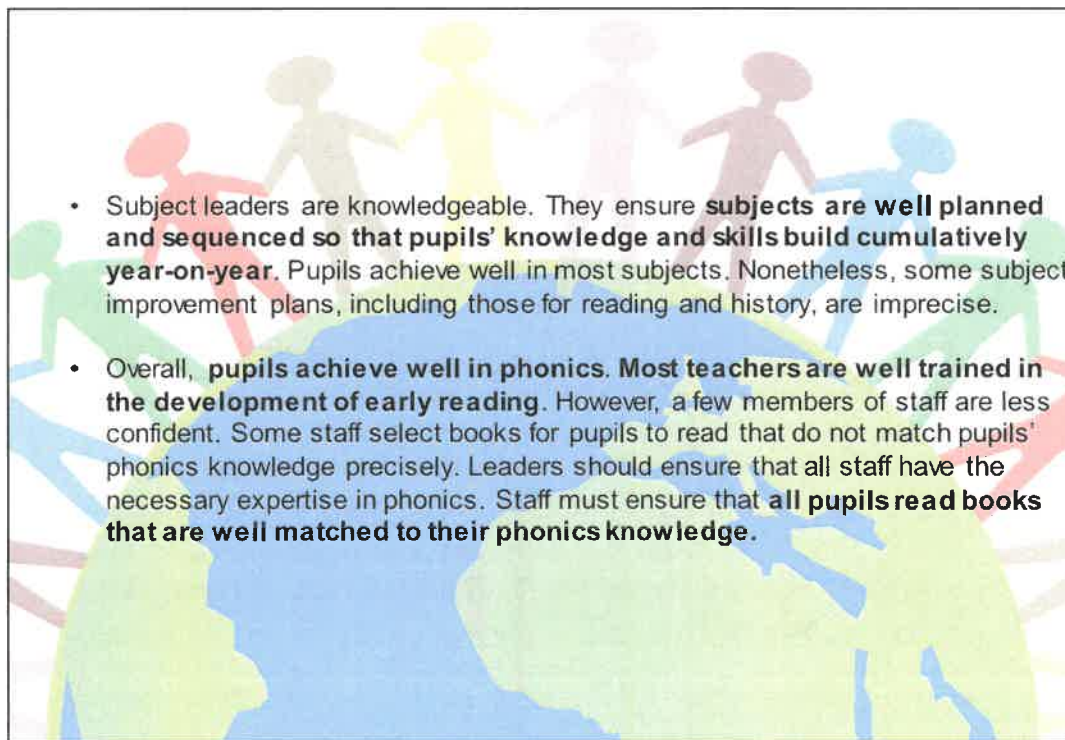


So as you will recall OFSTED came the week after the February half term in 2020. A month later we were in full lockdown, with most children at home.



- This is a school **at the heart of its local community**. The distinctively Christian ethos is welcoming. Pupils are **interested in the opinions, lives and cultures of others**. Their understanding of what is fair and just is well developed.
- Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. The **curriculum is well thought through and planned**. Leaders prioritise reading.
- **Pupils enjoy school**. Their attendance and behaviour are good. Pupils **feel safe and know that their views matter to staff**. They cooperate well with others and develop a healthy competitive edge. Pupils say **bullying is rare, but they know what to look out for**.

These are some of the comments made by the inspectors in their report about what it is like to attend the school.



These are the two main areas identified for improvement. Discussions with the inspectors also provided other areas that we have since focused on – the report is very much a summary.

We had done a huge amount of work in preparation for OFSTED as a new framework had come out in September 2019. This had a major emphasis on curriculum sequencing and development. When OFSTED came a lot had been done but not all the 'i's dotted and 't's crossed. During the pandemic, work on this area has been very difficult for 2 main reasons – the need and desire of teachers to focus on the learning of the children in front of them 110% of the time, and being able to work across year groups has been restricted. We are now just about there, but as always there is more to be done!

During the pandemic we did a lot of work on phonics and our results in the summer were excellent for both phonics and early reading. It is however a key priority of the government and OFSTED and in the last 12 months there have been further developments which we need to keep on top of to ensure that we are delivering phonics as required.





Last year at this time we had thought things would be more normal and then the level and seriousness of COVID went through the roof and we had to put in place additional measures to ensure children's learning could continue with as little disruption as possible. Hard to believe that was just 12 months ago - it seems an age! I am hopeful that this year we will be able to carry out everything we plan.

Coming out of COVID, apart from trying to remember what we used to do, is an opportunity to reassess what we do and why. Some changes we made for COVID we have kept – PE kit on PE days, no lining up before coming in in the mornings, at breaks and lunchtimes. These have proved beneficial.



Moving on to where we are now. Life in many ways is back to normal, although the 'scars' of the pandemic are still there. There is a greater number of children than previously who are showing signs of anxiety, emotional and mental health problems. I am so glad that I took the decision when the EMS was decommissioned to retain Mrs Hull as a Communication and Interaction and pastoral support worker. She is an incredible resource to have and her impact on children is amazing. She is also an incredible support to the staff as her experience of children with SEND is very extensive. We are truly lucky to have her and are very envied by other schools in the vicinity.

There are still many areas where children's learning and attitudes to learning are in a less positive place than they were pre COVID. Despite everything the staff and you did, and it truly was a team effort, the children lost out on learning – and building this back up is taking time, but we are definitely getting there. The impact is not just academic, but also in their social skills, resilience, ability to recall information and to apply it in different contexts. It has made us realise as educators how much embedding of learning and behaviours for learning is done, almost automatically, when children are there in class each day. Various parents have commented how even though the children had done all the work set and provided, it just did not seem to stick. There is no substitute for discussion and continuous revision of all the

basic building blocks that go into a child's learning.

We need to pick up areas from OFSTED that have not been fully addressed over the past couple of years, and there are other areas that we have become aware of or which have increased in priority as well. The key ones are set out in our SIP which I am coming on to, and I also want to share with you some of the other exciting things we have planned.

There are constraints still. We are really struggling to recruit support staff – the rate of pay is very poor – considerably more can be earned in Aldi so it truly is a labour of love. We are down about one and a half posts at the present time. I am also very mindful of our budget. Compared to many schools we are in a good place and can just about sustain the staffing I would like to have. However any pay rises at the moment – including those for teachers are not being funded by the government – they come out of existing school funds. We will benefit from the business energy cap but it by no means covers the total rise and is limited in time so we just don't know!

We also have new challenges concerning the cost of living – which is one of the reasons why I sent out the questionnaire re trips last half term.



This in summary (the document itself covers many other things and runs to 20 pages) is our School Improvement Plan for this year.

The Christian vision of life in all its fullness for everyone underpins everything we do – it runs through how we relate to children, how we expect them to relate to each other and to adults. It provides a lens through which we encourage the children to see their place in the world and how they should treat others in the wider community, be it Embsay, England or the Earth itself.

Coming from the children before, during and since the pandemic, has been their deep concern for the world we live in and that our actions impact not only on the environment but on the lives of many people less fortunate than ourselves. In one sense, all the education and learning children receive is going to be pointless if there is not a world in which they can live. Following discussions with the staff, governors and the children we believe that over the next few years we need to look at everything we do through this lens. How do we operate as a school? What can we do as individuals? What can we do to encourage action by others? How does our curriculum need to change to reflect this? An eco/Saving Creation group has been set up, led by Miss Falkner (we need a catchy name!), several governors are taking a lead role and I hope you agree that this should be a priority for our work.

The second main priority is in essence the need to review how we teach in school. There have been many changes of staff over the last 2 or 3 years, we have not had much time to discuss teaching strategies and what we believe is important for the children here. One area we are looking at in particular is how to build children's ability to retrieve information and to apply it in different contexts – making links between both different curriculum areas and within a subject. Building on some of the specifics we have looked at for phonics, we are also looking at how to reduce processing load for children so that they can focus on the key things they need to learn, rather than having to use some of their working memory to assimilate other information. It is quite technical!

I have mentioned reading and phonics before – we have excellent results, but we need to make sure that we can justify our methods.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing – of children, staff (and parents) is also a key driver for us. More important than any academic achievement is children who are happy and who feel safe in today's world. The level of anxiety and worry is higher than it has ever been and children need to be able to cope with the challenges of the world today – to know who they can talk to, where they can access suitable information and to be able to express what they are feeling. I include parents in my list of people whose emotional health and well-being is important as there are not clear cut boundaries between home and school – it is very much a partnership. What we see in school can be completely different to the child at home and where parents are finding it difficult in any way we are here to help. The last few years have also been very challenging for the staff and part of the leadership role – myself and the governing body – is to look after staff wellbeing. They have and are still giving above and beyond what can reasonably be expected of them and I am so grateful to them.

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**  
**2022 - 23**

**PRIORITIES**

READING & PHONICS

MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

CHRISTIAN VALUES

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

CONSISTENT HIGH QUALITY TEACHING

**Embsay**  
Cat E (VC) Primary School

We work together to nurture an inclusive family of hard-working, respectful individuals who have a lifelong love of learning.

*"Life in all its fullness" (John 10:10)*

Revised version of overview following discussions on 3rd November



Before I move on to wider curriculum plans I want to describe to you just a few of the really fun things I have seen within 'ordinary' lessons in the last few weeks. Year 4 mummifying tomatoes (apparently this is a successful technique which works well for at least two years, further data to follow next century), Year 5 playing some extraordinary World War 2 games using some sort of skittles in PE, Year 3 singing a stone age rock song based on We will rock you, and don't ask about some of the Year 4 methods for learning times table facts. Whenever I go into classrooms, the children are engaged and focused, learning but also hopefully enjoying themselves in the process. I am very proud of them.

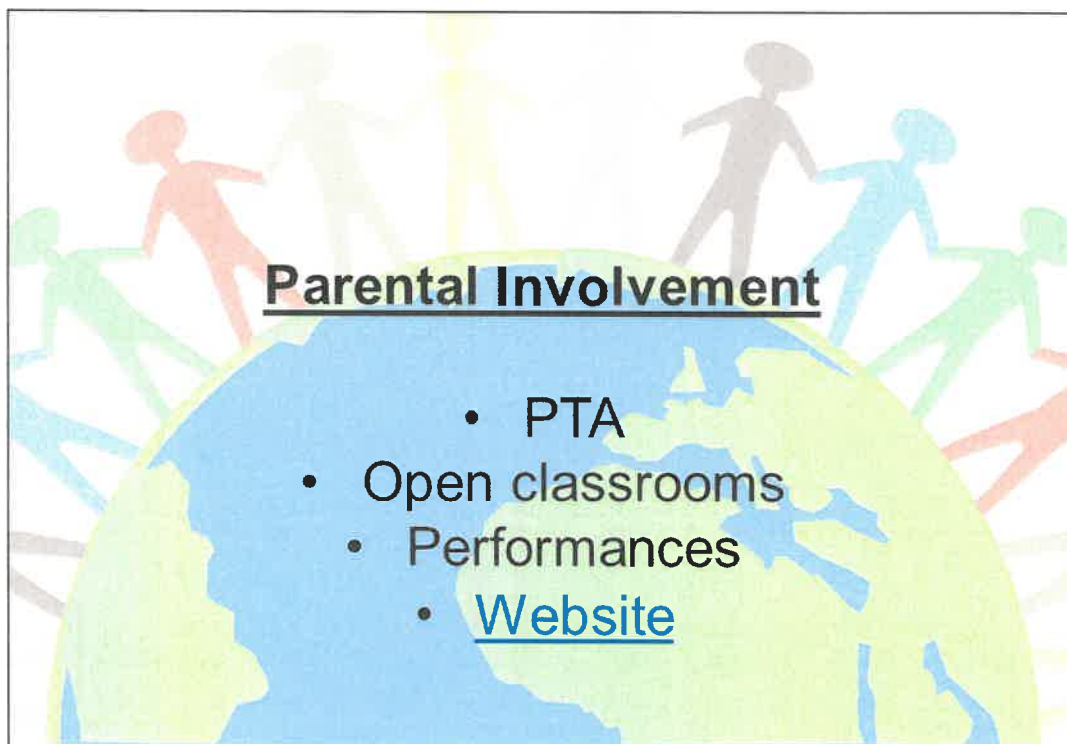
I sent out a letter and questionnaire last month about trips. Thank you if you responded – we had over a 100 responses. The overwhelming response was that the number/cost of trips should be as outlined. Trips out of school are extremely expensive if a coach is needed. During lockdown we also realised that whilst trips out of school add great excitement and enjoyment, and can really support learning, they are also in their own way disruptive of learning as they affect other routines and also usually involve 'borrowing' staff from other classes – affecting learning in that class. This is why in some cases we are inviting visitors in rather than going out and in all cases we are looking very closely at how the trip/visitor supports children's learning and development.

Art is an embedded area of excellence for the school and was commented on exceptionally positively by OFSTED. Mrs Pettit is key to this. Other areas of the arts are less well-developed. One of the interesting outcomes of doing separate end of year 'performances' was the greatly increased opportunity for all children to have larger roles. This links to the need to develop more opportunities for children to speak confidently to an audience – class, school, parents, community. To help drive this within school, we are taking part in an OffGrid Shakespeare project over the course of the next 15 months. This will provide training in drama teaching for all staff and hands on workshops (with parental sharing) for year 5 this half term and year 6 in the summer term after SATs. All year groups will do a drama based performance at some point in the year. We are in the process as well of increasing opportunities for music within school – both through the curriculum and more widely. Mrs Pearce and Mrs Formoso have taken up the baton of leading Young Voices and the Young Voices group are attending a choirs' workshop in Skipton tomorrow. We are also looking to involve our brass groups in the Skipton music festival and, now they are starting up again, to become involved in any musical events in Skipton.

PE is well established through school and as part of the wider curriculum. It is one area where we receive specific additional funding, even if the limits on how we spend this are somewhat constrained. This enables us to take part in all the festivals run by Skipton Tennis Club (many different sports) at Sandylands with no charge to parents, to have Kanga staff run lunchtime activities each day and a free after school club. We also always try to take part in other sporting activities where whole classes can participate.

Next week the second half term of after school clubs begin. We are trying to offer a range of clubs for the different year groups. Uptake is very hard to predict. The amount charged does not quite cover the costs of staffing and resources and is being supplemented out of school funds. Feedback on them and ideas would be welcomed.





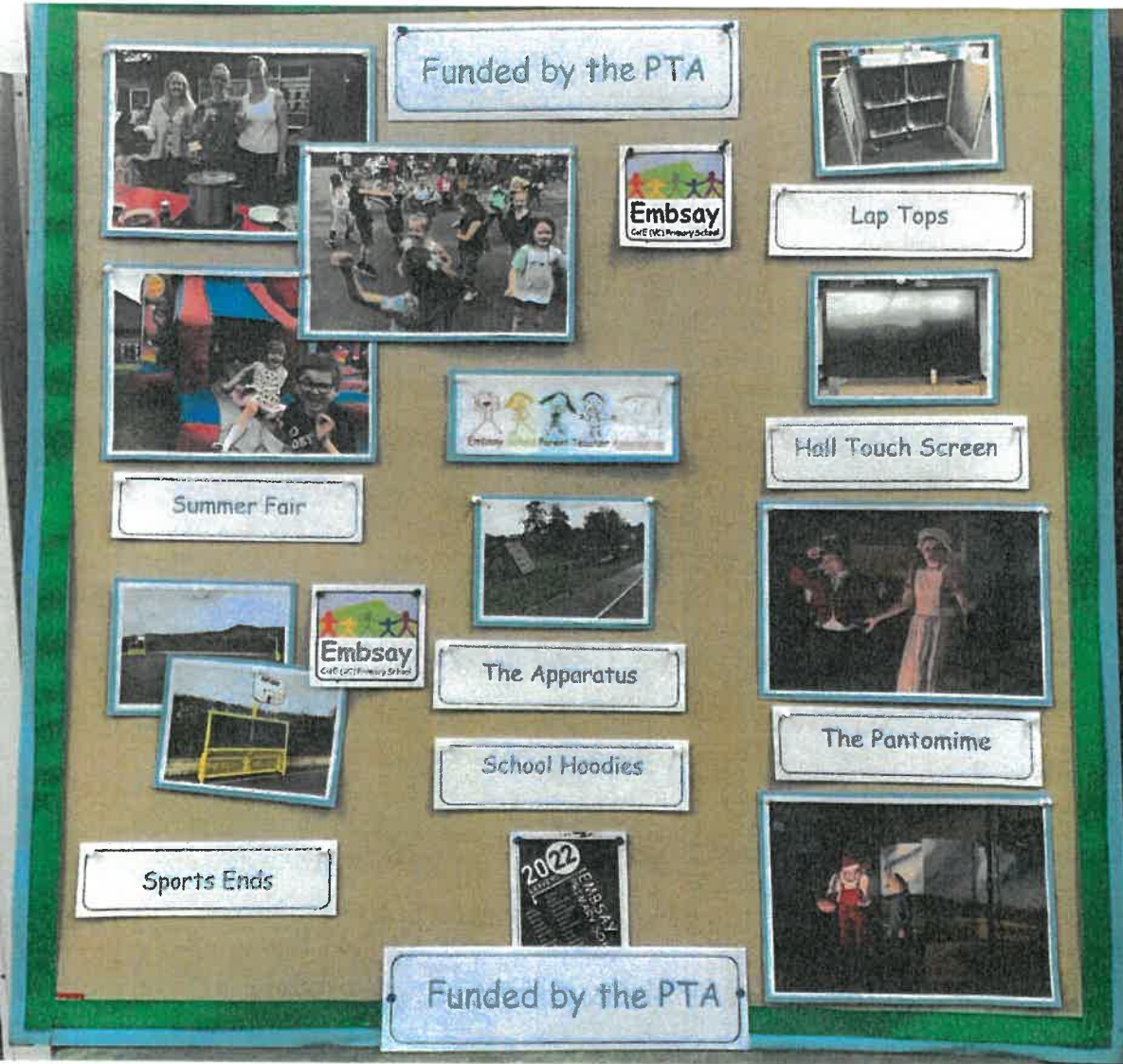
I am very aware of how little contact I had with parents during the pandemic. So are teachers. Building up and developing links is a key driver – one of the reasons for tonight.

In common with many schools, finding people ready to commit to running a PTA has been difficult. However we are very fortunate that a small team took up the baton in order to ensure certain things took place last academic year and (I hope) will continue this academic year.

We began (and continued when possible) last year to invite parents in to see what has been happening in their child's classroom. These opportunities have been welcomed and we will continue to try and do something most half terms. The topics being taught often dictate exactly what is on show. The reason for their usually being on a Tuesday is that this is the night designated for staff meetings – teachers may have other commitments on other evenings of the week.

Last year we also spent a lot of time developing our new website. This is the primary means of communication that we use. Letters from school, information about events are all there. Mrs Chapman sends out a short reminder about anything new each Friday. Class teachers regularly add information about what the class has been

up to on the class pages. Please let me know if there are any areas you would like to see developed further.



Funded by the PTA



Lap Tops



Hall Touch Screen



Summer Fair



The Apparatus



Sports Ends



School Hoodies



The Pantomime



Funded by the PTA

## **Christmas activities 2022**

W/b 05.12.22 Secret Santa (PTA run)

12.12.22 am Reception performance in school

12.12.22 2.00pm and 6.30pm Y2 nativity in Church

13.12.22 am Y1 Christmas show in school

13.12.22 pm Y5 Performance sharing

14.12.22 Christmas Dinner and parties

15.12.22 2.30pm Y6 Christingle

16.12.20 Pantomime (PTA funded)

**Year 3 and Year 4 will be holding open classrooms towards the end of term and doing something more performance based in the Spring term**

Dates for the morning 'performances' are still to be confirmed – probably 10.30 or 10.45am.



The final thing I need to tell you about, before we move on to questions, is where things are regarding academisation. Schools becoming academies has been ongoing since I became head in 2016. When the governing body considered it then, the feeling was that it was not in our best interest to change. There were times during the pandemic when I envied schools in academy chains because some of the decision making was done at a higher level.

A government white paper was published last summer indicating that they expect all schools to be in academies by 2030 (I am summarising). North Yorkshire has taken the decision to become part of a pilot to accelerate this process. The Diocese of Leeds is also now encouraging schools to become academies. As a church school we can only join certain academy chains where our church status is protected. In reality this means we need to look at two – Yorkshire Causeway which is based round St Aidan's in Harrogate and LDLT which is currently focused round Ripon but has a Diocese wide remit. A small group of governors is looking into the differences between the two – what the impact on our school would be and which would be a better fit for us. You will be consulted as the process evolves but I just wanted to make you aware.





