



Update from the Governing Board to Parents, Families and Carers





Dear Parents, Families and Carers,

With Easter nearly upon us, and the Spring Term having seemingly flown by, we thought it would be helpful to provide you with a brief update on the Federation's Governing Board and what we've been up to.





The Governing Board: Welcome to Our New Governors

The Vale Federation has a Governing Board consisting of parents, members of the local community, and the Principal.

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for the aim and direction of the school and is accountable to the Local Authority and parents for the way the school is run.

We are always on the look-out for individuals, from all backgrounds, to join the Governing Board, particularly as some of our existing Governors come to the end of their term of office, and over recent weeks we have been delighted to welcome onboard three new Governors:

- Neil Smith has become our new Staff Governor, taking over from Julie West who moved on from Booker Park at the end of the year. Neil is a Teaching Assistant at Booker Park, and has a son at Booker Park.
- Jonathan Cook joins us as a Parent Governor. Jonathan is Head of Design and Technology at The Kingsbrook School, and has a daughter who attends Stocklake Park.
- Tendai Nyamapfeni joins as a Co-Opted Governor. Tendai has a background in social work and children's disability services, and has a son at Booker Park.



We are delighted that Jonathan, Neil and Tendai have kindly put themselves forward to become Governors - all three bring a wealth of experience to the Governing Board and will be real assets to the Federation.

Supporting the Federation and our two schools by being a Governor is an immensely rewarding and enjoyable experience. Individuals who have children at either of our schools, or who are members of staff, or who wish to get involved in helping the Federation, from all sorts of diverse backgrounds with different experiences and skills, can play a hugely important role by becoming a Governor. If you'd like to find out more, please do email Bradley at btaylor@thevalefederation.com or Dave Pearce, our Chair of Governors, at dpearce@thevalefederation.com.

You can find out more about the role of the Governing Board, the members of the Board and how we fulfil our role and responsibilities in the sections at the end of this letter.





Review of Governance

It was a year ago that, in line with good practice, an external review of governance at the Federation was performed by the National Governance Association (NGA).

The findings and recommendations of the review were shared with parents, families and carers in the Governing Board's letter last Summer.

You may recall that, pleasingly, the NGA found that the Board is “ a well-organised and structured governing board which carries out its core functions effectively. It:

“sets the vision and strategic direction of school during governor meetings”

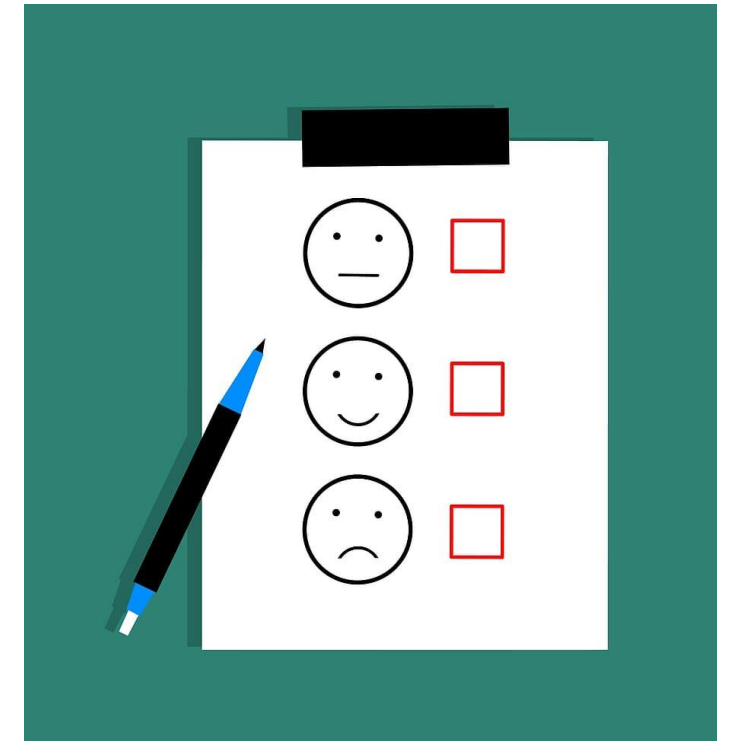
“holds the principal and leadership team to account for its educational performance of each school”

“ensures financial resources are well managed and spent”



Several opportunities for improving further the Board's governance of the Federation and how it functions were identified. Those recommendations were considered by the Governing Board and an Action Plan was developed.

How we've been getting on with implementing those actions has been reviewed regularly and I'm pleased to report that good progress has so far been made, further improving the already robust quality of governance in place here at the Federation.





Strategic Planning

One of the recommendations arising from the NGA's review of governance was that it would be helpful if the Board got involved in the setting of the strategic direction of the Federation at an earlier stage in the academic year. In previous years the Governing Board has begun initial discussions about reviewing and developing the strategic plans in late June or July, and then completed that process in the first half-term in the Autumn.

In line with the NGA's recommendations, with effect from this year, the Board and the Senior Leadership Team will get together early in the Summer Term in April, to have a dedicated meeting focussed on considering the Federation's strategic direction and then developing the strategic plans for the next academic year. Those plans will then be developed further throughout the Summer Term and finalised early on in the new academic year.



Such an approach will enable more upfront and proactive thinking and discussions about the strategy, helping to ensure that the strategic plans are as clear and strong as possible.



The Big Challenge – Levels of Staffing

Just like many other schools across the country, the Federation has for some time now been wrestling with the issue of relatively high levels of staff vacancies and how to fill those vacancies and, whilst doing so, best manage the impact of those staff shortages.

Bradley and his senior team have worked hard to create and put into effect a wide range of different initiatives to attract and recruit new staff, and to retain and develop existing members of staff. It is clear that there is no single 'magic bullet' that can solve the issues – it will take a range of different actions and approaches to ensure that the numbers of staff in both schools increase through filling vacancies and get closer to the numbers that are wanted to ensure that across the Federation our children have the best chance to fulfil their potential.

Earlier this half-term, a new staffing recruitment initiative was developed and is now being put into effect. That initiative involves working closely with two specialist education agencies, who have been tasked with filling the Teaching Assistant vacancies at both our schools. The recruitment process involves a two-week trial period for candidates to ensure that the role is suitable for each individual. Following the trial period, successful candidates will be recruited on a two to four week temporary contract, after which they will become employed by the Federation. It's early days yet, but there are some encouraging signs that this new initiative will have a real positive impact, which with the range of other recruitment activities could lead to a significant reduction in the number of vacancies.



The Governing Board does understand how difficult and challenging it has been, and continues to be, for staff to keep providing the best possible experience for your children and young persons, and also appreciates that you and our pupils may have been impacted by the vacancies. The Governing Board is grateful for the hard work and dedication shown by staff at all levels to manage as best they can with the vacancies and to take action to address those staff shortages. Similarly,



the Board thanks parents, families and carers for their patience, understanding and support as the Federation has sought to tackle this longstanding issue which has impacted both our schools and schools across the country.

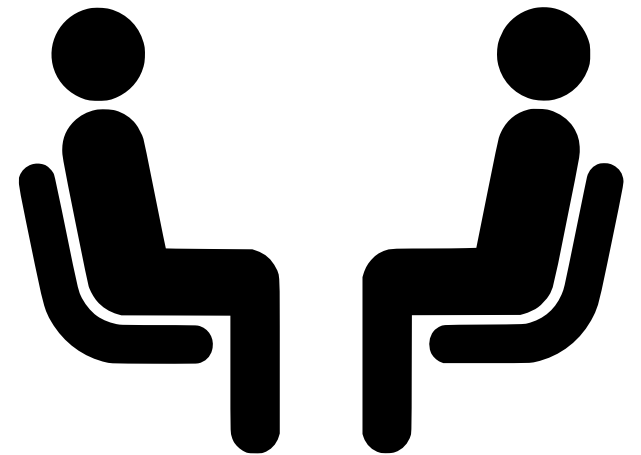


Parents Evening

In late February and March, Parents Evenings were held at both Booker Park and Stocklake Park. I was able to attend both events, and spoke with parents, carers and families, some children, and members of staff.

It was a privilege to be in attendance. The parents, carers and families I spoke to were overwhelmingly positive about the school, the amazing job staff do, and what a terrific difference the school makes to the lives of their children and their families. Speaking to members of staff, I was so impressed by their commitment to the children and the school, and really impressed with their detailed knowledge and understanding about each individual child.

As I look back on both events, what really struck me is the huge importance of this partnership we have between the parents, carers, families, children and the members of staff across the Federation, both in the classrooms and in the range of administrative and support functions. It's through this positive and strong partnership that, together, we can make sure the children and young persons have a wonderful experience in our schools and have the greatest possible opportunity to be the best that they can be.





And Finally... But Importantly

On behalf of the Governing Board, I thank you as parents, carers, families and friends for all that you do to support the children and our schools. I also thank all the members of staff who do such an incredible job in making Booker Park and Stocklake Park such amazing places, overcoming the day-to-day challenges (which is not at all easy), and providing your children with the opportunity to grow and develop, in a safe, caring and supportive environment. Working together in partnership, we can help our children and young persons to achieve so much.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter - we do hope you found it helpful and interesting.



Yours sincerely,

David J Pearce

David Pearce

Chair of the Governing Board, the Vale Federation



The Role of the Governing Board

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for the aim and direction of the school and is accountable to the Local Authority and parents for the way the school is run.

The Governors are not involved in the day to day running of the schools, which is the responsibility of Bradley, Marianne, Rhonda and Steve and their teams. The Governing Board of any school has three core functions, as set out by the Government's Department of Education:

Ensuring there is a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction across the Federation and our two schools

Holding the Principal to account for the educational performance of the schools and the pupils, and the performance management of staff

Overseeing the financial performance of the Federation and making sure its money is well spent



In performing these core functions, we also have a responsibility to ensure that the voices of the different groups of stakeholders are heard and taken into account.

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for the aims and direction of the Federation. Bradley, as Principal, and the school leadership team are responsible for the implementation of policy, the curriculum, and the day-to-day management of the Federation and its two schools, Board.

Over the next couple of pages, you can find out more about the members of the Governing Board and how we fulfil our role and responsibilities.





Who We Are

Type of Governor	Number of Positions	Governors
Co-opted Governors (from the local community)	6	Becky Belardo Natalie Hearmon Tendai Nyamapfeni Margaret Nyambayo Dave Pearce (Chair of the Governing Board) Prashanta Parbhoo
Local Authority Governor	1	Angela Coneron
Parent Governors	2	Luke Askew Jonathan Cook Nigel Westacott
Principal	1	Bradley Taylor
Staff Governor	1	Neil Smith

The Board are ably supported by our clerk, Emma Burley.



Fulfilling our Role and Responsibilities

As Governors, we fulfil our role and responsibilities in several ways, including:

Participating in twice-termly meetings of the full Governing Board.

Being members of various sub-committees, each focussing on different aspects of our responsibilities and the operation of the Federation and the performance of the two schools.

In conjunction with Bradley and the senior leadership team, setting the Federation's strategic plans and school development plans and overseeing their implementation.

Individual Governors focussing on particular topics and how they are applied and function throughout the schools, such as the curriculum, quality of learning, behaviour, health and safety, pupil and staff wellbeing, post-19 provision, finance and resources, and child protection and safeguarding.

Regularly visiting the schools to meet pupils and staff, monitor performance, progress, and compliance with policies and procedures.