



Update from the Governing Board to Parents, Families and Carers





Dear Parents, Families and Carers,

With the summer holidays nearly here, we thought it would be helpful to provide you with an update on the activities of the School Governors.





The Role of the Governing Board

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

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for the aims and direction of the Federation. Bradley, Marianne, Rhonda, Steve and their teams are responsible for the implementation of policy, the curriculum, and the day-to day management and operation of the Federation and its two schools, and are accountable to the Governing Board.

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.





What We've Been Up To

During the 2024/25 academic year the Governing Board has continued to do its best to fulfil its role and responsibilities, being a 'critical friend' to the schools' leadership team, providing both support and challenge. Several of the key areas and issues which Governors have been involved in are set out below:

Annual review and approval of the Federation's strategic plans and school development plans, and overseeing their implementation and progress, developing and enhancing the plans in response to emerging issues, feedback and external reviews. This has led to, for example:

- developing and improving the curriculum, enabling staff to deliver it more consistently and effectively;
- revising and implementing the Individual Support Plans, to improve staff understanding of and support for each individual pupil;



- introducing and delivering a package of training and developments activities to further develop the skills and capabilities of staff and leaders across the Federation;
- strengthening the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, providing coaching and support to drive improvements;
- providing the children and young people with greater opportunities to engage in a diverse range of activities;
- carrying-out a plan of activities focussing on the health and wellbeing of staff;
- embedding a careers curriculum at Stocklake Park; and
- enhancing communications and engagement between the Federation and parents, families and carers.



In April, the Governors and senior leadership team participated in a 'strategy planning' session focusing on the development of the strategic plans for the next five years, with a focus on improvement plans for the 2025/26 academic year.

Working with the school leadership team to develop and implement changes to the staffing structure, designed to more effectively support the delivery of the school development plans, enhance the quality of teaching and learning, and provide more career development opportunities for staff.

Reviewing and approving of the Federation's budget and financial plans, ensuring available funds are being used wisely, with the focus on making sure our pupils and students achieve the best possible outcomes, and overseeing the performance of the Federation against the agreed budget.

Ongoing review and strengthening of the child protection and safeguarding practices, processes and procedures, to ensure that the schools are providing a safe and secure environment for the children and staff.



Overseeing the staff recruitment and retention plans and activities, with c70 new staff recruited in the 2024/25 academic year, to fill vacancies, meet additional staffing requirements and increase the number of staff present in our two schools.

Working with the leadership team to develop and oversee the implementation of a range of activities to improve further the wellbeing of staff.

Ensuring the Federation has in place a suite of Policies and procedures which are operating effectively and compliantly.

Overseeing the effectiveness of the range of operational processes and practices in place across the Federation.



Visiting regularly the schools to see first-hand the experiences of the children and staff.

Maintaining and strengthening the effectiveness of the Governing Board through the recruitment of new Governors, the delivery of a Governor Development Plan and regular training.

In carrying-out these activities, and others, the Governing Board has done its best to provide Bradley and his team with help, support and constructive challenge. In doing so, our aim has been, and very much continues to be, to help ensure that the Federation achieves its Vision of creating a future where every child achieves the greatest level of independence, enabling them to become a valued member of society.



Changes to the Governing Board

Over the coming months, we will say farewell to two of our longer standing members of the Governing Board:

- Connie Coneron, who has been a Governor for over 20 years, being Chair of the Governing Board between 2013 and September 2022, will stand down at the end of her term in September; and
- Nigel Westacott, who became a Governor in 2014, has been Chair of our Resources Committee for over six years and has raised over £25,000 for MASKS during his time as a Governor, will stand down at the end of this Summer Term.

Both Connie and Nigel have served the Governing Board and the Federation with distinction, being committed and dedicated to doing their best for the Federation's children and staff. They have both been insightful, thoughtful, challenging and supportive, and great people to work with. On behalf of the Governing Board and the Federation, I thank Connie and Nigel for the huge amount which they have done for our two schools and wish them both all the very best for the future.



Over recent months, we have welcomed three new Governors to the Governing Board.

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 joined the Board as our new Staff Governor. Neil is a Teaching Assistant at Booker Park, and has a son at Booker Park.
- Jonathan Cook joined 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 joined as a Co-Opted Governor. Tendai has a background in social work and children's disability services, and has a son at Booker Park.

All three bring a wealth of experience to the Governing Board and have already, since joining, shown that they will make a valuable and important contribution to the Board and to the Federation.



Thinking About Becoming a Governor?

The Vale Federation's Governing Board has overall responsibility for the aims and direction of the school and is accountable to the Local Authority and parents for the way the school is run.

Supporting the Federation and our two schools by being a Governor, and being part of the team that makes up the Governing Board, is an important and immensely rewarding and enjoyable experience.

We are always on the look-out for individuals, from all sorts of different backgrounds with different experiences and skills, to become a Governor and join the Governing Board.

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.





The Big Challenge – Levels of Staffing

All of us who are involved with the Federation are aware that, just like many other schools, both Booker Park and Stocklake Park have for some time now been working hard to fill staff vacancies and, whilst doing so, best manage the impact of staff shortages.

An array of different initiatives to attract and recruit new staff, and to retain and develop existing members of staff have been put in place, with the aim of ensuring we get closer to having the numbers of skilled staff that are needed to make sure that across the Federation our children have the best chance to fulfil their potential.





The Governing Board works closely with Bradley and his senior leadership team, to oversee the implementation of the range of recruitment and retention activities and their impact on the overall staffing position. We have been encouraged in recent months to see the successful ongoing recruitment of new staff, combined with some real evidence that fewer staff are leaving the Federation, in doing so, steadily reducing the number of vacancies. While good progress is being made, there is still some way to go, and staff recruitment and retention will remain a key priority, for both the senior leadership team and the Governing Board.

The Governing Board is grateful for the commitment, dedication and resilience shown by staff to manage as best they can with the vacancies and to keep providing the best possible experience for your children and young persons – we know it is not easy and involves a great deal of hard work.

The Board recognises that the staffing position can impact on parents, families and carers, and thanks all of you for your patience, understanding and support as the Federation has sought to tackle this long-standing issue which has impacted both our schools and schools across the country.



And Finally... But Importantly

On behalf of the Governing Board, I thank you as parents and carers, families and friends for all that you do to support the children and our schools, and I thank all the members of staff who do such a tremendous job in making Booker Park and Stocklake Park such wonderful places, providing your children with the opportunity to grow and develop, in a safe, caring and supportive environment.

As parents and families, carers, staff and Governors, by working in partnership we can together 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.

On behalf of the Governing Board, I wish you and your children all the very best for the summer holidays.



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

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, and are accountable to the Governing Board.

Read on to 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

*standing-down in the next few months

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 focusing 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 focusing 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.