



Update from the Governing Board to Parents, Families and Carers





Dear Parents, Families and Carers,

As we begin the Summer Term, 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

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.

The members of the Governing Board come from all sorts of backgrounds - some who are the parents of children attending our two schools, or have done in the past, whilst others don't have children who are or who have been at Booker Park or Stocklake Park. What all Governors have in common is a desire to play an active role in making the two schools the best possible places to help the pupils and students fulfil their potential in a caring, safe and enjoyable environment.





We are always keen to hear from people who are interested in becoming a Governor.

The Governing Board were delighted last term to welcome Julie Butler as a new Governor. Julie's son attends Stocklake Park, having previously been at Booker Park. Julie has many years of experience of working in the care and housing industry, and will be a real asset to the Governing Board and to the Federation.

Supporting our two schools by being a Governor is an enjoyable and rewarding experience. 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.





Strategic Planning

One of the three core functions of all Governing Boards is ensuring each school has a clear vision, ethos and strategic direction.

As part of our annual cycle of developing, implementing and reviewing the Federation's strategic plans, later this month the Board and the Senior Leadership are having a strategic planning meeting. That meeting will focus 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.

That approach is designed to enable proactive thinking and discussions about the strategy, helping to ensure that the strategic plans are as clear and strong as possible.





An important 'starting point' in the strategic planning process is to review and consider the Federation's Mission (defining the Federation's key purpose) and Vision (setting out where the Federation aspires to go), to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate. The Federation's Mission and Vision are set out below:

Mission: "Together, overcoming barriers, enabling each child and young person to reach their full potential".

Vision: Inspire – Enable – Achieve

"Through a multi-professional approach, we will create a high quality, inclusive, happy, and safe school environment where pupils with a range of learning difficulties are:

- *Inspired to engage in learning*
- *Enabled to realise their greatest level of independence and emotional resilience*
- *Supported to recognise and celebrate their achievements now and in the future"*

Considering, reviewing and agreeing the Mission and Vision, as part of our strategic planning meeting, will help ensure that the Federation's strategic plans are fully aligned with supporting and enabling the Federation to achieve its fundamental purpose for the good of all the children and young persons attending our two schools.



Senior Leadership Team

With our Business Director, Steve Parkinson, leaving the Federation last term, Bradley and the Governing Board have considered how the role and the wide range of responsibilities should best look moving forward. It's has been decided that it would be beneficial to split the Business Director role into new two positions – a Head of Operations and a Head of People.

The Head of Operations will be responsible for leading and managing the Federation's finances and core management services, including the estate and facilities. The Head of People will be responsible for leading and managing the Federation's Human Resources.

Good progress has been made in recruiting for these two new positions, and the expectation is that both roles will be filled by September, strengthening and enhancing the Federation's senior leadership team.





We've heard recently that Rhonda has decided that she will step down from her Head of School role at Stocklake Park and will leave the Federation at the end of this Summer term.

Since joining Stocklake Park over four years ago, Rhonda has worked tremendously hard, demonstrating great commitment and dedication to give our students at the school the best possible experience. The Governing Board, along with students, parents, families and carers, and colleagues, are very grateful for all that Rhonda has done for Stocklake Park and the Federation.

I'm sure there will be plenty of opportunities over the coming term to thank Rhonda for all her hard work and dedication and to wish her all the very best for the future.

To maintain consistency, and to support Rhonda on her return to work after a period of absence, Bradley will continue in effect to lead Stocklake Park over the coming term and will be working with his senior team and the Governing Board to develop future plans for the leadership team.



Finances and Budget

Another of the three core purposes of a Governing Board is to ensure financial resources are well managed and spent.

For us, this means working with the senior leadership team to set a budget for the Federation, and each of the two schools, balancing income, primarily through Government and Local Authority funding, with expenditure (mainly paying staff salaries and the costs of running the schools) and ensuring that money is spent wisely and put to good use, to provide the best possible experience for our children and young persons.

In April and May, the Governing Board and senior leadership team are working closely together to review the existing budget and to develop the budget for the period of 2026/27 through to 2028/29. That future budgetary plan will be finalised over the coming weeks and submitted to the Local Authority in mid-May.





Review of Governance

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

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

The 2024 review identified several opportunities for improving further the Board’s governance of the Federation and a range of actions have subsequently been taken.



The Board felt that it would be helpful to invite the NGA to conduct a follow-up review, to focus on the current position with governance, to review the actions taken and their impact, and to identify any opportunities to further improve the quality of governance in place here at the Federation.

That review is underway currently, and is expected to be completed in the next couple of weeks. The outcome will be shared with parents, families and carers in the next letter from the Governing Board.



The Big Challenge – Levels of Staffing

As is the case with many other schools across the country, the Federation has continued to wrestle 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 developed 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. While encouraging progress has been made, particularly in reducing the number of vacancies at Booker Park school, increasing levels of staff retention, strengthening the programme of staff training and development and successfully utilising agency staff, staff shortages remain a challenge.





There is no one single solution to what is a complex, nationwide issue and the senior leadership team will continue to work hard to fill vacancies and increase staff numbers, whilst taking steps to ensure that the impacts of staff shortages are managed as well as possible.

The Governing Board understands that it has been, and continues to be, challenging for staff to keep providing the best possible experience for our pupils and students, and do appreciate that on occasions you and your children may have been impacted by the vacancies. The Governors are grateful for the dedication and hard work of staff at all levels who are doing the best they can to address and manage those staff shortages. Similarly, the Board thanks parents, families and carers for your understanding and support as the Federation continues to seek 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, 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 amazing jobs 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. Working together in partnership, we can help our schools to meet the Federation's Mission and Vision, together overcoming barriers to enable each child and young person to reach their full potential.

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 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.

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 Julie Butler Natalie Hearmon Tendai Nyamapfeni Margaret Nyambayo Prashanta Parbhoo
Local Authority Governor	1	Dave Pearce (Chair of the Governing Board)
Parent Governors	2	Luke Askew Jonathan Cook
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 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.