



## Annual Governing Board Update July 2025

As Chair of Governors, I am pleased to share with you the strategic work of the governors and the impact on Sodbury Vale Federation this academic year. Our key roles have been to support the leaders in the schools to implement the vision, aims and objectives, approve the school budget and, for the first time in 18 years, appoint a new Executive Headteacher. Below I share some of the work done across the year by our dedicated governors, to whom I am incredibly thankful, followed by formal information about the structure and processes of our current governing board.

This is also an opportunity to reflect on the work of Mrs Berry. As a governing board, not only are we exceptionally grateful for the commitment, diligence and professionalism she has given us, but also for her integrity; this is not something you read on a CV. At the heart of every decision made, the benefits to the children have been Mrs Berry's prime focus and not once has she swayed from this. We are incredibly proud of how well Mrs Berry has led our two schools, modelling the Christian values and encouraging every child and every member of staff to flourish. We thank her immensely for dedicating the last 18 years to Sodbury Vale Federation.

Thank you Mrs Berry from everyone past and present within Sodbury Vale Governing Board.

### Horton Ofsted

As many of you will know, Horton had a one day visit from Ofsted in April. The governor monitoring, as well as the informal visits such as Bible Storytellers, gave us as governors the confidence to share the excellent work done at the school. This, alongside inspectors talking to pupils, parent/carers, Mrs Berry and staff, browsing the school's website and observations of the day resulted in a very positive and encouraging report which reflected the school values and excellent day-to-day learning opportunities available for our children.

### Christian Distinctiveness

Although both schools are church schools, there is a difference between the structure and organisation of their Christian Distinctiveness. Horton is a Voluntary Aided (VA) school meaning that the governors have key responsibilities in approving the admissions policy as well as ensuring the religious ethos of the school is effective and being accountable for financial contributions. During a SIAMS Inspection, Religious Education (RE) is a focus. St John's Mead



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is Voluntary Controlled school meaning that the local authority has prime responsibility for the school's operation, however the Ethos committee also ensures that St John's Mead complies with the church school criteria. As part of the Ethos committee, the members monitor the well-being of both staff and pupils and ensure the actions of the schools reflect the Christian visions. Formal monitoring visits at both schools this year have included Collective Worship, SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) learning walks, RE and well-being. Additionally, we were delighted to welcome both our Bishop's visitor (who wrote wonderful letters to each school) and Bishop Robert from Tewkesbury. What a privilege. Our governors who attended reported that the children were thrilled to meet Bishop Robert who arrived in robes and answered many, many questions about his roles and responsibilities.

### Appointing an Executive Headteacher

The appointment of an Executive Headteacher was a new journey for the Governing Board. Usually, appointments of staff are led by the leader of the school but for such an appointment, it is the responsibility of the governors. Thankfully we had excellent support from the Local Authority and Diocese who guided us throughout the process. In fact, at the end of the process I received an email from our Diocese representative saying,

“I have shared with my team how encouraged I was with the way your governing team worked together so well and how you showed such sensitivity and compassion to everyone involved from pupils through to the candidates themselves. Thank you for this.”

Each and every governor played such an important part in the process spending hours of their own time to support and for that, I am ever so grateful. I must however mention our new governor Jorge who did not hesitate to offer his experience and expertise to guide us through the advertising and job specification wonderfully. Alongside Catriona Ashley (our School Business Manager) the application process was slick and efficient which greatly helped us to find the right leader for our federation. We were blessed with four excellent candidates which made the choice particularly challenging. However, we are confident that the appointment of the new Executive Headteacher Mr Dean Hudd will ensure continuity and development of the excellent work of Mrs Berry, allowing all to flourish.

### Reflection on Governing Board Priorities 2024/25

- Support the schools to fulfil the school development plan priorities



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Every governor meeting involves a discussion about the progress of each school in fulfilling the school development plan aims and priorities. The governors asked questions, shared feedback from their formal monitoring in areas such as assessment, SEND (Special, Educational Needs and Disabilities), Pupil Premium, Sports Grant, EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) and Safeguarding and reflected on the progress.

- Engage with all stakeholders of the community.

This was particularly evident in the Executive Headteacher recruitment process as well as the time change to the St John's Mead end of day. One of our governors has kindly offered to sit on the Horton Village Hall committee, a parent forum was held at Horton and our local MP visited St John's Mead after a letter from the governors inviting her to explore possible funding to improve our nursery building; this is difficult because current funding is available for new nurseries rather than already established nurseries. We will keep you posted if we have any news on this. Additionally, the governors have continued and increased their attendance at school functions and events such as: Church services, the Colour Run, the carnival, sports days, end of year and Christmas plays, Book Week judging to name but a few.

- Expand the expertise of the board by recruiting new governors, particularly representing Horton.

Jorge joining governors last October was particularly good timing (as mentioned in the recruitment process) however, alongside, Mrs Dare who was elected as staff governor, it is valuable to have two new people who bring a new outlook, new ideas and a wealth of knowledge to our governing board. Whilst we have not yet managed to have representation from Horton village, the governors have been able to visit Horton regularly both formally and informally and feel they know the school very well.

### Priorities for the Governing Board 2025/26

As mentioned last year, our priorities will depend on the needs of the schools, however, at the time of writing, the aims and priorities of the governing board next academic year are to:

- Support the new Executive Headteacher to continue the excellent work already in place but also to encourage new ideas which will benefit the children at both schools.
- Continue to reflect on the effectiveness of governance and the engagement with stakeholders.



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- Support the federation with setting and achieving the aims and priorities within the new School Development Plan.

## Review of Meetings and Meeting Structure

The governing board at Sodbury Vale Federation has continued to meet using the Circle model as well as an additional Ethos committee. The Circle model means that all nine or ten meetings include all governors in making decisions and reviewing documents. As this is working very effectively so far, the plan is to continue using this model. When specific areas need further discussion then a working party is created who then feedback to all governors. The Ethos committee formally meets 3 x per year and informally 3-6 x per year to discuss and review the Christian Distinctiveness of the schools through self-evaluation. There are currently 3 vacancies for foundation governors. These are appointed by the church and we are keen to have those positions filled. Please do get in touch with either school office if you or someone you know is able to volunteer.

## Attendance

Governors are volunteers and their dedicated time to Sodbury Vale Federation is greatly appreciated. In preparation for meetings, governors read relevant documentation in advance and, if they are unable to attend meetings in person, have the opportunity to ask questions or share their views through discussion or email with the chair or vice chair. With the wonders of technology, governors can also join through Teams, particularly when they are abroad with work.

## Training

As part of their role, governors need to keep up-to-date with their areas of expertise and responsibility with options to learn new skills and gain further knowledge. This year, governors have attended training in safeguarding, exclusions, online safety, SEND, governor self-evaluation, new governor induction, cyber security and SIAMs (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools).



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Governor Type	Name	Appointment Body	Start / End Date	Responsibility	FGB attendance
					2024/25
Ex Officio (Head)	Nicola Berry	LA / Diocese	01.09.2007 31.08.2025	Executive Headteacher	9/9
Ex Officio (Diocese)	Catherine Coster	Diocese	01.03.2022 28.02.2026	Ethos chair Well-being	6/9
Foundation	Suzanne Elmore	Diocese	01.03.2022 28.02.2026	Chair of FGB Assessment lead Staffing lead Ethos Committee	9/9
Foundation	Sarah Loveridge	Diocese	01.03.2022 28.02.2026	Ethos Committee SEND Lead	5/9
Foundation	Patricia Jess	Diocese	01.07.2022 30.06.2026	Ethos Committee Safeguarding lead Equalities lead Attendance lead	8/9
Co-Opted	Emma Galsworthy	FGB	19.09.2023 18.09.2027	Curriculum co-lead	9/9
Co-Opted	Simon Morrison	FGB	16.03.2022 15.03.2026	Finance Lead	8/9
Co-Opted	Mark Kenyon	FGB	16.03.2022 15.03.2026	Pupil Premium lead Sports Grant lead Curriculum IT lead	7/9
Parent	Emma Cole	Election via Parents	03.03.2022 02.03.2026	Vice Chair of FGB Early Years lead	8/9
Parent	James Maillardet	Election via Parents	03.03.2022 02.03.2026	Premises lead Health & Safety lead	8/9
LA	Jorge Olsson	FGB/LA	22.10.2024 21.10.2028	To be confirmed	7/8
Staff	Faye Dare	Staff	18.03.2025 17.03.2029	To be confirmed	3/3
Clerk	NIVID	FGB	16.09.2024		9/9
Foundation	Vacancy	Diocese			
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Foundation	Vacancy	Diocese			