



Sodbury Vale Federation



Annual Governing Board Update July 2024

The role of governors provides non-executive leadership, supporting our schools at a strategic level leaving operational day-to-day running of the schools to Mrs Berry and the school leaders. Governors support the setting of the vision and strategic visions of the schools as well as ensuring budgets are well-managed and resources financed effectively. Although compulsory for schools, governors are valuable volunteers.

Structure

The governors within Sodbury Vale Federation are proud to support and represent Horton CE VA and St John's Mead CE VC primary schools and their communities. The board comprises of:

- 2 x Ex Officio (Executive Headteacher / Diocese appointed)
- 3 x foundation governors
- 2 x parent governors
- 3 x co-opted governors
- 1 x elected staff member

Current Vacancies

- 3 x foundation governors
- 1 x LA governor

We have recently recruited a clerk ready to start in September 2024. Clerks provide valuable support to the governors through sound advice, minute taking, meeting and document preparation as well as specific knowledge of governing board responsibilities, legalities and training.

Meetings

Since federating, the full governing body meets once or twice per school term which equates to 9 or 10 times per year either at Horton, St John's Mead or via Teams. At the start of each academic year, roles and responsibilities, alongside a review of governor skills and expertise, are defined to support the needs of the schools, in particular, the school development plan. Standing agenda items for every meeting include safeguarding, GDPR, health & safety, SEN/D (including Pupil Premium), ethos, well-being, review of policies, governor monitoring visits and training, with each meeting having specific areas of focus areas such as finance, staffing or premises. If appropriate, extraordinary meetings are planned to cover further topics, such as pay. The governing board particularly appreciates the detail Mrs Berry shares in her monthly Executive Headteacher report for governors which not only incorporates the above mentioned topics but



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pays particular attention to attendance, data and the impacts and progress of the school development plan. Actions from each meeting are noted, reflected upon and completed; this year alone, over and above governor monitoring and meetings, all 29 actions have been completed. This is thanks to the commitment and diligence of each and every member of the governing board.

Christian Distinctiveness

As church schools, the governors work closely with the Diocese to ensure the schools are not only fulfilling their legal obligations but also ensuring all children have the opportunity to flourish through each school's distinct values and ethos. Everything we do links to the visions of our schools, including policy review, strategic decisions and supporting the school development plan. This year, governors have monitored and discussed this through ethos committee meetings, Collective Worship observations, pupil voice, participation in Horton prayer day, contributions through Open the Book as well as incorporating feedback in other monitoring such as Sports Day and Christmas plays. Currently, links are being made with a school in Kenya. The expertise of Catherine Coster is particularly valued within the ethos committee.

The Role of Governors in Promoting School Improvement

As a governing board, we are welcomed into the school, not just to fulfil our monitoring duties and attend meetings but as part of the school community. Participating in the June INSET Day enables us to spend time with the staff from both schools and to find out more about each school and the day-to-day successes and goals. Being able to work together to review and set the school priorities creates a shared and manageable vision. These have been a key focus of much of our monitoring and are reflected upon in both the Executive Headteacher's governor report and in each meeting. The current school priorities are:

- Children are fluent writers.
- A love of reading permeates across the school community.
- Children can explain and apply their mathematical learning to everyday life.
- A curriculum that reflects the schools' Christian values and enables all children to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for school and beyond.
- Children are ready to learn at school every day.

Although currently a small governing board, we are a dedicated team who act as a critical friend - asking questions and seeking clarification and different viewpoints.

It is important to mention a particular success this year for those children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D). Both schools know the children well and are exceptionally well-led by the SENCOs. Support is delivered exceptionally well by a fantastic team of teaching assistants. Not only has this been recognised through governor monitoring but also through the incredibly positive feedback in the report from the SEN/D team from the local authority who visited Horton, a SEND superstar award from Bristol Autism Support for a teaching assistant at SJM as well as the day-to-day intervention support which has hugely impacted the Y6 SATs results.



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The Role of Governors in Premises and Finances

Cuts and changes in the Local Authority structure and provision have impacted schools, in particular HR. The governors are exceptionally grateful to Catriona Ashley (schools' business manager) for her diligence and advice. Not only was she successful in securing a joint tender with other schools, she has ensured the transition has been smooth. Added to that, the governors are very appreciative of the completed additional admin tasks involved as a result.

Funding, grants and contracts fill much of the governing board meetings alongside site visits and paperwork. The financial expertise of Simon Morrison alongside the lead premises governor James Maillardet have certainly eased the process this year. We have applied and been successful in obtaining funding from the Diocese for condition works at Horton both this year and last year. Despite some hiccups with contractors at the start of the school year, work has been done to address damp issues, repair a retaining wall and replace floor coverings. Further works are planned this summer (with different contractors) to address the remaining areas with damp and install a safer entry system. Working closely with the Diocese, we adhere to strict guidelines and restrictions.

At Horton, the new trim trail looks fantastic. The governors wishes to thank the school community for their involvement and support. Now, discussions are taking place to replace the non-standard fire doors alongside the introduction of wrap-around care.

At SJM, the governors have recently written to the local authority for support in replacing the Nursery building but the funding is not yet available. Toilet adaptations are required for children with SEN/D and fencing is being replaced. Moving forwards, the junior trim trail and installation of a sensory garden are the next priorities.

Priorities for 2024/2025

The governing board is one element of the school community. It is without doubt that the children within Sodbury Vale Federation remain the key priority and focus for all decisions and changes made. Whether this is working on improving attendance, attainment or specific curriculum areas or indeed buildings and safety.

Schools are fluid which means improvement is on-going and may well go in different directions. The governing board at Sodbury Vale Federation are striving to:

- Support the schools to fulfil the school development plan priorities.
- Engage with all stakeholders of the community.
- Expand the expertise of the board by recruiting new governors, particularly representing Horton.