



Welcome from the new Chair

Welcome to a new school year at our Sodbury Vale Federation Schools.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself. I am Suzanne Elmore and have been elected as Chair of Governors for Sodbury Vale Federation. I had the privilege of becoming a governor at SJM when my eldest son first joined the nursery in 2011. Being able to support, learn and be part of a team have greatly enthused me and the more recent federation has added to my interest and motivation.

As many of you will know, this is a role which was efficiently and effectively driven by Dave Craddock, our chair for an incredible 14 years. Not only will he be greatly missed by all, we are exceptionally grateful for the time, effort and dedication he gave to our school communities at St John's Mead initially and then, after playing an integral part in the federation process, Horton. Stepping back from governors is a huge step. However, Dave quite rightly commented that the time is right; although the new federation governing body is young, already the enthusiasm, motivation and dedication is vibrant and I know we are a strong team looking for both schools to thrive. At the same time, I must also thank Mrs Sarah Taylor, who retired from Horton school in the summer after 27 years, for her significant and appreciated contributions on the governing body representing staff. She will also be greatly missed.

As we move forward into a new academic year, our aim as a governing body is to maintain the diligence and productivity with current practices in place alongside being open to new ideas and initiatives as they arise.

On behalf of everyone in the Sodbury Vale Federation governing body, I wish our school communities a wonderful new school year full of curiosity and wonder using the variety of school opportunities to flourish.

What Do the Governors Do?

As a new school year begins, it is perfect time to share what governors actually do. In one sentence, we work with the school leaders to ensure high standards of achievement for all. This is done in 3 ways.

Setting the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction. This is done through contributing to, questioning and supporting the school development plan and gathering evidence of our schools' Christian ethos. We look at the 'Big Picture', government initiatives, policies and individual needs of each school.

Holding the school leaders to account for the educational performance of its pupils. This is where you may see governors visiting the schools. Using a planned and prepared monitoring timetable, governors meet with staff to seek and question information on progress and attainment. Linked here is also safeguarding, attendance and inclusion. Please note however the information is kept confidential.

Overseeing the financial performance of the schools and making sure their money is well spent. Regular reviews of the budget are discussed and shared through meetings with the South Glos finance team and within our own governor meetings. All spending is questioned and accounted for.

You may notice that the word 'question' is in every section. This is key in the role of the governors and it is also known as a 'critical friend'. Being able to ask questions to gain understanding or explain a process ensures we have the right knowledge before making any decision.

This all comes under the umbrella of 'strategic direction'. The day-to-day running of the school (known as operational) is led by Mrs Berry and her team of senior staff. Governors are not involved in this although they are able to further volunteer, as parents and guardians are, to support the school in areas such as reading, school visits or being a member of the Open the Book team for Collective Worship.

Who We Are

The governing body consists of volunteers from our communities bringing a range of life experiences towards a shared common goal to support our schools. We are able to use our strengths and expertise while at the same time, work together to learn from each other. I for one have a background in education but since becoming a governor, have learned so much about finance and premises alongside health and safety regulations.

Governor Vacancies

We currently have 3 Foundation Governor (appointed by the church) vacancies as well as a local authority (community governor). Although we have enough parent governors, parents and grandparents are welcome to apply to be foundation governors. At the moment, we are particularly keen to extend representation from Horton. For more information, please contact our clerk, Alex Jones at either school.

admin@stjohnsmead.co.uk

enquiries@hortonprimary.org.uk

Sodbury Vale Federation Governing Body

Chair – Suzanne Elmore

Vice Chair – Emma Cole

Clerk – Alex Jones

Assessment – Suzanne Elmore

Ethos committee - Catherine Coster, Patricia Jess, Sarah Loveridge, Suzanne Elmore

Executive headteacher – Mrs Berry

EYFS – Emma Cole

Finance – Simon Morrison

GDPR – Alex Jones

Health & Safety – James Maillardet

Premises – James Maillardet

Pupil Premium – Mark Kenyon

Sports Grant – Mark Kenyon

Safeguarding – Patricia Jess

SEN/D – Sarah Loveridge

Staffing – Suzanne Elmore

Staff representative – Mrs Buchanan / Mrs Galsworthy

A Few Reminders

Like you as parents and guardians, we as governors are here because we want the very best for the children at both schools. The safety, well-being and happiness of the children and staff are our priority.

Horton Building Works

We thank you for your patience during the recent building work and do apologise that term started one day later than planned. Thank you also to those parents and staff who kindly gave up their weekend to speed up the process.

Parking

At all times please be safe, considerate to our neighbours and follow the Highway Code.

At Horton, the school has an on-going arrangement with the village hall that all parents and guardians may use the village hall car park for drop-offs and pick-ups. Please do use this and, although the uphill walk in the morning opens up the lungs, leave any spaces outside school for those who, for various reasons, are unable to tackle that hill.

At St John's Mead, much work and investigation has gone into the access of the nursery lane. The new signs are working well and we thank you for not using the lane unless you are authorised.

How to contact governors

We are here to support the children at both schools. If you wish to contact the governors, this can be done through each school office for the attention of Alex Jones (clerk) or Suzanne Elmore (chair). Please do read the information on the previous page explaining our role in school as it may be more appropriate to speak to a member of staff.

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We wish you and your children a happy year at our Sodbury Vale Federation schools.