



# Vale School Governors' Association Cymdeithas Llywodraethwyr Ysgolion y Fro and Governor Support Unit **Newsletter**

## Note from the Chair

The run up to Christmas is threatening to be even more frenetic than usual in our house. My eldest daughter is getting married the day after Boxing Day. The bride is less stressed than anybody at the moment, but I suspect that cannot last, and the rest of us are making up for it.

Schools are busy with Christmas shows, Nativity plays and Carol concerts. This is an exciting time of the year for the children in your care. I hope you as Governors are making the most of it as well.

On a more sober note, the latest Vale of Glamorgan Education Budget Forum meeting was a rather dispiriting affair. The Governor representatives were there to hear a very gloomy presentation on the amount of money the Welsh Government has allocated for the Vale of Glamorgan Council to spend on its services. The Council's budget has been cut by over four percent. Although schools are to be

protected, in that the level of expenditure next year will be the same as for this year, in reality with the effect of inflation this is a significant drop in the resources you will have available for your school. Other council services will have much greater pressure on their budgets.

I fear that you will have to be creative, and even so will need to take some difficult decisions in setting budgets in January. You have to square the circle, taking into account the need to raise standards and ensure the well-being of the pupils and the staff at your schools. It is not an easy task and it is getting more difficult year on year.

In spite of everything may I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy if not a Prosperous New Year.

**Martin Price**

Chair of VSGA and Vice-Chair of Governors, St Richard Gwyn Roman Catholic High School, Barry

## Issue 30 Autumn Term 2013

### Special points of interest:

- AVAGO was formed in 1996 and re-launched in 2006 as Vale School Governors' Association (VSGA)
- The Management Committee is made up of 15 elected governors together with 2 elected parent governor representatives

### VSGA was set up to:

- Promote best practice in governance in schools within the Vale of Glamorgan LEA
- To promote partnership amongst schools and between schools and the LEA
- To work with stakeholders to ensure adequate resources for schools within the LEA
- To represent the Association's views on issues relating to school governance and the management and resourcing of schools to relevant authorities and organisations

## In association with the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Governor Support Unit

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VSGA has an email address that you may contact us on.  
It's [VSGA@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:VSGA@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

alternatively you can contact VSGA by post at:

**VSGA**  
Governor Support Unit  
Learning & Development Dept.  
Vale of Glamorgan Council  
Provincial House, Kendrick Road  
Barry CF62 8BF

## Are our schools that bad?

So, are our schools really that bad? Every week another report or article appears criticising the state of education in Wales. Over the last few months there has been a constant tirade of what is wrong with our schools and how poorly Wales performs in relation to the rest of the United Kingdom and internationally. If it is not the low Pisa results or failing local authorities, it is the poor standards of literacy and numeracy, the disparate implementation of the Foundation Phase, the lack of consistency in assessment or falling results at GCSE and A level. No wonder morale within the teaching profession is low! All sorts of remedies are proposed, even to bringing back the grammar schools! So what is the answer? I think there are just two important factors.

This summer I visited Finland, where pupils consistently perform at the top of the Pisa league table, yet do not start formal schooling until the age of seven. I asked our tour guide why schools in Finland seemed to do so well. Her answer was very direct. "It's teachers, of course. We select them carefully and train them well and parents respect them as professionals. It's as simple as that". I could not agree with her more. We can tinker with the system as much as we like, change the curriculum, introduce new policies or categorise schools differently, but in the end pupils' results and a school's effectiveness depend on the quality of the teachers, including the headteacher. That's all there is to it. Good teachers make a good school. How crazy, therefore, that in England academies and free schools can now employ teachers without any training!

As we return to a new school year, let's now concentrate in Wales, therefore, on producing good quality teachers and let them get on with their main business of teaching and learning. Let's support them in their efforts and praise what they do well instead of continually carping about what is wrong. Let's start to hear what is good about our schools. As a person who has spent a lifetime in education and inspected over 150 schools in Wales, I can vouchsafe that the large majority of teachers are doing an excellent job, almost all schools have improved beyond recognition in the last ten years or so and pupils are achieving much success, often within very difficult circumstances. That is not to say that all is well, as clearly there are issues that need addressing and, of course, we can always do better, but the picture is not as bleak as it is constantly made out to be.

The second major point I would like to make is this. One of the most important problems holding many pupils and schools back is the significant level of deprivation and disadvantage experienced by many families and communities in various parts of Wales. This is high for the size of the population in comparison to other countries of the United Kingdom and could partly explain why Welsh pupils appear to struggle to do as well as elsewhere. Evidence clearly indicates that pupils rarely achieve as well in deprived and disadvantaged areas. All schools are being asked to tackle poverty as a major objective, but their capacity to do this is limited. Improving socio-economic circumstances, raising aspirations and creating more opportunities, particularly in employment, must be the main responsibility of government. If Wales is to compete successfully with other countries and all schools are to be successful, then the cycle of disadvantage must be broken. Pupils must realise the value of education and have hope in their future, if they are to succeed. They need to be encouraged at home and at school to achieve.

It's simple, therefore. To have an excellent education system, we need to have good teachers and well-motivated pupils. Let's focus directly on these two all-important aspects over the coming years and I am sure pupils in Wales will perform as well as, if not better, than those elsewhere.

**Dr. David Ellis**

**Registered Estyn school inspector and former Dean of Education, Cardiff Metropolitan University  
Chair of Governors, St. Illtyd Primary School, Llantwit Major**



[helpline@governorswales.org.uk](mailto:helpline@governorswales.org.uk)

Governors Wales' confidential helpline provides independent advice, support and guidance on any issue concerning school governance.

However complex or straightforward your query may be – we are here to help you fulfil your role effectively and efficiently.

Examples of areas in which we can help:

Disciplinary/Complaints procedures  
Appointment of Headteacher  
Meetings and minutes  
Committees  
Elections  
Annual Report to Parents/Annual Parents Meeting  
and many more ...

The helpline is available from 9.00a.m. to 10.00p.m. during weekdays and 11.00a.m. to 4.00p.m. at weekends, excluding public and bank holidays.

All calls are charged at local rate.  
A bilingual service is available.

Mae llinell gymorth gyfrinachol Llywodraethwyr yn darparu cyngor, cefnogaeth ac arweiniad annibynnol ar unrhyw bwnc yn ymwneud â llywodraethu ysgolion

Pa mor gymhleth neu syml yw eich ymholiad – rydym yma i'ch helpu i gyflawni eich rôl yn effeithiol ac effeithlon.

Dyma enghreifftiau o'r meysydd y gallwn fod o gymorth i chi:

Gweithdrefnau disgyblu/cwynion  
Penodi Pennaeth  
Cyfarfodydd a Chofnodion  
Pwyllgorau  
Etholiadau  
Adroddiad Blynyddol i Rieni/Cyfarfod  
Blynyddol gyda Rhieni  
a llawer mwy ...

Mae'r llinell gymorth ar gael rhwng 9.00a.m. a 10.00p.m. yn ystod dyddiau'r wythnos ac 11.00a.m. a 4.00p.m. ar y penwythnosau, ac eithrio gwyliau cyhoeddus a gwyliau banc.

Mae cost pob galwad ar raddfa leol  
Mae gwasanaeth dwyieithog ar gael.

# Mandatory Training Update - December 2013

## Clerk training

All Clerks bar 2 have attended this training and arrangements will be made shortly to ensure these 2 clerks receive training.

## Who needs to attend Clerk training and by when?

All existing clerks to governors within 12 months of their appointment.

## Induction training

We maintain a current list of all those governors who still need to attend this training and 3 more sessions are scheduled for next term as below and all those on this list will be contacted direct shortly encouraging them to attend one of the available sessions. **If governors cannot attend any of these sessions they will be given the opportunity to do this course via our eLearning package. Please note this is the only course that is currently available via eLearning.**

Date	Venue	Time
Mon 20 Jan	Corporate Suite, Civic Offices, Barry	6.00-8.00pm
Mon 17 Feb	Corporate Suite, Civic Offices, Barry	4.30-6.30pm
Tue 25 Mar	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Barry	6.00-8.00pm

## How do I book on Induction training?

Bookings can be made by emailing [governors@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:governors@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

## Who needs to attend Induction training and by when?

All new governors appointed after 1 Sep 2013 and all those governors appointed from 1 Sep 2011 who have not already attended Induction training. New governors from 1 Sep 13 must attend this training within 12 months of their appointment and those appointed from 1 Sep 11 must attend by 31 August 14.

## Chair training

Three sessions have been scheduled for next term and all Chairs of governors will be emailed direct encouraging them to attend one of the available sessions. At the moment we are focusing on complying with the mandatory requirements so these courses are restricted to existing Chairs only. However, we will be making this course available to Vice Chairs in future and further details will be circulated at a later date.

## Who needs to attend Chair training and by when?

All existing chairs of governors within 6 months of their appointment.

## Data training

We maintain a current list of all those governors who still need to attend this training and 3 sessions are scheduled for next term as below and all those on this list will be contacted direct shortly encouraging them to attend one of the available sessions.

Date	Venue	Time
Tue 4 Feb	Corporate Suite, Civic Offices, Barry	6.00-8.00pm
Thu 6 Mar	Corporate Suite, Civic Offices, Barry	4.30-6.30pm
Wed 2 Apr	Corporate Suite, Civic Offices, Barry	6.00-8.00pm

## How do I book on Data training?

Bookings can be made by emailing [governors@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:governors@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

## Who needs to attend Data training and by when?

All new governors appointed after 1 Sep 2013 and all governors re-appointed or re-elected from 1 Sep 2013 who have not already attended Data training between 1 Sep 12 and 31 Aug 13.

## Why is mandatory training being introduced?

Governing bodies have a duty to improve school performance and promote the highest standards of educational achievement for all learners. To do this, governors must have the knowledge to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively to enable them to contribute to the school improvement agenda. It is Welsh

Government's view that mandatory training will have the most impact on raising standards in school governance.

## What happens if I don't attend mandatory training within the prescribed timescale?

You will automatically be suspended for 6 months and if you do not attend the training during that time you will be disqualified.

## Who is responsible for suspending and disqualifying governors who do not attend mandatory training?

The governing body.

## What measures are GSU putting in place to ensure compliance with the new Regulations?

Training has been scheduled as indicated above because GSU recognises that governors are volunteers and several opportunities are being made available to enable them to attend and avoid suspension becoming necessary.

## Who should I contact if I have any queries about mandatory training?

Please contact GSU by emailing [governors@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:governors@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) or by ringing **01446 709107** (direct line).

**John Sparks**  
Head of Governor Support

## Vale Youth Service Summer Teenscheme

During August 2013, the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service provided two, four-week summer teenschemes for young people aged between 10 and 14 years. The scheme was aimed to provide an out-of-term childcare facility utilising age appropriate Play and Youth Work curriculum activities. This scheme was funded from the Vale of Glamorgan Children and Young People's Partnership 'Out of School Childcare Grant'.

The scheme operated Monday to Friday, from 9.15am to 3.45pm throughout August. The young people attended either a provision held in Area 41, Holton Road, Barry, or Llantwit Major Youth Centre, Station Road, Llantwit Major. While attending, they took part in a wide variety of activities, including: arts and crafts activities; water play activities; cooking activities; sports activities; media and music workshops; and play based activities that aided the community through a fundraising car wash and sponsored dance.

There were 105 individual young people who attended the scheme over the two locations. As part of the scheme, the young people had the chance to achieve a Bronze Youth Inspire Award that is a locally recognised award that highlights the achievements of young people through their active participation in activities. Of these 105 young people, 54 young people completed this award and are being recognised at a Youth Achievement Ceremony in November.

An evaluation was conducted with young people, their parents/carers and also staff who worked on the scheme. The overall comments returned from the scheme were very positive, including a parent's review saying 'Scheme very high quality standard with approachable reliable staff, enabling my children to enjoy informal fun activities and play'.

If you have any questions regarding the scheme, please contact **Peter Williams, Curriculum, Development and Attainment Officer for the Vale Youth Service**, on **01446 792141**.

# Online admissions for Vale secondary school places open 7 October 2013

The Vale of Glamorgan Council online admissions service for transfer to secondary schools in September 2014 will open for applications on 7 October 2013.

In November, parents will also be able to use this service to apply for Reception places for September 2014 and from January 2014 parents will be able to apply online for nursery places for next academic year.

The online service makes it easy for parents to apply for Vale of Glamorgan school places. The system is quick and easy to use and the council says:

- You can apply from home 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- There is no risk your application will be lost in the post
- You will receive an email confirming that your application has been submitted and received by the council
- The system is secure and has a series of security features that will prevent others from seeing your information
- You will be able to view your child's place offer on your online account on the published offer day.

Councillor Chris Elmore, Cabinet member for children's services, said: "The traditional paper-based process means parents have to fill in paper forms, send them to the council, wait for them to be processed and then wait again for a response. Our online system means that parents can apply for a school place and get an automatic reply saying their applications have been received. Parents can also track the status of their application at any time.

"The process is very secure and data is protected at all times because parents can only access information relating to their child by using a unique user name and password."

The traditional paper-based admissions process remains unaffected for those not wishing to use the online service.

For more details on the application process and to view the "Parents Guide to School Admissions", view the councils website, [www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

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## Vale Youth Forum

During the build-up towards Local democracy Week 2013, the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service has been working towards increasing the numbers of young people involved with the Vale Youth Forum (VYF). The VYF is a registered charity that brings together young people aged 11-25 to discuss issues that affect them and their represented schools and youth organisations. The Forum enables young people in the Vale of Glamorgan to have a say on decisions that have direct implications on them. This is highlighted in the VYF slogan, "Young Voices, More Choices".



By working with current VYF members, our goal is that during the autumn term, after having reached all secondary schools and youth organisations, both statutory and voluntary, at least two members from each establishment will be elected onto the VYF. In order to achieve this, election packs have been created and distributed which included materials on the VYF and how to run a successful election campaign. The VYF are also holding a recruitment event on 13/11/13 at Barry Memorial Hall. Through these efforts and thanks to VYF members taking part in a broadcast on Bro Radio, we hope that membership will flourish and by the end of November 2013 have an enthusiastic, well represented and diverse VYF.

This will be the starting point of an exciting Vale of Glamorgan Council promise to set up a Youth Cabinet and see the first Vale of Glamorgan Youth Mayor elected. VYF members will have the opportunity to undergo a range of training which will prepare them for elections onto the Youth Cabinet and ultimately be seen as a key candidate for the Youth Mayor position. Throughout this process we will widen young people's knowledge and involvement in the democratic process of the Vale of Glamorgan Council which is a key aim of the Welsh National Assembly.

The Vale Youth Forum and vision of a Youth Cabinet and Youth Mayor go hand in hand and rely on one another. They need the support of all stakeholders in order to reach their full potential and truly represent the voice of young people in the Vale of Glamorgan.

For more info on the Vale Youth Forum please email

[valeyouthforum@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:valeyouthforum@hotmail.co.uk) or ring **Ve Van de Voorde, Participation Officer** on **02920 701254**.

## “Moving on Up” Fun Day

“Moving on up” Fun Day was held in Llantwit Major Comprehensive school during the Summer Holidays. Transition pupils from local primary schools were invited to bring along their parent/guardian and learn together in their new school.

Free fun activities included:

- **Delicious lunch box ideas** – everyone made healthy apple and sultana muffins
- **So you think you can’t draw** – all the pupils learnt how to draw a portrait of their adult companion.
- **Wicked maths games** – discovering the quick and easy way for the 11 x times tables.

All these courses were provided by Adult and Community Learning.

The parents enjoyed the informal learning experience and the children gained confidence to support transition to their new comprehensive school.

For more information on courses [www.valecourses.org](http://www.valecourses.org)



## Management Committee Membership 2012-14

The Management Committee is comprised of 15 elected governors plus the two Parent Governor Representatives (one each from the Primary and Secondary sectors).

No.	Title	Initial	Surname	School
1	Mr	N	Craggs	Gwenfo C/W Primary
2	Cllr Mr	C	Elmore	Barry Comp & Holton Primary
3	Mrs	M	Gibbs	Llantwit Major Comp & Romilly Primary
4	Mrs	S	Hodges	Ysgol Gwaun y Nant & Ysgol Sant Baruc
5	Mr	P	Lewis	Cowbridge Comp
5	Mrs	A	Males	Cogan Primary & St Cyres Comp
7	Mr	M	Mason	Llanilltud Fawr Prim & Ysgol Dewi Sant
8	Dr	M	Price	St Richard Gwyn R/C High
9	Mrs	C	Roach	Llangan Primary
10	Mr	P	Sampson	Cadoxton Primary
11	Mr	D	Treharne	Llansannor C/W Prim & Ysgol Gwaun y Nant
12	Mr	S	Williams	Rhws Primary
13	Mrs	P	Hardy	All Saints C/W Primary
14	Mrs	S	Williams	All Saints C/W Primary
15	Mrs	K	Kemp	Llancarfan Primary
PGR - Prim	Mr	L	Kellaway	Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg/Ysgol Nant Talwg
PGR - Sec	Dr	C	Brown	Llantwit Major Comprehensive

Any governors interested in becoming a member of the VSGA Management Committee should contact John Sparks by email at [JSparks@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:JSparks@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

