

Vale School Governor's Association and Governor Support Unit

Newsletter

Note from the Chair

The appalling weather has been preoccupying me this term. Where is all this rain coming from? The water meadows on each side of the road as I travel from Dinas Powys to St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School in Barry have been under water for weeks. Fortunately, the fields are doing their duty and slowing the flow of water so that the school, touch wood, has not yet been flooded despite the deluges, and we have not had to deal again with the dispiriting consequences of being inundated.

Meanwhile, on a similar dispiriting note, you will all have had your school budgets for 2024/25 from the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The amount of money available to the Welsh Government is too low to sustain Public Services at the level we are accustomed to and this is reflected in the allocation to Local Authorities. The Vale has had to make some difficult choices. I don't envy the Councillors. They are between a rock and a hard place.

The consequence is that Governors are being given less money than is required to run their school according to the regulations they must follow. Some forty per cent of the schools in the Vale were forecasting deficit budgets for 2023/24. The situation will be worse for 2024/5.

Already there are news reports of schools in other authorities raising alarm bells. Headteachers in Conwy and Denbighshire have already written to parents with their concerns. Schools throughout Wales are trimming staff. These are worrying times.

Following our opportunity to speak to Senedd Members on the parlous state of school finances before Christmas, Vale Governors Association will be continuing our public campaign to highlight how the learners in our care are being affected by the poor finances.

Happy Easter! Perhaps it will have stopped raining by then.

Dr Martin Price

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

Issue 57

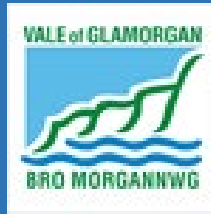
Spring Term 2024

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



We still need more School Governors who look like me!

I am from a working-class background, from Southeast London, and in 23 years of working in education, I do not see many school governors who look like me. I wanted to write this article because I believe in the power of genuine inclusion. I would like to see more differences in our school governing bodies, in terms of age, race, gender, sexuality and class.



When I was at school in seventies, I felt the system was against people like me. I was discouraged from dreaming too big. I needed to be aware of my place and was repeatedly told that I would not amount to much because of my background. I did not enjoy school from the age of 11 years old. I was an outsider that was told I could belong if I was good at sport and knew my place.

In September 2022, when the concept of being a community governor was presented to me, I decided that the role was not for me. I reverted to the 11-year-old version of me, with my arms folded and was overtly disengaged. I decided that I could not be a member of any governing body because I was not 'posh' enough, not old enough and I was the wrong skin tone.

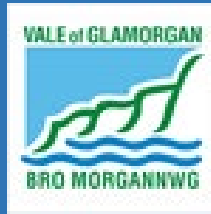
However, I was told in no uncertain terms by trusted colleagues; you cannot advocate for inclusion if you refuse to engage. I read an [article](#) a year ago and it resonated with me, so I decided to commit to becoming a Community Governor in a local primary school. It stated,

"Governing bodies should represent the community they serve. If you can't relate to the community, how can you understand and then do things in the best interests of the students?"

Governors are responsible for appointing senior staff, making sure money is well spent, sitting on various panels, including for exclusions and complaints. They hold a great deal of power and responsibility because they need to act as a critical friend to the head teacher. When members of governing bodies hold different opinions, are from different backgrounds, there will be different perspectives. This range of perspectives translates as more informed decision making.

You do not have to be from the global majority to be a good governor but **being actively inclusive can make you an incredible governor**. Being actively inclusive takes effort and it is not a passive activity. There is accessible training available and the communities we serve deserve actively inclusive governing bodies.

What would I tell my slightly younger self when I sat in my first governor meeting? You belong here and your voice is as valid as others around the table. - **Martine Booker-Southard; Community Governor, Holton Primary.**



School Governing Body Equality and Diversity Champion – model role description



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

This document is provided to give school governing bodies in Wales an understanding of the benefits of appointing an equality and diversity champion for their school and the duties they may perform. The appointment of an equality and diversity champion does not alter the requirements on a governing body to fulfil its statutory equality functions as listed.

Why does my governing body need an equality and diversity champion?

All schools in Wales should strive to be as inclusive and welcoming as possible. Differences should be celebrated, not mocked and questioned. Schools should have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of bullying and harassment. An equality and diversity champion is one way to show the whole school community that your governing body takes this seriously and wants to lead by example.

What's involved?

An equality and diversity champion should be prepared to speak up for equality and diversity at all times and in all policy making decisions. They should be comfortable in challenging school leaders and governors where they think the school is falling short or acting in a way that is discriminatory. They should also raise awareness about the issues related to diversity and inclusion to promote equality. Champions should also work with the head teacher and local authority to monitor and update the school's strategic equality plans and equality objectives. This will provide accountability for the school on the effectiveness of its policies.

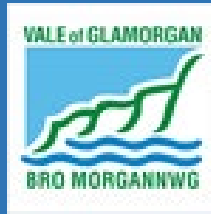
What special qualifications, training or experience do I need to take on this role?

None. An equality and diversity champion just needs to be passionate about fairness for all. However, a champion may wish to take advantage of any additional training offered by their local authority or consortium related to equality and diversity. This will help to ensure they're equipped with the knowledge and tools to help hold their school leadership team to account in a meaningful way.

Where can I find help and support on diversity issues?

There are many resources online to help identify discrimination. Third sector organisations such as [Show Racism the Red Card](#), [Stonewall Cymru](#) and [SNAP Cymru](#) are all good places to start. Your local authority may also offer equality training, on top of what's offered in the mandatory governor induction training package. For staff with ME backgrounds it would be helpful to also signpost them to [BAME Ed Network Wales](#).



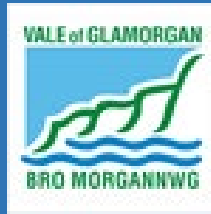


School Governing Body Equality and Diversity Champion – model role description

What questions should the equality and diversity champion be asking the head teacher and the governing body?

The equality and diversity champion should be prepared to ask what the head teacher and governing body are doing to ensure the school is a beacon for diversity and promoting equality. Here are some examples:

- How does the school ethos celebrate differences?
- How are we developing the whole school community's understanding of different cultures and backgrounds?
- Please explain how allegations of racism/homophobia/transphobia/bullying related to disabilities and additional learning needs (involving both staff and learners) are dealt with at the school. Is this approach good enough?
- Who is the named support person/s for staff and learners to approach if they have concerns? What processes are in place to help staff and learners speak up without fear of reproach and in confidence their issue will be dealt with properly?
- In what ways do you think the teaching and learning in the school reflects diversity as a core cross cutting theme of the curriculum? What innovations and initiatives are being put in place?
- How inclusive is the school uniform policy?
- How are learners' thoughts and opinions about equality and diversity in school captured and taken into account?
- What steps are being taken to ensure the school staff and governing body are as diverse and representative of our community as possible?
- What checks are in place to ensure the school's compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011?
- What are we doing to implement the recommendations from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group: final report?
- How do we ensure any changes to school policies and new school policies do not adversely affect any particular groups?
- What more can we do as a school to champion equality and diversity?



Vale of Glamorgan – Safeguarding Update

Training and Vale Governors

Which governors are supposed to do what Safeguarding training?

The LA's position is that all governors should undertake the Welsh Government Safeguarding elearning modules available via the links below and that all Designated Safeguarding Governors (DSGs) should attend the DSG specific training for that role when it is included within the termly governor training programme that is emailed regularly direct to all governors.

<https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/65cf3917-fe44-4f34-9dfd-ff7eba11e6f6/en> (Introduction - Module 1)

<https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/0b7409c9-3dce-4d43-80ea-36ee57c28535/en> (Roles & Responsibilities - Module 2)

What about the other Safeguarding training module that has recently appeared on the termly training programme?

This training has been developed by the Central South Consortium (CSC) as one of 4 modules for all newly appointed governors as part of their Empowering Governors Programme. The 4 modules are Induction, Data, Safeguarding and Enabling Equity and Excellence. Induction and Data are mandatory but the other 2 are not. The idea is that these 4 modules enable new governors to develop their knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to successfully undertake their role in supporting school improvement and promoting the highest standards and aspirations for all learners. Experienced governors can also attend one or more of these sessions to remain updated for their role. The Safeguarding element focuses on understanding and promoting a culture of vigilance and these sessions offer governors the opportunity to attend a virtual session if that is their preference over elearning. The key factor is that all governors should attend some form of Safeguarding as it is such an important area.

Is Safeguarding training mandatory for governors?

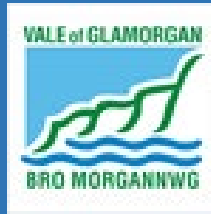
No, it is not one of Welsh Government's mandatory training modules for governors but Safeguarding is a very important area that all governors should be aware of.

Do Designated Safeguarding Governors need to attend DSG training?

Yes, it is a reasonable expectation that governors who take on this important role should remain updated for it. It is also Council policy that all DSGs should attend training for the role. If they are not prepared to attend training then it is reasonable that the governing body should appoint someone else to the role.

How often should DSGs attend training for the role?

At least every 2 years to remain up to date for the role. Expiry will be on the 2nd anniversary of the previously attended DSG training session.



Vale of Glamorgan – Safeguarding Update

Training and Vale Governors

Can Chairs of governors also be the DSG?

There is nothing to prevent Chairs also being the DSG however we strongly advise that it is another governor because it ensures a different voice can be heard. It also avoids Chairs becoming overburdened with roles as being Chair already involves a significant amount of time and work for a volunteer.

Can staff governors also be the DSG?

There is nothing to prevent staff governors also being the DSG however we strongly advise that it is another governor for the same reasons as above and it brings neutrality to the role if it is undertaken by someone who is not employed by the school.

Do governors need to be DBS checked?

There is currently no legal requirement for governors to be DBS checked because they should not have unsupervised access to pupils in their role as a governor. However, it is Council policy that all DSG's undertake a DBS check for that role.

Do staff governors still need to undertake the Safeguarding training referenced here even though they will have undertaken Safeguarding training for their day job?

Yes, that is our recommendation because the role of governor obviously differs from that of an employee. This also applies to any governor who has a day job that requires them to undertake safeguarding training. Again, we would still recommend they complete the governor specific safeguarding training alongside it.

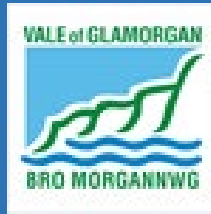
Who monitors which governors do what Safeguarding training?

Clerks should monitor what Safeguarding training their governors have done and to assist with this, all Chairs, Headteachers and Clerks will each term be provided with the actual training attendance of their governors for the previous term. It is good practice for Clerks to regularly check in and remind their governors of Safeguarding training opportunities and to maintain their records accordingly. This information will be useful when schools are inspected by Estyn.

What if I still have any queries or questions regarding what Safeguarding training I should be undertaking?

Please contact the Governor Support Unit via email at governors@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or by 'phone on 01446 709107/125 or the Safeguarding Team at SafeguardingEducation@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or by 'phone on 01446 704828.





Vale of Glamorgan – Trans Inclusion Schools Toolkit

A revised Transgender Inclusion Toolkit and Guidance document for schools has recently been approved by the Council's Cabinet. This document has been shared with schools directly and will be available on the Council's intranet for others to view.

As you may be aware, a consultation on the revised document was undertaken in 2023 and the results of the consultation and revised toolkit have recently been considered by the Council's Learning and Culture scrutiny committee before being referred to Cabinet for final determination.

This guidance forms part of a wider suite of documents produced by our education department to support schools with issues such as bullying and inclusion. Click on the file below to view the document.

VoGC Trans
Inclusion Schools
toolkit.pdf

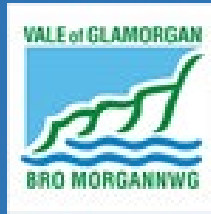
VGSA Management Committee 2022-24

The Management Committee is comprised of elected Governors plus the two parent Governor Representative (one each from the Primary and Secondary Sectors)

No	Name	School
1	Mr P Cate	Jenner Park Primary
2	Vacancy	Vacancy
3	Ms J Evans	Fairfield Primary & and Gladstone Primary
4	Mrs M Gibbs	Romilly Primary
5	Mr G Griffiths	Ysgol Gwaun y Nant & Ysgol Sant Curig
6	Cllr W Hennessey	Rhws Primary
7	Mrs C Hunt	St Nicholas C/W Primary
8	Mrs S Jenkins	St Andrews Major C/W Primary and St Cyres Comprehensive
9	Dr C Lee	St Cyres Comprehensive
10	Cllr J Lynch-Wilson	Llantwit Major Comprehensive
11	Dr M Price (Chair)	St.Richard Gwyn RC High School
12	Mr D Treharne	Llansannor C/W Primary
13	Mrs T Vaughan-Taylor	Cowbridge Comprehensive
14	Mr O Williams	Ysgol Sant Baruc
15	Cllr M Wilson	Fairfield Primary & Victoria Primary

Parent Governor Representatives (PGR's)

Parent Governor Representative Primary – L Barrowclough- Llandough Primary School
Parent Governor Representative Secondary – G van de Burgt – Whitmore High School



Vale of Glamorgan Governor Support Unit

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VSGA has an email address that you may contact us on. It's VSGA@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or alternatively you can contact VSGA by post at: VSGA Governor Support Unit, Learning & Skills Directorate. Vale of Glamorgan Council, Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry CF63 4RU



Happy Easter
to all
Governors