

## Vale School Governor's Association and Governor Support Unit Newsletter

### Note from the Chair

The internet meme about the supposedly Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times" seems apposite at the moment. The world situation in which the young people in our care are growing up seems ever more precarious and difficult. Our role is to make sure they are properly equipped to cope with it all and maybe make the world they inherit a bit better than the one we are leaving them.

I am heartened at the way, particularly in primary schools that the Curriculum for Wales has changed the way we look at what we teach learners. I like the model of basing learning on the local area as a focus for national and world concepts- studying the Cadoxton or the Ogmore to study how rivers work, while also bearing in mind wider lessons from the Severn, Thames, Nile and Amazon. We need to look at what we and the learners in our care can do locally to make our place better, with positive consequences for Wales, the UK and the wider world.

And the formal announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Education in October adds to our interesting times as School Governors. Following a review of the future direction and roles and responsibilities, she will "bring together the current functions of the National Academy for Education Leadership and some of the functions of the regional consortia and local authority partnerships into a new national body. The body will be responsible for designing and delivering professional learning and leadership support on a national level in response to changing practitioner and Welsh Government priorities."

The detail of how this will happen has yet to be revealed, but what it means for Governors in the Vale is that in due course, Central South Consortium will cease, and its activities be delivered either by the new national body or via Local Authorities.

VSGA's concern is to make sure that the standards set in the current excellent training provided to Governors by the Vale and CSC continue to be met. We will be doing all we can to make sure you have the knowledge and information you need to help your schools meet the challenges we all face.

And, to lighten the anticyclonic gloom, we are coming up to the end of a long term. May I wish you and your families and loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy and prosperous less interesting New Year. **Dr Martin Price**

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

### Issue 59

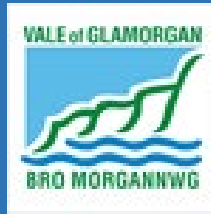
#### Autumn Term 2024

#### 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



## School Attendance

### An update from the Vale of Glamorgan Inclusion Service

School attendance is a focus nationally. With school attendance rates discussed almost weekly in the media and schools struggling to reach pre-covid levels it is of no surprise. School attendance affects attainment, poverty levels and wellbeing for all our learners.

At the end of 23-24 the Vale of Glamorgan were ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in Wales. The average school attendance for both primary and secondary schools in Wales was 89.0%, the Vale of Glamorgan's overall average was 89.4%. Although this is positive news we still have some way to go to ensure all our school age children are receiving the best possible educational opportunities. You will hopefully have seen our new Attendance campaign Posters outside schools and within the community reminding families 'Miss School, Miss out'.



We have seen schools focus on attendance over the last year and there has been a concern about the number of days lost to holidays. A letter was sent out to all families from the Inclusion service outlining that the LA do not recommend any school authorising holidays. Although as a local authority we know that it is up to schools' discretion if they authorise up to 10 days for holiday's, we have seen a marked improvement in schools that no longer authorise any holiday days. Within the new Estyn Framework, inspectors are looking closely at how schools are looking to improve attendance and challenging absences. Any learner with an attendance below 90% is now considered to be persistently absent (a change made by Welsh Government from 80% a year ago) which means that any learner who has missed 19 days within the school year will be categorised as such. Often discussions centre around families accessing cheaper holidays in term times but we know that for many this may result in anxiety at the prospect of returning to school, missed learning that affects attainment and confidence and difficulty in reengaging with their friends.

Dinas Powys had a successful Estyn inspection at the end of their term last year where attendance was raised within an identified "spotlight" where it was highlighted that a 'detailed (attendance) tracking system is having a positive impact and pupil attendance is improving'. Dinas Powys staff gave a presentation at a recent Wellbeing and Attendance Forum to show how they use their attendance tracker effectively and discussed identifying patterns of absence as well as how they can monitor and celebrate positive attendance.

Exclusions is also another priority within the Vale. We have seen the number of exclusions increase post covid and this has resulted in 2667.5 days lost to learning last year. We are working in partnership with services including the Education Psychologist Service, the Engagement team, YJESS, In Reach, Youth Engagement Officers, SEMHP, ALN and school ALNCO's to look at preventing dysregulation within schools that could result in exclusions. We know the best place for our learners is to be supported within our schools.

We welcome all Governors to play an active role within their schools at supporting their schools' challenge issues within school attendance and exclusions. If any Governors would like any further information or training then please do not hesitate to contact **Amanda Geddes, Acting Inclusion Manager** on [ageddes@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:ageddes@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)



## Learning Links Team Autumn Term Update

Meet the team



Martine Booker-Southard – Learning Links Manager



Sandra Saif  
*Learning Links Lead  
Casework Officer*



Emma Tipples  
*Learning Links Team  
Casework Coordinator*



Linda Collins  
*Business Support  
Officer*



Amy Penberthy  
*Business Support  
Officer*



Mai Alassi  
*Learning Support  
Assistant*



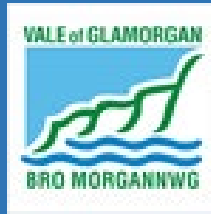
Leza Legg  
*Learning Support  
Assistant*



Nicole Holtam  
*Learning Support  
Assistant*



Ellie Griffith  
*Learning Support  
Assistant*



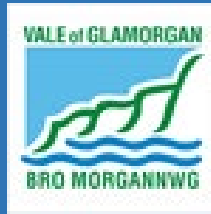
**A snapshot of some of the important work our team has been doing to support the young people within the Vale who may be more vulnerable to underachievement and poorer wellbeing with all aspects of their education to overcome any barriers to their success, ensuring they achieve their full potential.**

**Mai Alassi:**

1. Support school to achieve School of Sanctuary (SoS) award, through advice and delivering trainings to all Vale schools who have signed the pledge to become a School of Sanctuary.
2. Provide advice and training for schools to upskill their staff on how best to support their multilingual pupils. Whilst also providing targeted support when needed- covering Penarth and Barry cluster.
3. Support Children Looked After (CLA) post 16, track attainment and attendance.
4. Support with school with family engagements events and facilitate school/home communication: Holton school / St Cyres/ Whitmore and Gladstone.
5. Support with preadmission meetings within schools all over the Vale.
6. Support in Afghan Relocations and Assistance Program (ARAP) and MOD Entitled Persons – by collecting data, pre-admission, and admission meetings.

**Leza Legg:**

1. Predominately covering Llantwit cluster schools, supporting schools with pupils from the Global Majority, including their preadmission meetings, One Page Profile, sorting out school uniform, lunch, PE, snacks, trips, any queries from school to parents and from parents to school, communication between schools, parents, interpreters, and MoD Camp regarding various issues. Supporting schools in finding correct support for Global Majority pupils and making decisions depending on wellbeing/ level of learning and supporting pupils in classrooms.
2. Supporting with any queries from school to parents and from parents to school regarding various issues and encouraging parents to communicate with their children using their home language, being proud of their culture, language, and background
3. Delivering Training to schools for Schools of Sanctuary which includes:
  - Multilingual Training
  - School of Sanctuary Introduction
  - Context Training (UNCHR Train the Trainer)
4. Attend CLA Reviews on behalf of the Vale Learning Links Team.
5. Attend parents School meetings (Global Majority) in different schools and mediate between schools and parents who speak Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi.
6. Support schools in the Vale regarding the use of EAL Assessment and Bell Foundation (when schools ask for guide and support).



## **Nicole Holtam:**

### **CLA**

- Liaised with multiple schools across the Vale, as well as out of county, to help them get registered onto our Professional Portal and to update PEPs to ensure CLA pupil voice is being recorded on their PEP.
- Quality checking PEPs that we receive on the portal to ensure that they meet our standards and have successfully recorded the voice of the pupil.

### **Service Children**

- Meeting weekly with service children at Ysgol Y Ddraig to work on the Service Children: Your Views project.

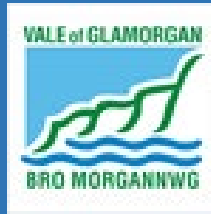
### **YIS**

- Delivered training to 13 schools in the Vale and supported them with implementing the YIS in their schools.
- Created a questionnaire for YIS pupils to gain pupil voice – sent to Victoria Primary School.
- Signed up 16 more schools for online YIS training – starting on 9<sup>th</sup> October.

## **Ellie Griffith:**

### **Young Carers**

1. Young Carers Your Views Project – I have worked closely with the Young Carers at St Cyres Comprehensive School to develop the Young Carers Your Views Project. The aim of the project is to gather the voices of our Vale young carers and find out how schools and the local authority can better support young carers through their educational journey. The project has now been launched to all Schools within the Vale and responses will be fed back to relevant schools to better tailor the support of young carers in education.
2. Raised awareness of young carers by meeting with the Young Carer Leads in both the Primary and Secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan (23 schools visited) discussing the following:
  - explain the Vale of Glamorgan referral process for young carers
  - highlight any outside of school support that is available for young carers (e.g Young Carers Project at YMCA)
  - Suggest ways in which the school can raise awareness of young carers to both the staff and pupils
  - Signpost the school to staff training delivered by TuVida
  - Put schools in contact with TuVida to work towards their Young Carers in Schools Award
3. Visited Holton Primary School to deliver a presentation about young carers to help support the Year 5's enquiry topic of which they were currently learning about young carers for. Answered many incredible questions by all the year 5 pupils to help support their learning and understanding.
4. Help support data collection of young carers in the Vale by monitoring and creating young carer involvements on ONE.



## **Service Children**

Currently meeting weekly with the Service Children at Ysgol Y Ddraig to work on the Service Children Your Views Project. The project aim is to gather the voices of Service Children within the Vale to find out how schools and the local authority can better support their Service Children through their educational journey. The responses from the project will be shared with all relevant schools to encourage tailored support for Service Children in school.

## **Global Majority**

Hold pre-admission meetings at both Primary and Secondary schools all over the Vale to gather information for the school and admissions whilst also ensuring the parents / care providers of those young people can ask any questions or queries they may have. When needed a translator is provided to ensure all information is transferred correctly.

Helping to support the efficiency of the Support in Afghan Relocations and Assistance Program (ARAP) and MOD Entitled Persons at the East Camp MoD base in St Athan by:

- Attending weekly meetings in person on camp to answer any queries on behalf of schools, the families, the local authority or the MoD.
- Assisting with data collection and updating the live spreadsheet that is accessed by admissions and the MoD to ensure school placements are being offered to all young people on the camp.
- Communicating daily with the MoD to ensure all key information is being shared to all relevant recipients. (e.g new arrivals, families moving on, inset days for schools etc)

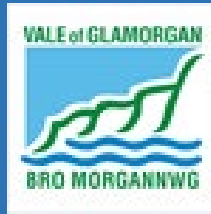
## **CLA**

Attending CLA reviews to support the communication between education, social services, health, and the local authority – this ensures we are all working collaboratively with the young persons best interest at the forefront. By attending CLA reviews on behalf of the Learning Links Team I can ensure schools are aware of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process for the Vale of Glamorgan and voice the importance of using the portal to update them 6 monthly.

## **Young person friendly policies**

For young people to have access to the policies for each of the vulnerable groups, I have re-worded and made the policies young person friendly to ensure all young people know their rights and what support they are entitled to within school. These documents will then be shared onto schools and added to our Learning Links Team page for young people to access.





## Letter to all Schools Central South Consortium Area FAO Governing Bodies/ Headteachers

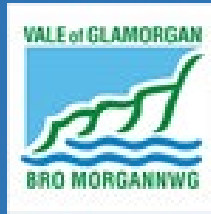
Dear colleague,

### **Middle Tier Review**

You will be aware that Welsh Government (WG) commissioned a review of Improvement Services, referenced as the Middle Tier Review. You will also be aware that following on from that review, WG provided guidance to local authorities on re-configuring school improvement services by November 2024.

Following a review by the five local authorities that constitute the Central South Consortium area, there was a consensus across the five local authorities to the core principles of a future operating model. These core principles are summarised as follows:

- I) School Improvement should be underpinned by collective responsibility and be seen as a collective endeavour and this principle should underpin all future approaches.
- II) The delivery of school improvement functions are undertaken by individual local authorities:
  - ‘Collaborative Learning Partnerships’ are developed in each LA and co-constructed with headteachers. The form and function of these Collaboratives will depend on local context and existing mechanisms that facilitate collaboration.
  - Some Collaborative Learning Partnerships may work across LA boundaries where this is beneficial. For example, where secondary schools and their feeder primaries work across LA boundaries or in the case of Welsh medium or special schools to ensure sufficient scale.
  - The role of Improvement Partners are revised to reflect the role/responsibilities of Collaborative Learning Partnerships and to provide more explicit recognition of the role of local authorities and their statutory responsibilities.
  - Improvement Partners working with English medium primary and secondary schools will be employed by local authorities and will have a reporting line/accountability to their respective Director of Education.
  - Improvement Partners working with Welsh medium and special schools to be pooled on a sub-regional footprint aligned with Health Board footprints, recognising the specialist and scarce nature of this resource.
  - All Improvement Partners to be part of a regional network to provide professional development and protect against ‘insularity’ while also enabling the brokering of school to school support across LAs where this could be advantageous.
  - Local Authorities to develop governance arrangements to allow representatives from Collaborative Learning Partnerships to come together and collectively discuss and reflect upon the progress being made by schools.
  - Professional Learning and Curriculum Support should continue to be organised and delivered as it is now across the five local authorities within the CSC regional footprint.
  - The current business support functions within CSC will be reviewed as part of the new arrangements of LA and Regional working.



These principles have now been formally shared with the five local authority Cabinets, who having fully considered the reports (links to each report: [Bridgend](#) [Cardiff](#) [Merthyr Tydfil](#) [Rhondda Cynon Taf](#) [Vale of Glamorgan](#) ), have formally agreed to the core principles associated with the proposed development of future school improvement and have requested that they receive a further report detailing a proposal for a future model of operation.

As a consequence of the decisions taken by each Cabinet, Chief Executives and Education Directors will now work together to provide detailed proposals on the core principles that have been agreed by Cabinet Members.

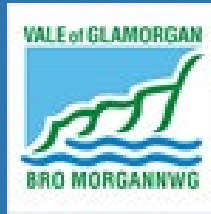
Finally, once the next stage of the review is concluded, any outcomes will at the appropriate time be shared with all stakeholders, which will of course include yourselves.

Yours faithfully,

**Mark Shephard,**  
**Lead Chief Executive**  
**Central South Consortium Area**







## Vale of Glamorgan Pupil Engagement Team An introduction to AvI Robots

The Pupil Engagement are a small but dynamic team in the directorate who provide a range of advice and services and preventative projects in schools. In the last 18 months the team has worked closely with health care, digital teams and schools to develop its knowledge base and use of technology and access across the LA.

### What is AvI Robot?

This is equipment that looks and is a small robot. It has a camera for live stream and a microphone for communicating and can be controlled easily by an app. The app control allow different levels of moving the robot and allowing visual access as well as lights to express feeling and to show when a learner is joining in the classrooms activities.

### How does the AvI Robot work?

The AVI is the robotic device is placed in the classroom and connected to the school WIFI. AVI live streams the classroom allowing a continue offer of high-quality education and wellbeing support being provided by the learners known and trusted adults. The integrated speaker allows the child to talk to their classmates and staff and to engage and be included any tasks, school work or other events. Offering a continued connection to teachers, friends and all the ongoing activities in school can aid reintegration after long periods of absences and helps then get back on track for the future.

### How do we access an AvI Robot?

The VoG offer the AVI robot under specific health and disengagement criteria this as part of social emotional and mental health panel for persistently disengaged learners, medical or highly complex health care needs as identified by schools. It is used at schools individual discretion and agreement on an individual basis and can be integrated support for social and academic access from the learners own classroom.

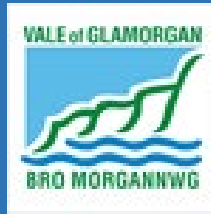
The Vale of Glamorgan Council currently has 10 robots that can be allocated for 2 terms and allows access for up to 25 hours to their own school, personalised plan curriculum, social activities and interventions.

The benefits are that there is simplicity to allocate, train, provide resources and monitor. There are fewer delays in access the current curriculum. It maintains social and academic contact with peers and means pupils are engaged and ready for return under a phased plan where needed. Both the school and families have access to technical support and training.



See the AvI in action <https://www.youtube.com/@Nolsolation/videos> and learn more about the range of use and impact on the users.

If you would like to request a demonstration for your school or just want to know more, contact Pupil Engagement [pupilengagement@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:pupilengagement@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)



## VGSA Management Committee 2024-26

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 Peter Cate (Vice-Chair)	Jenner Park Primary
2	Mr John Duxbury	St David's CiW Primary School
3	Ms Jodie Evans	Fairfield Primary & Gladstone Primary
4	Mr G Griffiths	Ysgol Gwaun y Nant & Ysgol Sant Curig
5	Mrs Jackie Griffiths	Fairfield Primary and St Joseph's RC Primary
6	Cllr Andrew Hennessey	Rhws Primary and St Helen's RC Primary
7	Mrs Ceri Hunt	St Nicholas C/W Primary and Oakfield Primary
8	Mrs Sarah Jenkins	St Andrews Major C/W Primary and St Cyres Comprehensive
9	Mr Gordon Kemp	St Nicholas CiW Primary and South Point Primary
10	Dr Chris Lee	St Cyres Comprehensive
11	Cllr Julie Lynch-Wilson	Llantwit Major Comprehensive and St Athan Primary School
12	Dr Martin Price (Chair)	St. Richard Gwyn RC High School
13	Mr Jasper Roberts	Llantwit Major Comprehensive and St Illtyd Primary
14	Mrs Terri Vaughan-Taylor	Cowbridge Comprehensive
15	Mr Owen Williams	Ysgol Sant Baruc
16	Cllr Mark 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

### Contact Details:

**John Sparks**  
**Head of Governor Support**  
**Tel; 01446 709106**  
**Email: [JSparks@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:JSparks@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)**

**Francesca Wright**  
**Senior Governor Support Officer**  
**Tel; 01446 709125**  
**Email: [fwright@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:fwright@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)**

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



**Wishing all Governors a  
Merry Christmas and a  
very Happy New year**