



GOVERNORS' NEWSLETTER

Vandyke Upper School

SPRING 2026

From the Chair of Governors



My name is David Groves, and I am delighted to introduce myself as Co-Chair of Governors at Vandyke Upper School. It is a privilege to work alongside such a committed team of staff and governors, all focused on ensuring that every student at Vandyke has the opportunities, support and environment they need to thrive.

As governors, our role is to provide strategic oversight, champion the school's values, and help drive continual improvement across all areas of school life.

A Strong Focus on Health & Safety

At Vandyke, we take health and safety extremely seriously. Ensuring the wellbeing of students, staff and visitors is a responsibility we never take lightly. To support this, we have recently introduced *Safesmart*, a modern software platform designed specifically for education settings. *Safesmart* enables schools to manage risk assessments, incident reporting, compliance tasks, safety checks and staff training in a clear and efficient way. This new system will help us stay proactive, organised and fully compliant, reinforcing our commitment to maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment.

Meet the Governor - Louie Jones

Having been a student at Vandyke, I know what a positive impact the school and its faculty had on my life, and career.

I currently work for a large manufacturing company, as an EHS Business Partner. So far in my career as a chartered health and safety practitioner, I have developed a strong understanding of health, safety and environmental management and law, across several industries.

My personal aim from joining the school as a governor is to expand my current understanding of the school and its operations, and the work that happens behind the scenes to keep the school running successfully, specifically from a facilities, finance, and HR perspective.

I'd also like to grow my professional skills through being involved in a governing structure, with the hope of bringing these developed skills into my day-to-day career.

Since leaving the school, I continue to be an active supporter of Vandyke, through volunteering with the schools Duke of Edinburgh team (wherever possible), which continues to be a great privilege.

I also hope to bring my experience both as a previous student, and in my current career capacity, to help the school continue to develop and run successfully.



Improvements to Local Roads & Campus Boundaries

For the past four years, we have consistently pressed for improvements to the road outside Vandyke and Gilbert Inglefield. We are pleased that the Council has now produced plans to introduce traffic-calming measures, widen the footpath, and create a new cycle path. We are currently in discussions with them about how these measures can be implemented to support increased safety at the start and end of the school day.

We have also recently completed the installation of a secure fence along the entire rear boundary beside Clipstone Brook. This important improvement will help prevent unauthorised access and further strengthen site security.

These developments reflect our ongoing commitment to making Vandyke an even safer, more welcoming place for all students.



Best regards,
David Groves, Co-Chair of Governors



Our Board of Governors

Headteacher

Leah Ferguson-Moore

Staff Governors

David Murphy

Sam Peplow

Carla Williams

Parent Governors

Pippa Bazalgette
(Co-Chair)

Leona Gerald-Okoli

Claire Martin

Denise Morgan

Gertrude Onichabor

Amy Vassell

Correy Voo

Community Governors

John Fields

David Groves
(Co-Chair)

Nia Haines

Michelle Johnson

Louie Jones

Bailey Knights

Paul Linnane

Brendan Thomas

Nikki Tooman

Clerk to Governors

Jo Sessions

The role of a school trustee

School governors and trustees are the largest volunteer group in the UK. More than 300,000 governors and trustees support schools across the country. They come from all kinds of backgrounds, bringing a range of skills and perspectives. Vandyke Upper School is a single academy trust and our trust board is made up of staff, parents and community trustees who are expected to act in the best interests of all our stakeholders – students, staff, parents and the local community.

Our trustees have three main functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the headteacher and senior leaders to account
- Overseeing financial performance and ensuring money is well spent

The trust board works as a team to fulfil their responsibilities and is united by a collective desire to support the school in providing the best experience possible for students. No specific experience is required and the strongest boards benefit from a range of perspectives and lived experiences.



Following our recent request for parent trustees, we are delighted that three parents have put themselves forward and have been appointed to the board. We have also welcomed three new community trustees in the past 6 months. We have included some information below on some of our new trustees and will share information on others in future newsletters. We are looking forward to working with all our trustees to support Vandyke to prepare students for their future lives, to make the most of opportunities available to them and to take their place as responsible, world-ready citizens.

Pippa Bazalgette, Co-Chair of Governors

Meet the Governor - Paul Linnane

I'm a proud dad of three children who all attend schools in Leighton Buzzard, so education is something I care about both professionally and personally.

In my working life, I'm Chief Data Officer in the UK energy sector, where I've spent over 20 years. My role involves working with all energy providers across the industry as well as regulators and government to help improve how data is used to support better decisions. I lead a team of around 50 people, focusing on developing others, good governance, and making change in a fair and structured way. I also chair a 'Data Trust' which involves co-ordinating decisions on the valid uses of personal energy data for a variety of projects. I bring a practical understanding of data, governance and financial oversight, and experience of asking the right questions to support good decision-making.



I want to support Vandyke as a high-achieving school, helping it use information sensibly, maintain its strengths, and ensure that all students leave with choices they feel confident about - whether academic, technical or vocational. I strongly believe in the power of education to shape life chances, and that every child, whatever their background, deserves to be treated fairly and supported to reach their potential.

For me, a successful school is one that balances strong pastoral care for those who need extra support with an environment that stretches and supports academically able students. As a governor, I would aim to contribute through thoughtful challenge, sound governance, clear strategy, and evidence-based decision-making.