



### Governing Body Pen Portraits 2024/2025

<b>Mr D Nisbett Chair of Governors</b>	David has been a Governor at Valley Gardens for over eight years. Both of his children attended the school. He is a teacher and senior leader in another school that teaches young people from ages 9 to 18.
<b>Mr D Godfrey Headteacher</b>	David is the Headteacher of the school. He has been working in education for 25 years and been a Headteacher for 15 of those years in first, primary and middle schools including an Executive Headship prior to taking up his role at Valley Gardens. In his spare time, he is a professional musician playing the trumpet and percussion for a number of local bands and artists.
<b>Mrs L Stearck Vice Chair of Governors</b>	Louisa has really enjoyed her role as a Parent Governor since 2016. She has 3 children, her eldest two have now left Valley and youngest has just started in Year 5. She is an NHS dentist who has worked locally for the last 20 years. She hopes that as a parent at the school she can represent other parents to ensure that the school provides the best possible experiences and opportunities for all children. As someone with no background in education it has taken her a while to learn all that happens in a busy school environment and appreciate the hard work that goes into providing the school environment that comes with Valley Gardens, she hopes that in her role she can do what she can to support this.
<b>Mrs L Johnson</b>	Lynn has had the privilege of serving as a Governor of Valley Gardens for 4 terms of office; first as a Staff Governor and latterly as a Co-opted Governor. She is a member of the Standards and Resources committees. Her career experience has been in the Education, Youth and Hospitality sectors. She is currently a volunteer for a national charity.  Lynn enjoys the role of Governor as a critical-friend, supporting the continual development of the school and its staff and pupils. It is a role that challenges in its aims to help guide, encourage and shape the school community.  She believes that education provides the building blocks for a positive future for all young people and that they should be able to fully partake and enjoy their 'journey' not only in academic outcomes but in all aspects of wider learning, personal development and social aspects of school-life.  Lynn has a particular interest in safeguarding, behaviour, wider learning and the extra-curricular enrichment opportunities offered.  On a personal level her passions are all things food, winter-sports and travel related.
<b>Mr P Baggett</b>	Paul Baggett has been an Assistant Headteacher at Valley Gardens for almost three years. His background is in Physical Education, but



	<p>currently teaches Physical Education , Art, PSHE and PBL. His role in school includes pastoral concerns, behaviour and discipline, staff CPD, community liaison and teaching and learning. He has taught in 3 outstanding Middle Schools over the past 32 years and lectured at Western Illinois University to Physical Education Undergraduates. He has been an Assistant Head for the past 20 years. He lives in Whitley Bay and has two teenage boys, both of which were pupils at Valley Gardens Middle School. Paul also helps to run the schools parents forum and is a member of Friends of Valley Gardens.</p>
<b>Mr J Russell Thompson</b>	<p>Jonathan is a Senior Leader at a local primary school. He has taught for 5 years in KS2 and leads Maths, Computing and Curriculum Research and Development across the whole school and heads up the KS2 team. He has National Professional Qualifications (NPQ) in both Middle and Senior Leadership. He recently joined the Valley Garden’s governing body as Trust governor. Jonathan lives with his husband and son in Newcastle.</p>
<b>Mr Sean Burnside</b>	<p>Since completing his History degree and subsequent teaching qualification at Newcastle University. He has devoted a considerable portion of his career in education to Valley Gardens Middle School. In the fourteen years he has been associated with the school, he has taught in many subject areas and occupied a variety of roles, ranging from cover teacher through to Head of Department, enabling him to have a good insight into the school's values and ethos. He has come to appreciate the highly important role that our extra-curricular offering plays in allowing pupils to develop a wider view of the world, and is proud to have been involved in many of these activities, such as bringing school productions to the stage, and leading residential visits both in this country and overseas. In his spare time, he is heavily involved with the People's Theatre in Heaton, where he has frequently performed and directed, and also been elected on several occasions to its standing committees, primarily to help guide and develop its artistic direction.</p>
<b>Mr James MacLeod</b>	<p>James is a parent of two children one of whom is at Valley Gardens and another child who will be attending in the next couple of years. James grew up in Whitley Bay and benefitted from a great education in the local schools and had opportunities to get involved in a range of extra-curricular activities and sports which he remains grateful for.</p> <p>In his career he has worked in senior communications and corporate affairs roles for public service television broadcasters for the last twenty years, at the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 where he was one of the team responsible for the move of the headquarters outside of London to Leeds. In these roles he had developed communication and market strategies for value-driven organisation and has a lot of experience working with Boards and leadership teams to help them navigate complex issues and problems successfully.</p> <p>He has welcomed the opportunity to contribute positively to the work of the Team at Valley Gardens as a parent governor, to support the</p>



	<p>excellent work the school carries out and to ensure it maintains its high standards. Whilst he has not been a school governor before he was a founding member of a group that helped support the founding of a new state primary school in inner London before relocating back to the north east. His parents were teachers in northeast schools and remain involved in the education system. He is passionate about making sure that high quality education is available to all children.</p>
<b>Mrs Karen Burgess</b>	<p>Karen is passionate about education and would like to play an active role in the broader school community. She has one child in school and another who has attended the school before moving to high school. She would like to share her time and experience to help the school and influence policy and practice.</p> <p>Karen works within careers and enterprise and has an extensive network of contacts who could support the school to enhance the curriculum. Prior to her current role she worked in the pharmaceutical industry for over 15 years where she gained leadership and project management experience which she believes could be helpful in her role as governor. She retrained to become a science teacher and is keen to help young people achieve their potential and understand the relevance of the school curriculum to the world around them. Using her expertise and understanding of both education and industry she hopes to make a positive contribution to school governance.</p>
<b>Mrs Alex Tait</b>	<p>I have two young children, one of which started her school journey during the global pandemic. The pressure I witnessed on schools and families during the time was unprecedented and my experience is that the most successful outcomes through this trying time were when parents and schools worked together cohesively. Not only for a shared goal of academic achievements, but also for parent, teacher and child wellbeing. As a Director of a large Software Company I have a good grounding in leadership, collaboration and agile working with a focus on continuous improvement. I can see the 'bigger picture' and know how to communicate and create teams who work together to achieve a common goal. As a governor I will use these skills to ensure clarity on the common goals, with communication and collaboration between the school and parents front of mind.</p> <p>I am also driven to support high performance from my local schools, not only for our children's education and wellbeing, but also for the consequential positive impact on our local economy. A great school often brings prosperity for the local area, which is another investment into our children's future.</p> <p>My children have their full school career to come and I want to invest my time and skills to not only support them but also my wider community as a school governor.</p>



<b>Ellie Roberts</b>	<p>I am a parent to three children, one who is now at Whitley Bay High School and two who attend Valley Gardens Middle School.</p> <p>I believe that I can play an active and valuable role within the team of governors at Valley Gardens, working collaboratively with the staff team to ensure that our children receive a rounded, engaging education at Valley Gardens; the fun, awe-inspiring, nurturing school experience that they deserve.</p> <p>As an Educational and Child Psychologist, I am lucky enough to spend every day in different schools and classrooms. I appreciate the expectations that are placed on our children as well as the pressures that both children and teachers are under at present. I therefore have great empathy and compassion for teachers and learners alike.</p> <p>Every day in my professional life, I work in partnership with teachers, headteachers, teaching assistants and parents, to unpick issues and find solutions, skills that I am sure will be valuable within the role of parent governor.</p> <p>A lot of my work over the last few years has been focused on supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of individual students. I often provide training to school teams on this subject. I believe that I could make a valuable contribution in this field, an area of need for so many children at present, by sharing some of the good practice that I have observed in other settings, approaches that are known to work well, as well as providing updates on current research and theory.</p> <p>I have sound knowledge of safeguarding principles and systems, and I am the safeguarding trustee on the board of a local charity that supports vulnerable youngsters.</p> <p>Another key area of interest of mine is working with children and families who have experienced trauma. I recognise the importance of taking a trauma informed perspective when considering how to approach some complex situations.</p> <p>With my professional skill set, along with my experience as a fellow parent, I believe that I could be an asset to the governing body.</p>
<b>Dan Brady</b>	<p>I am from Whitley Bay and I live with my family in Monkseaton. I own and run a software and publishing business in Whitley Bay. I have benefited from the excellent state education that North Tyneside has offered, which has instilled in me a love for</p>



	<p>learning across many areas. I have a background in business, technology and design as well as a love for science, psychology, music and history.</p> <p>I have a genuine love for learning which I attempt (sometimes successfully!) to convey to my children.</p> <p>Through my work, I have worked with client organisations including the Department of Work and Pensions, Newcastle University, Sage Gateshead, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and numerous small and medium sized businesses across many industries. My business publishes books of various types (some of you many have seen the North East Coast photo book – a copy is in the school library). We also build software in sectors including payments, publishing, membership systems, e-commerce and more. I'm experienced in working with organisations to use digital technologies to transform their processes and effectiveness. I originally worked as a professional photographer and graphic designer. I am also a musician playing bass and guitar. In my twenties I taught music workshops in schools in the North East.</p> <p>Through my work and education, I have acquired an understanding of the power of evidence-based approaches in delivering positive outcomes. I also appreciate the challenges of running an organisation, balancing multiple priorities with limited resources. As a parent of two children ages 16 and 9 I have experience of several schools in the region.</p> <p>I would welcome the opportunity to work with Valley Gardens leadership team and governors to help the school meet its goals. Most importantly I would love to contribute my skills and experience to help all our children be the best they can be.</p>
<b>Paul McKenzie</b>	<p>Paul McKenzie has recently joined the Team as a trust governor and is new to the role. Paul comes from a long background in Policing and was the Local Neighbourhood Officer responsible for the areas in which the school sits. Indeed, was a point of contact for a number of schools within the area. Paul was a serving Police Officer in the area for over 20 years and resided within the local area so is well aware of the issues and needs of the local communities nearby. Retiring as a uniformed officer. Paul has now returned to Northumbria Police in a civilian capacity within Assessment and Accreditation offering support guidance and assessment to new recruits within Northumbria Police. Paul knows only too well the benefits that a happy school experience can bring to a child's development and as aside to his main role Paul is a qualified Dyslexia Assessor and as such has a good understanding of Neurodiversity needs that can become evident within a child's development. Although new to the role Paul is looking forward to working with VGMS now and in the future.</p>
<b>Shimon Ali</b>	<p>I have always valued education. I would like to be a school governor to improve our education system for our children's future. Being a father to an amazing little boy has made me realise the future I would like him to have. I believe for my son and other children in our</p>



	<p>community to have the best possible start to life will have to come from us. Therefore, I would like to join your team to improve our education system both academic and social aspect of their life. I believe my local connection through work will allow me to connect the communities and school governors together and improve for better. I have gained a lot of skills and knowledge about North Tyneside borough since working for North Tyneside Council. I believe I can use the skills and knowledge I have to tackle the issues our resident face as well as improve the school's records.</p>
<b>Rosie Smith</b>	<p>I would like to become a school governor because I believe in the importance of giving back to the community in meaningful and rewarding ways. Engaging in this role would allow me to contribute positively to the lives of students and the broader educational environment. It also allows me to do something different and fulfilling with my time.</p> <p>Having left secondary education in 2017, I possess a contemporary perspective on the current education system. This recent experience equips me with a relevant understanding of both its strengths and areas needing improvement. Reflecting on my own schooling experience, I realise that it could have been significantly enhanced if there had been more dedication and thoughtful involvement. I am motivated to ensure that current and future students receive the support and consideration that can make their educational journey more effective and enriching.</p> <p>Although my professional career has taken a different direction, I have always held an interest in teaching and the educational system, inspiring me to contribute to this field. During secondary school, I volunteered at a primary school where I taught sports, which I enjoyed and found incredibly rewarding. I am committed to bringing my enthusiasm, recent insights and dedication to creating an environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive.</p>