



23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

This is to advise you that on Monday I stepped down from the position of Chair of our Local Governance Committee. I will continue to be a Governor at the school. Ms Jill Larcombe has been elected as the new Chair and she will have my full support. Jill introduces herself at the end of this letter.

I have always believed that the Chair should not remain in position too long for the benefit of the school, and now seems an appropriate time to go. The past 4 years have been a challenging time for the governing body, firstly transitioning into the Vector Learning Trust and then into the Uffculme Academy Trust. Looking forward, now we are in a stable situation, there are a whole new set of priorities for both the school and the LGC. I readily admit I do not have the skills necessary for this and with my other business and community benefits, do not have the capacity to gain them. Jill, on the other hand has the experience and knowledge in abundance, and I know will guide the school to become outstanding.

This school is the jewel in the crown of Axe Valley, it stretches its students, is nurturing and caring, and the future of our community is very much in its hands. Our students will leave us, moving on in education or work, and will achieve great things. Some will return and assist in ensuring the Axe Valley fulfils its true potential, whilst keeping its caring and supportive spirit. This is a great school, let nobody deny it!

My thanks firstly go to Mrs Laura Jenkins, Head Teacher, who has worked tirelessly since being appointed, in directing the efforts for continuing improvement, and is a caring individual to students, staff and governors. Her energy and enthusiasm is both infectious and motivating. Talking of infections, Mrs Jenkins has been ahead of the game in ensuring the school is fit and ready for students to attend during lockdown, and for when all came back this term. Our students and staff are as safe as they can be, with teaching and learning continuing apace. I have to record that I believe Head Teachers in general, and Mrs Jenkins in particular, are far superior in responding to this situation than those in Whitehall who should know better.

Thank you also to all the staff at Axe Valley. There are times when I know some may have disagreed with decisions of the LGC. You have continued, however, in a professional manner, and have ensured it has not affected the teaching of the students in your care. To others reading this letter, let me assure you that this is the best group of people who could ask to educate our young people. Whilst stretching and supporting their education, they also care about them as individuals, and their pastoral and emotional work is as important to them as their teaching.

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May I also thank Uffculme Academy Trust, and in particular Lorraine Heath the CEO, who have welcomed us into their Trust, and have given us so much support over the past 2 years. We would not be where we are without their input and assistance.

Last, but by no means least, I wish to thank the students of Axe Valley Academy, both past and present. You are a credit to the school, and to your community. You are the ambassadors for the school, and the future of our country. I could not wish to be associated with a better group of young people.

Kind regards



Jeremy Walden  
Local Governing Committee

#### **Message from Jill Larcombe, new Chair of Local Governing Committee**

I feel privileged to be welcomed into your school community and to be elected as Chair of the Local Governing Committee on Monday evening.

As a Director of Uffculme Academy Trust I have started to get to know your school over the last twelve months and one of the first things I noticed was the warm and welcoming atmosphere. Mrs Jenkins has impressed me with her drive, enthusiasm and commitment to the students at Axe Valley Academy and I look forward to working with her and the other members of the Local Governing Committee to support the school and improve the outcomes for every student.

I have been a school governor for over twenty years, most of them at Uffculme School, and strongly believe that every child deserves to receive an excellent education and be encouraged to have high aspirations. In 2018 I became a Local Leader of Governance through the Teaching School Council, South West with the aim to support school governing boards to improve their governance. As a LLG I have access to more training and an experienced support network. I am also a Clerk to Governors supporting the governing boards in two Devon school federations. I clerk the board of Devon Association of Governance and represent secondary academy governors on the Devon Education Forum. I spent my earlier working life as a sheep and dairy farmer but was forced to change career when small farms became unviable. Now I split my time between bookkeeping for farmer clients and clerking school governing bodies and parish councils. My family are very important to me and I have a three year old granddaughter who is just entering the education system.