

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NOBEL SCHOOL BOARD OF GOVERNORS
HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2023 AT 6.30PM**

Governors Present: Kelly Hagland (Chair), Manesh Chudasama, Chris Crawley, Brett Facey, Martyn Henson (Headteacher), Jamie Kellett, Mark Laws, Rose Odudu, Shannon Parr, Wendy Parsley, Mathew Reah, Claire Sutton, Rev. Kojo Wood.

Also in Attendance: Jacquie Watts (Clerk), Nik Thomas (Business Manager), plus Sam Head and Steve Morley (members of staff) for parts of the meeting.

(NB: Governor Challenge, Questions and Monitoring are highlighted in bold)

Action By:

- 1. To receive any apologies for absence and decide whether to consent to the same**

NOTED: the meeting was quorate.

NOTED: apologies for absence were received from Carly Broom and Jackie Mordaunt because of health issues.

AGREED: to accept the above apologies.

NOTED: Rose Odudu apologised in advance for her late arrival.

- 2. AOB**

NOTED: no issues were identified.

- 3. For governors to declare any potential conflicts of interest re. items on the agenda**

NOTED: there were no declarations of interest.

- 4. Safeguarding Report**

Rose Odudu joined the meeting during this item.

NOTED: the report uploaded with the agenda. Steve Morley provided an oral commentary on the report covering exclusions, pupil behaviour and persistent absence. School attendance was currently above national average. He highlighted changes in the KCSiE regarding IT filtering and monitoring and the need for governors to be aware of this. The school recorded IT issues on CPOMS. **In response to a question from governors, the meeting discussed the school's approach to exclusions, including legal and practical parameters, and pupil behavioural issues.**

NOTED: **governors raised the increase in Children Looked After numbers and asked if the staff team was the correct size to deal with this?** The team size was still being reviewed. **The increase in the number of self harm reports was commented on and discussed, including the school's response to the same. A governor asked how many staff were trained to support mental health issues?** One was trained to support staff, but multiple staff were trained, or being trained, to support pupils.

NOTED: nearly all governors had confirmed online that they had read part I of the 2023 KCSiE. The Headteacher confirmed orally, and for minuting, that both he and Jackie Mordaunt has read the KCSiE.

AGREED: Manesh Chudasama would read part I of the 2023 KCSiE as soon as possible and confirm in writing to the clerk that he had done so. **MC**

NOTED: the revised Child Protection Policy (GB09 – Item 11.1) requiring governor approval. It adhered to the County Model, with minor adjustments to customise it for Nobel use.

AGREED: the Child Protection Policy as uploaded with the agenda.

NOTED: the Behaviour For Learning Policy would be submitted for approval to the next Board meeting. **SM/
Clerk**

Steve Morley left the meeting at this point.

5. Examination Results and Pupil Performance Data

NOTED: the report uploaded with the agenda. The Head expressed his satisfaction with the 2023 results. Issues the school had been tackling for years had produced positive outcomes, resulting in strong results and an excellent Progress 8 score.

NOTED: Sam Head delivered a presentation to the meeting on the year's results and historical trends, including anonymised examples of how the progress 8 scores were built up. **Governors found the presentation very helpful.** The Progress 8 score was the highest the school had produced and above target. It compared favourably with previous national levels, although results had still to be validated.

NOTED: improvements in both male and female performance, but the school still needed to address the gap in performance between female and male, with girls out performing boys. **In response to a governor's question, the school clarified the SEND codes and results.**

NOTED: Governors queried the sustainability of the results? Current pupil prior attainment looked positive and the school had set maintaining performance levels as a 23/24 target. The Head reiterated that the results were not a fluke, but the result of systemic curriculum transformation over the last five years beginning with KS3.

NOTED: the performance of disadvantaged pupils was still an issue to be tackled. Discussions and possible changes at national and government level were noted. **A governor, who was also a parent, praised the school staff for the support they provided to pupils on results days.** A map of pupil destinations was noted. **Governors praised the excellent results and thanked Sam Head for a helpful and informative presentation**

Sam Head left the meeting at this point

6. School Development Plan

NOTED: the report uploaded with the agenda. The School Plan was a work in progress, focusing on four key areas of: Culture of Scholarship, Responsive Teaching, Achievement for All and Enriching Lives. Faculty Handbooks were being developed and link governors could ask to see them. **Questions raised online by governors were noted, along with development of the TA role.**

NOTED: the introduction of a cross-school teacher/peer coaching regime. The

Head explained the process and commented that, having developed the curriculum at a macro level, the school was now focusing on teaching at a micro level.

NOTED: Enriching Lives was using 12 Nobellian character virtues as a development platform. **Governors queried the mechanism for rewarding the 12 virtues?** The Head explained the reward and recognition system.

NOTED: for the next meeting, the school would provide a video report on each area. **A governor asked if it as possible to have a deeper “walk-through” the SDP as a deeper understanding made a difference to governor visits?** The Head would ask Naomi Rose to write a paper on targeted SDP outcomes.

NOTED: governors asked if the template governor visit report could be updated to reflect the new SDP and areas for focus?

MH/ NR

MH

7 Annual Equal Opportunities Report

NOTED: the annual report for 22/23 as uploaded with the agenda and the oral commentary provided by Nik Thomas. The age profile of Premises and Catering staff was being watched, as many staff would be retiring around the same time.

Whilst the gender profile for SLT was slightly out of kilter with the breakdown for the rest of the school, small SLT staff numbers meant that a change of one member of staff had a significant impact in percentage terms. The school’s equal opportunities recruitment practices were stressed.

NOTED: the data for SEND pupils was noted, as was the equality data contained within item 5 above. The school did not collect data on religion for staff, though it did for pupils. The school’s progress against its Equality Objectives was noted. **The value of capturing gender identity and sexuality was raised.** Parental response to a gender identity question, indicated that currently it was of little value.

8. School Finances

NOTED: the documents uploaded with the agenda, including the financial summary. The pay award for non-teaching staff had yet to be resolved and paid.

NOTED: the cash monitoring report and aged debtors list were considered. One long-term debtor had ceased making payments against its repayment plan without explanation. **Governors asked if the debt should be written off?** Nik Thomas saw no reason to do so. The company had not ceased trading and appeared to have the resources to meet the debt. The debt had reduced significantly, but had not been resolved. Nik Thomas saw a benefit in continuing to chase the debt whilst there was hope of repayment and the Head said he was strongly opposed to writing off the debt.

NOTED: a governor queried why 50% of forecast expenditure had already been met, especially given the summer quiet period. The school was already 42% through the financial year and whilst the summer was quiet in terms of teaching related consumables, staff salaries still had to be paid and there had been significant capital activity. **Governors highlighted the reduction in cash, but were advised it was to be expected given the Governing Board had agreed a deficit budget. The planning and budget setting process for the following year was discussed. Governors stressed the need to address the trend of deficit budgets.**

AGREED: the schedule of Financial Delegation.

9. ICT Asset Disposal

NOTED: the report uploaded with the agenda.

AGREED: to the disposal of 30 obsolete desktop PCs.

10. School Admissions 2025-26

NOTED: the documents uploaded with the agenda. In light of the closer working relationship with Lodge Farm Primary School, it was proposed that priority should be given to Lodge Farm pupils. If the change was approved, there would need to be a statutory consultation period. **Governors asked if priority should also be given to the children of Lodge Farm staff, in the same way priority was given to the children of Nobel staff? The matter was discussed and it was felt that a reciprocal priority arrangement for the children of both schools' staff would be appropriate.** The proposed Admissions document text reflected that a Federation or similar arrangement might be broader than just Lodge Farm.

AGREED: unanimously to the proposed changes to the 25-26 Admission arrangements effectively granting admission priority to Lodge Farm pupils and the children of Lodge Farm staff, but extending the priority to children of permanent members of staff who were directly employed by The Nobel School or any other Hertfordshire school which was a member of a Trust, Federation or similar formal association including Nobel. Any such school to be clearly identified as such on Nobel's website; and children who, at the time of application, were on roll at any other Hertfordshire school which was a member of a Trust, Federation or similar formal association including Nobel. Any such school to be clearly identified as such on Nobel's website.

11. Approval of Policies

NOTED: the four policies listed on the agenda for approval:

11.1 Child Protection Policy – had been agreed under minute 2 above.

11.2 Children Looked After Policy – had not been submitted for governor approval as the HCC model policy had not yet been published.

11.3 PAR – approved on line by a majority of governors prior to the meeting.

11.4 Business Continuity/ Emergency Response Plan – questions had been raised online and the plan had been approved online by a majority of governors prior to the meeting. **Governors asked how lessons learned from the evacuation tests were captured and recorded? The possible trial of the Emergency Response Plan was raised. Also, the Chair's home landline was no longer in use.**

AGREED: Nik Thomas and Mark Laws would discuss the possibility of trialling the **NT/ ML** Emergency Response Plan outside of the meeting.

12. Health and Safety Update

NOTED: the document uploaded with the agenda. There was little to report. The Autumn Term site inspection had commenced and would be complete by the end of Half-Term. Emergency evacuation practices had taken place.

13. School Business Plan

NOTED: the document as recently considered by the Foundation Committee had been uploaded for information prior to the meeting. The Cleaning Contract was pending whilst tenderers were given time to appeal. The appeal period ended the following week and if no appeals were received TUPE arrangements would start. Solicitors had been appointed to complete the Stevenage Music Centre lease. **The meeting discussed the delay in the land and premises transfer from HCC to Nobel being registered with the Land Registry, and possible implications once the transfer was registered.**

14. Governance Matters

14.1 Annual Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests

NOTED: all governors with the exception of Carly Broom and Jackie Mordaunt had completed the annual declaration.

AGREED: the Clerk would contact Jackie Mordaunt and Carly Broom to arrange completion of their annual declarations.

**Clerk/
CB/ JM**

14.2 Personal Details Form

NOTED: all governors with the exception of Carly Broom had completed their personal details forms.

AGREED: the Clerk would contact Carly Broom to remind her to respond to the school's email.

**Clerk/
CB**

14.3 Code of Conduct 2023/24

NOTED: all governors with the exception of Carly Broom, Jackie Mordaunt and Rose Odudu had completed the annual confirmation of the Code.

AGREED: the Clerk would contact Jackie Mordaunt, Carly Broom and Rose Odudu to arrange completion of their annual confirmation.

**Clerk/
JM/ RO**

14.4 Governor Attendance Record 2022-23

NOTED: the annual governor attendance record uploaded with the agenda.

AGREED: the document as a true and correct record for publication on the school website.

Clerk

14.5 Action Tracker 2022-23 and 2023-24

NOTED: the document uploaded with the agenda.

AGREED: to delete items 52.20-21 and 64.20-21 from the tracker.

Clerk

NOTED: a governor queried 77.22-23 and the creation of a Strategic Plan Working Group to finalise the strategic plan for Governing Board approval. The Chair confirmed discussion had been delayed because of Federation discussions.

Governors expressed concern at the lack of recently documented Vision and Ethos statements.

MR

AGREED: Matt Reah would produce a document based on the previously discussed vision and ethos for agreement by the Governing Board.

14.6 Annual Meeting and Agenda Schedule 2023-24

NOTED: the proposed schedule uploaded with the agenda. The Clerk advised she had not received many responses regarding the proposed schedule. **A governor asked if most meetings were going to be held virtually?**

AGREED: meetings would be held virtually unless there was a need for an in-person presence, as at the first meeting of the Autumn Term or extraordinary meetings to discuss the possibilities of federation. Extraordinary meetings were likely to be called at short notice.

NOTED: a governors' repeated request to hold meetings on days other than Wednesdays. The school had been unable to facilitate this because of other commitments effecting staff and the school buildings.

AGREED: the annual meeting and agenda schedule for 23-24.

14.7 Link Governors 23-24

NOTED: the list of proposed 23/24 links as uploaded with the agenda. The Chair had received no objections to her proposals.

AGREED: link governor roles for 23/24. Visits should commence as soon as practical.

NOTED: the NGA recommended one visit per governor per term.

MH

AGREED: the Head would ask senior colleagues to contact their respective link governors to invite them to come into school.

14.8 Governor Monitoring and Visits 22/23

NOTED: the three governor visit reports and the 22-23 Visit Record as uploaded with the agenda. The Clerk reminded the meeting that the colour coding served to indicate that reports for an area had been submitted and could be used to see at a glance how many reports had been submitted for a particular link. No further changes were suggested.

14.9 Governor Monitoring and Visits 23/24

NOTED: the two governor visit reports and the 23-24 Visit Record as uploaded with the agenda. The Clerk would now complete the record to show the agreed link governors for 23-24.

14.10 Governor Training

NOTED: the updated training record uploaded with the agenda. Further minor adjustments needed to be made. Available training was listed online.

NOTED: Rose Odudu had recently undertaken a day's training on Safer Recruitment. She recommended breaking it into two sections. Clare Sutton had also undertaken the course and recommended doing the two sections of the course on two different days. The online training pathway was highlighted and it was recommended that governors follow it.

**CS
MC**

AGREED: Claire Sutton would circulate a copy of the pathway. Manesh Chudasama would consider if the training record could be shaped to reflect the pathway.

14.11 Annual Review of Governor Effectiveness 22/23

ML

NOTED: the second part of the 22/23 survey and historical responses to previous surveys. **Following governor comments, Mark Laws would be reviewing the initial five questions. The Governor Effectiveness Working Group had yet to meet to evaluate the responses.**

Clerk

AGREED: the Governor Effectiveness Working Group of Kelly Hagland, Mark Laws and Kojo Wood, plus the Clerk, would be convened by the Clerk to consider responses. Other governors were welcome to attend if they notified the Clerk promptly. Also, Manesh Chudasama would consider responses about governor training to see if they matched the training record.

**All
MC**

15 Minutes of Foundation Committee Meeting Held on 20 September 2023

NOTED: the provisional minutes of the previous Foundation Committee meeting held on 20 September 2023 and the accompanying summary of Committee decisions taken at the meeting as uploaded with the agenda.

AGREED: the provisional minutes of the Foundation Committee meeting held on 20 September 2023.

16. Minutes of Previous Governing Board held on 5 July 2023

NOTED: the minutes of the Governing Board meeting held on 5 July 2023 and the accompanying Action Tracker document as uploaded to TEAMS with the agenda.

AGREED: the minutes of the Governing Board meeting held 5 July 2023 as a true and correct record. They were signed by the Chair and passed to the school, via the Business Manager, for safe keeping.

17. Future Developments

AGREED: this item would be referred to as Federation Discussions on future agendas and minutes.

NOTED: the Federation Working Group had met twice so far. Lodge Farm remained enthusiastic about the prospect of Federation, as did Nobel's SLT and staff, but the Head had heard a note of hesitation at the July Governing Board meeting. He had therefore put together a paper explaining the positive possibilities of such an approach, which he would share with governors on the following Friday. He welcomed governor comments.

NOTED: recent discussions had included HCC. HCC officers were broadly positive regarding the proposal to federate. The focus was on a loose curriculum-based federation in the first instance, with financial matters and due diligence tests left till later. The HCC Governance Team had offered to engage with and guide the Working Group. The fastest timetable would lead to federation at the end of 23/24, but HCC had advised it was likely to take longer. **A governor asked if an independent consultant was needed to advise on financial and business matters? The meeting considered the need for a cost benefit analysis as part of the due diligence process.**

NOTED: a loose curriculum federation would have limited costs. Merging the schools to form one institution would have financial implications, as the funding lump sum per school would be halved. It was reiterated that the schools were considering a loose federation in the first instance – an operational federation, before a financial one. Financial detail, when appropriate, could be scrutinised by the Finance Working Group. Current information was available in the shared Federation folder all governors had access to. Questions based on the material was welcomed in advance of the next meeting. The Head remained excited by the prospect of shared teaching and curriculum mapping

AGREED: the Head would write the document referred to above to enable governors to ask questions. An extraordinary meeting of the Governing Board would then be convened to discuss the matter in detail. The Clerk would convene the meeting once the paper had been circulated. Governors' comments on the document were sought by the end of the Half-term holiday. Nik Thomas would remind HCC that their further input was awaited.

MH
Clerk
All
NT

18. AOB

NOTED: there were no items of other urgent business.

19. Date of Next Meeting

AGREED: the date of the next meeting of the Board of Governors as Wednesday, 29 November at 6.30pm via TEAMS.

NOTED: Kojo Wood submitted his apologies in advance of the November meeting. **Clerk**

NOTED: the Foundation Committee would meet before the Governing Board on Wednesday, 15 November at 6.30pm via TEAMS.

The meeting ended at approximately 9.05pm

Drafted by: Jacquie Watts
Clerk To The Governors
12 October 2023

Approved by The Board of Governors on:

Date:29 November 2023.....

Signature (Chair):.....