

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NOBEL SCHOOL BOARD OF GOVERNORS
HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 6.30PM**

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

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

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

Action By:

1.	<p>To receive any apologies for absence and decide whether to consent to the same</p> <p>NOTED: the meeting was quorate.</p> <p>NOTED: apologies for absence were received from Carly Broom, Mark Laws and Rev. Kojo Wood on the grounds of a new born infant, a prior commitment and pressure of work.</p> <p>AGREED: to accept the above apologies.</p> <p>NOTED: Wendy Parsley apologised in advance for her late arrival.</p>	
2.	<p>AOB</p> <p>NOTED: no issues were identified.</p>	
3.	<p>For governors to declare any potential conflicts of interest re. items on the agenda</p> <p>NOTED: there were no declarations of interest.</p>	
4.	<p>Safeguarding Report</p> <p>NOTED: Steve Morley apologised that the report had been uploaded late and initially in the wrong place. This had been rectified on Monday.</p> <p>NOTED: Steve Morley provided an oral commentary on the report covering safeguarding referrals, National Bullying week, exclusions, pupil behaviour, specialist offsite provision and CLA pupils, especially those where PP funding was used to provide additional support. School attendance at 93.9% was currently above national average. He highlighted that behaviour issues were caused by a small percentage of pupils. The Head commented that, in his opinion, behaviour had worsened nationally over the ten years he had been at the school. He was considering the establishment of an in-school unit, but it was too early to bring forward a proposal to the Board. An increased number of young people seemed unable to cope with school or life in general.</p> <p>NOTED: the CLA, Behaviour for Learning and Online Safety Policies listed for approval under item 11 on the agenda. Steve Morley summarised the first two policies and advised the meeting that HCC was no longer providing a model policy for Online Safety on the grounds that it should be part of the broader safeguarding policy. Steve Morley had therefore not created a new policy for the year. In terms</p>	

	<p>of the behavioural policy, he was hoping to expand the section dealing with grounds for detention. He also highlighted that, increasingly, the school was expected to approach external agencies for support for pupils before HCC would provide support. This had financial implications for the school.</p> <p><i>Steve Morley left the meeting at this point.</i></p>	
5.	<p>Student Voice</p> <p>NOTED: the Head advised he had not invited the Head Girl and Boy to attend the meeting and had not submitted a written report as he thought it might be more useful for governors to meet with a broader range of pupils when visiting the school. Also the school's Effectiveness Adviser met with students on her visits to the school. Her reports were now available for governors to read on TEAMS and Sharepoint in a folder labelled SEA Visits. He invited governors to read her reports and ask questions about the student voice elements.</p> <p>NOTED: the Head and Deputy's positive thoughts about the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity elements of recent training sessions they had attended.</p> <p>NOTED: governors wanting to visit the school to focus on the pupil voice should email the Chair in the first instance to see if a group visit could be arranged. The Chair could then liaise with the school a week in advance of the proposed date.</p> <p>NOTED: a governor commented on a previous conversation he had had with the Head Girl and Boy. Initially, they had seemed unduly positive, but he had subsequently found they genuinely valued the school. The Head commented that those pupils appointed as Head Girl and Boy were usually high achieving and positive students, hence the value of governors meeting a range of pupils.</p> <p>NOTED: Nobel pupils had been invited to 7 Oxbridge interviews this year – the highest number so far. Whilst this was not the ultimate goal for all pupils, the Head felt it was still indicative of positive progression.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>All/Chair</p>
6.	<p>School Plan</p> <p>NOTED: the Head's termly video report (item 8 on the agenda) explored the School Plan in detail. Naomi Rose had subsequently uploaded several summaries of the plan and suggested questions governors might ask when visiting the school.</p> <p>NOTED: governors found the video exploration of the plan very insightful. Votes for School was highlighted as being of especial interest, with a governor commenting that her child had talked about it on returning home. Two governors asked if they could observe it? Question prompts were also highlighted as very useful.</p>	
7.	<p>Parent, Pupil and Staff Surveys</p> <p>NOTED: no surveys had been held so far this academic year, so no report had been provided. A parent survey had been held in June 2023 as part of the OFSTED inspection process.</p> <p>NOTED: Planned surveys for 23/24 were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2024, first week after the start of term - pupil survey • February 2024, first week back after the half-term break – staff survey 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer 2024, before the end of term – parent survey. <p>AGREED: the Clerk would schedule reports back to the Governing Board as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil Survey – 27th March 2024 • Staff Survey – 5th June 2024 • Parent Survey – 3rd July 2024 <p>NOTED: governors asked if the same questions were repeated on an annual basis so year on year comparisons could be made? The Head felt the questions for the pupil and parent surveys were comparable year on year, but fresh questions would be used for the staff survey and comparison would therefore be difficult.</p>	Clerk
8.	<p>Head's Termly Report</p> <p>NOTED: Head's termly video report uploaded with the agenda. As noted previously, governors found the video informative.</p>	
9.	<p>Strategic Plan/ Nobel Vision Statement (item 10 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: the report uploaded with the agenda as prepared by a governor. It was a one page summary of the school's existing vision. Having regard to staff workload, work on a broader strategic plan had been postponed pending a decision on federation, but it was felt that a Vision Statement, approved by the Board, was an important point of clarity in the federation process.</p> <p>AGREED: the Vision Statement as uploaded.</p>	
10.	<p>Approval of Policies (item 11 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: the five policies listed on the agenda. All had been discussed and approved by a majority of governors online with no dissensions. The Chair asked if anyone had any concerns with the proposed policies? All present were happy with the documents as uploaded.</p> <p>AGREED: the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary Policy • CLA • Homework Policy • Behaviour for Learning Policy • Online Safety Policy to be cancelled, on the understanding that related matters would be dealt with under the broader heading of safeguarding. 	
11.	<p>Governance Matters (item 14 on the agenda)</p> <p>11.1 Annual Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests</p> <p>NOTED: the Clerk advised she had received returns from all governors except Carly Broom. As Carly was not present at the meeting, the Clerk would look into the matter further outside of the meeting. [The Clerk subsequently identified a return previously received from Carly, evidencing that all governors had completed their declarations].</p>	Clerk

<p>11.2 Governor Monitoring and Visits 2023/24</p> <p>NOTED: the ITT/ECT governor monitoring visit report and the current monitoring record for 23/24 as uploaded with the agenda. The clerk advised that another visit report had been received after the agenda had been set. It would be submitted to the January 2024 meeting. Given the relatively few visits so far recorded, the Chair reminded everyone they should have visited their link area at least once by the next half-term break and have submitted a brief report to the Clerk. The question guide submitted by Naomi Rose would be especially helpful.</p> <p>NOTED: Chris Crawley would be visiting the school the following week to undertake a health and safety link visit.</p> <p>11.3 Annual Review of Governor Effectiveness</p> <p>NOTED: the Clerk highlighted the notes of the Governor Effectiveness Working Group. Mark Laws had not been able to provide the completed version of the annual survey, but she hoped it would be available for the January 2024 Board meeting. She had asked him if he could submit it well in advance of the meeting so all governors had more time to consider it.</p> <p>11.4 Governor Training</p> <p>NOTED: Manesh Chudasama had not provided an updated training record as he had only received one report of training undertaken since the last update. Governors observed that the record no longer reflected the training pathways offered. Changing the record to match the pathways would make it easier for governors to follow and select courses. Manesh acknowledged it was an action he had previously agreed to undertake, but had not yet completed.</p> <p>AGREED: the training record should be updated to match current learning pathways.</p> <p>NOTED: a governor strongly recommended that all on the Board should undertake the brief federation course, as it was very helpful.</p> <p>11.5 60 Second Round-Robin Governor Update</p> <p>NOTED: governors provided the following updates on actions undertaken in relation to Nobel since the last meeting: (KH) – several meetings with the Head, Finance Working Group, Foundation Committee, Federation Governing Board meeting, monitoring visit, Governor Effectiveness Working Group; (RO) – Federation Governing Board meeting, Foundation Committee; (JK) - Federation Governing Board meeting, considering support for careers and work experience placements, scheduling a further careers visit; (MR) - Finance Working Group, Foundation Committee, Federation Governing Board meeting, PP monitoring visit; (CC) - Foundation Committee, Federation Governing Board meeting, scheduling Health and Safety Visit, two training courses for which she had yet to submit the certificates; (JM) – Federation Governing Board meeting, year 11 mocks, 6th form form tutor meeting with parents, UCAS process, destination survey; (MC) - various activities and school visits as a parent; (SP) - two training courses for which she had yet to submit the certificates, scheduling link visit for January; (CS) – monitoring visit and report (submitted after agenda had been finalised), gave careers talk to year 7, considering possible work experience</p>	<p>ML</p> <p>MC</p>
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	<p>placements; (BF) – visited school the previous week to set up work placement link with Stevenage Council, seeking to establish similar link with Harrow Borough Council, emailed staff link to arrange a visit and will now chase-up; (WP) – Year 11 mocks, drama practical exams, year 10 panto, pupil auditions for Mathilda, form tutor meeting with parents.</p> <p>NOTED: the Chair thanked everyone for their activities and reminded those who had undertaken training to submit their completion certificates to Manesh Chudasama.</p> <p><i>Wendy Parsley and Nik Thomas joined the meeting during the above item.</i></p>	
12.	<p>School Finance (item 9 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: the revised 23/24 budget document for governor approval. Income and expenditure had both increased resulting in a worsening of the forecast budget position by c£65k, a variance of 0.6% of the annual budget. Nik Thomas summarised some of the contributory factors to this worsened position and reiterated that the school was aware the Governing Board was looking for a balanced budget in future years.</p> <p>NOTED: the four year forecast included with the revised budget. Spring grant figures could subsequently impact on this.</p> <p>NOTED: the benchmarking reports comparing Nobel’s expenditure with similar schools in Hertfordshire. Nobel was not alone in running a deficit budget. Some comparisons were complex. The SLT was medium sized compared to others, but there was no way to identify the teaching loads of various SLTs.</p> <p>NOTED: the school’s non-public funds account had been audited satisfactorily.</p> <p>NOTED: governors reiterated discussions at the Finance Working Group and the Foundation Committee to the effect that the Board was looking for the school to return to a balanced budget in future years and as soon as reasonably possible.</p> <p>NOTED: a governor asked how agreed staff pay increases would impact on the November cashflow? Also the high number of top of the scale teachers was commented on. Governors acknowledged that staff stability and experience had led to excellent results but that had to be balanced carefully against high costs. The national picture was one of tight school budgets and rising costs. The pay increase would be reflected in the December figures. The Head and Business Manager were exploring the school’s financial position in the light of likely natural staff changes. The Head hoped costs could be reduced naturally without impacting negatively on the quality of teaching and learning</p> <p>AGREED: the revised 23/24 budget as presented.</p>	
13.	<p>Health and Safety Update (item 12 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: the Health and Safety Update report. There had been no accidents since the last report to the Foundation Committee.</p> <p>NOTED: the accident summary for 22/23. There had been 45 accidents in total, 10 requiring formal certification and 1 RIDDOR reportable accident. Most involved sports or playground injuries. The accident rate was approximately two thirds of</p>	

	<p>the rate of the previous year and compared favourably.</p> <p>NOTED: a Radiological safety visit had taken place. No subsequent actions were required</p>	
14.	<p>School Business Plan (item 13 on the agenda)</p> <p>NOTED: the School Business Plan uploaded with the agenda and as submitted to the recent Foundation Committee meeting. Work on the drains would be taking place at the end of term. Costs were likely to be reasonable. Governors hoped the work would solve the problems of the autumn term.</p> <p>NOTED: governors queried if summer building works would be limited to essential work, given the ongoing reduction in financial reserves? The school was expecting to be prudent in its activity, but pointed out that capital funding would be utilised rather than revenue.</p> <p>NOTED: the report relating to energy procurement processes. Nik Thomas explained the complications of tendering for energy contracts, as quotations could not be fixed long enough to obtain Governing Board approval. The recommendations were designed to deal with the challenge. Governors were invited to confirm that Section 9a, Alternative Procurement, of the school's Finance Procedures Manual should apply to the purchase of the school's gas and electricity supplies from Autumn 2024. The meeting discussed the proposals. As the Board was being asked to deviate from the standard Financial Handbook, governors asked for records to be kept of energy procurement decisions taken by the school and the reasons for them, and for the records to be reported to the Governing Board in order to maintain a rigorous governance framework.</p> <p>AGREED: Section 9a, Alternative Procurement, of the school's Finance Procedures Manual should apply to the purchase of the school's gas and electricity supplies from Autumn 2024. The assessment criteria to be used in making a decision should be:</p> <p><i>"The school will prefer the mechanism that provides the minimum probable total cost over 5 years, provided that there is little or no risk of exceeding the cost of a fixed-rate contract on the best terms available."</i></p> <p>The Headteacher and the School Business Manager were nominated as decision-makers against the above criteria and were authorised to agree contracts as appropriate, subject to records being kept of energy procurement decisions taken by the school along with the reasons for them, and for the records to be reported to the Governing Board.</p>	NT/ MH
15.	<p>Minutes of Foundation Committee Meeting Held on 15 November 2023</p> <p>NOTED: the provisional minutes of the Foundation Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023 and the accompanying summary of Committee decisions taken at the meeting as uploaded with the agenda.</p> <p>AGREED: the provisional minutes of the Foundation Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023.</p>	

16.	<p>Minutes of Previous Governing Board Meetings held on 11 October and 20 November 2023</p> <p>NOTED: the minutes of the Governing Board meetings held on 11 October and 20 November, the latter being deemed confidential, and the accompanying Action Tracker document as uploaded to TEAMS with the agenda.</p> <p>AGREED: the minutes of the Governing Board meeting held 11 October 2023 as a true and correct record. They would be signed by the Chair and passed to the school, for safe keeping.</p> <p>AGREED: the confidential minutes of the inquorate extraordinary Governing Board meeting held 20 November 2023 as a true and correct record. They would be signed by the Chair and passed to the school, for safe keeping. As the meeting of 20 November was inquorate, approval of the minutes constituted agreement of their confidential status and approval of apologies tendered.</p> <p>NOTED: the Chair asked if any of the governors unable to be present at the 20 November meeting had any comments or questions to make about the recorded discussions? No questions were raised. The Chair invited governors to submit any subsequent comments or questions about Federation to her or to the Federation Working Group.</p>	Clerk Clerk
17.	<p>AOB</p> <p>NOTED: there were no items of other urgent business.</p>	
18.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>AGREED: the date of the next meeting of the Board of Governors as Wednesday, 24 January 2024 at 6.30pm via TEAMS.</p> <p>NOTED: the Clerk raised the issue of delayed reports from both governors and school staff and reminded everyone of the currently agreed process for the creation and publication of agendas and reports. A draft agenda was produced two weeks before a scheduled meeting and shared, via email, with the Chair, Head and Vice Chairs and anyone due to submit a report to the meeting. The agenda and all documents submitted in advance to the Clerk were uploaded a week before the meeting date and all other agreed reports were expected to be uploaded within 24 hours of the publication of the agenda. If reports were not submitted within this timeframe, and especially if reports were uploaded after the weekend, there was insufficient time for governors to read and scrutinise the reports. If this process was no longer working, the Clerk was willing to consider alternative approaches. The Chair reminded governors they should be checking their school emails at least once a week in order to respond to urgent emails on matters such as pupil exclusion and on routine agenda-setting emails. A governor felt that there was currently no need to change the process, but wondered whether there should be a ban on reports uploaded after the weekend? The Clerk did not favour a ban, which would require her removing very late reports from the folders, as there was occasionally a genuine need for a late report and its automatic removal might prevent the consideration of a genuinely urgent matter, but she pointed out that the Governing Board could, at its meeting, decline to accept reports submitted late and insist that they be deferred until the next meeting.</p>	

	<p>NOTED: the Chair thanked everyone for their efforts on behalf of the school and wished everyone a Happy Christmas.</p> <p><i>The meeting ended at approximately 8:10pm</i></p>	
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Drafted by: Jacquie Watts
Clerk To The Governors
30 November 2023

Approved by The Board of Governors on:

Date:24 January 2024.....

Signature (Chair):.....