

Governing Body Blog 2021-22

Full Governing Body meetings are held once per term, with smaller committee meetings and governor visits in between. After each meeting, a Governor will write a short summary of what was discussed. Full minutes are available on request and if you would like to know more about the work of the Governing Body or get involved please contact the Chair of Governors.

September 2021 Blog

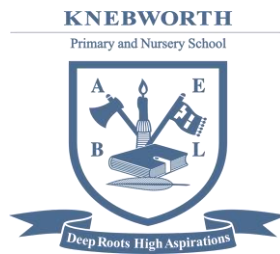
The full governing body met on Wednesday 22 September, continuing to use Zoom as we have found that this enables those of us juggling other responsibilities such as work and children to participate more easily. We intend to alternate between virtual and in-person meetings moving forwards so that we can work in the most effective way possible by benefitting from the advantages of both. At this meeting we welcomed Dharsh Perera, our new Associate Governor. Dharsh is a parent of a child with SEND and will be an asset to the governing body.

At the meeting we looked at the school evaluation and development plan which is reviewed termly. This plan is ambitious, but achievable, and sets out our five strategic priorities, how we intend to achieve them and our progress so far. Ultimately our goal is that by the end of this academic year the school will be performing at the standard that Ofsted inspectors would consider to be Outstanding. The school's staff have been working terrifically hard and has delivered many of the actions set out in the plan, so we're well on track.

We were also updated on the additional funding the school receives through the Pupil Premium and Covid Catch Up Premium, and how the school intends to spend the money. This extra cash is there to help ensure that pupils who are at risk of falling behind are supported to achieve their potential. There has been a recent increase in the number of children qualifying for the Pupil Premium and the school is reviewing its strategy to ensure that funding is appropriately targeted.

A regular item on our agenda is health and safety and we've recently undertaken an internal audit to check that effective health and safety policies are in place being adhered to. The senior leadership team will be updating the staff handbook and providing some refresher training to ensure that all staff are fully aware of what's expected. At the same time we considered a recent incident involving a newly installed piece of playground equipment. The suppliers have repaired the equipment and provided a report on how the incident occurred and what has been done to rectify the problem and prevent it from reoccurring.

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We are satisfied that the equipment is safe and that the company has taken measures to prevent further incidents of this nature.

Following our external behaviour review last term the school has updated its behaviour and anti-bullying policies. These are also available on the school website. Recently a member of our governing body has taken specific responsibility to work with the school's senior leadership team on developing communication with parents and stakeholders, and they will be looking at how best to ensure that everyone is aware of the contents of these important documents. We are increasingly using videos to keep people informed about many aspects of school life, so parents may see some short clips on this topic in the near future.

Governors were also given a briefing on a recent Stakeholder Voice survey, circulated to parents and guardians, staff and governors last term. We asked for feedback on what people thought was working well in school and what they thought the school could do better. The survey received 83 responses and we're very grateful for their insight. The school has recently sent to parents a 'You said, We did' document on how the school is responding to feedback.

During the meeting we discussed an outline planning application to build around 230 new homes on land at the back of the school. There are concerns about how additional traffic from this development may affect the safety of children travelling to school, which we intend to put in writing to the planning authorities. We also need to consider how this development, and others in the neighbourhood plan that will increase housing in the area, will affect the demands on education. The school needs to consider its longer term vision and what we want in the future. The planning process may provide opportunities for the school to expand and to upgrade or replace our facilities, we need to explore and understand these fully, along with the challenges of increasing Knebworth's population.

Written by Nik Watson.



Deep Roots

May 2022 Blog

The full governing body met in person at Knebworth School on the 11th May 22. This was the first full board face to face meeting since the start of the pandemic.

Two new governors were welcomed to the board;

- Steven Hewlett-Light who is a senior leader of technology firms and has experience in strategy, digital communications, marketing and software design.
- Reeshi Harania who has a background in risk management and finance.

A recent analysis of governor skill sets identified that the board has a shortage of people with experience of chairing meetings so we will try to recruit these skill sets when recruiting new governors.

The board discussed a draft succession planning document which recommends we adopt the National Governors Association best practice guidance. This stipulates that Governors serve no more than two, four-year terms. In exceptional circumstances, a governor may serve an additional term of up to four years if approved by the board. The governors voted on the proposal, the majority of which were in agreement.

The next topic on the agenda was the governor's clerk. In particular whether the board wants to continue using the Herts for Learning service or another clerk. The board agreed that HFL will work with us on an external review this term and continue providing 'pay as you go' clerking services until the end of the academic year. We will buy into an independent clerking service from September, subject to agreement.

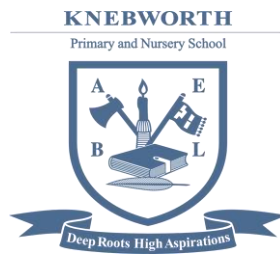
The Headteacher talked the governors through the performance and attainment of children year to date, providing explanations where attendance or performance were not at the expected level. Also explaining interventions to improve attendance and performance. In particular, work that is being done to improve Maths and Writing performance in Year 2 and reading attainment in Year 1.

The Headteacher explained that behaviour is generally good and has improved following tightening of the school's behaviour policy and greater playtime and lunchtime supervision.

The governors discussed the parent consultation feedback (obtained at the open and parents evening) which was overwhelmingly positive. Some very useful feedback was provided in response to the question 'How could Knebworth School improve for every child?'



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Some parents suggested improvements around the extra-curricular offer to children, including calls for a broader offer of clubs and activities.

Home-School Communications – Some parents asked for communication to be more tailored to their child and felt that there were too many methods of communication which could lead to messages being missed.

SEND and Inclusion – Some parents mentioned SEND and inclusion, asking for more awareness about different needs and better support.

Others asked about improved facilities, more or clearer homework and concerns that children are encouraged to consume too much sugar and sweets as part of school life. Also, more opportunities for children working at greater depth to push themselves. All feedback will be fed into the strategy review.

The Governing Body thanked Viv Goddard for her service of a Governor, accepting Viv's resignation after over thirty years as a Governor at Knebworth School. Nicola Watson has taken over as safeguarding link governor.

School policies are up to date. A flexible working policy has been circulated and will be tailored for the school then circulated for approval.

Finance

The schools' financial value standard report was submitted before the deadline.

Health and Safety

There is one outstanding action on both the internal and external audits, both minor in nature.

Legionella testing is being carried out monthly but a drop test is outstanding for the tank in the main school and is being followed up.

School Budget

The Head Teacher spoke about the 2022/2023 budget which will be circulated for approval. The updated Asset Management Plan will also be made available to governors.

Strategy Planning

Strategy Planning sessions are scheduled to take place in June.

Written by Robert Tutt.

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July 2022 Blog

Governor Board Meeting – 13 July 2022. The Governing body met virtually following the External Review of Governance session facilitated by Herts for Learning.

- Positive feedback was provided in relation to the External Review and actions were understood. During that session, dates and owners for actions were agreed.
- The Board of Governors agreed to a flat structure and Governors will take on link roles for areas identified in the new 5-10 year strategy.
- The incoming Clerk should provide consistency and help the Governing Board to implement the recommendations of the review.
- A discussion on Governor skills identified that further activity is due in this area and that the skills audit should be linked to the strategy.

Headteacher's report:

- The Headteacher's report highlighted that attendance for academic year 2021/2022 was lower than previous years pre-covid however, this has been a challenging year due to covid and a significant chicken pox outbreak.
- Governors reviewed and challenged the attainment data. The new strategy will aim to focus on narrowing the gap between boys and girls and for disadvantaged children.
- The role of Governors in Safeguarding was discussed. Ofsted requires governors are challenging our safeguarding processes and satisfy themselves that the school's safeguarding is effective. Safeguarding training should be completed within six months of appointment. At each termly visit, governors will arrange to meet briefly with a group of staff or pupils to talk about safeguarding and make sure that our procedures and policies are keeping children safe. Governors will note the discussion in a revised governor visit form.

Resources Committee update

- Robert Hall provided an update on the Resources Committee. The budget calculation date has been set for 19th October. Income received was slightly lower than budgeted but had no material impact.
- The carry forward budget would need to be reviewed as above 10% carried forward for 3 years could result in funding reduction.
- A School Business Manager has been recruited to replace the Finance Administrator.

AOB

All Governors were reminded that feedback should be sent directly to Steven Hewlett-Light on the Strategy papers that are available on Governor Hub.

Written by Reeshi Harania.



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