

Governor Blog September 2022

The Full Governing Body (FGB) meeting was a week later than planned, as the original date fell on the national day of mourning and had to be rescheduled. This was the first meeting of the FGB's pilot of a new "circle model" of governance. Instead of meeting in separate committees, the whole board gets together once per half term and discusses issues across all of our functions.

This meeting was the first for our new Clerk to the Governing Body, Laura Corcoran. Gemma Wood was re-elected as chair for a third year and a new Vice Chair was elected, Karen Chater. We also voted to co-opt Dharsh Perera to the Board. Dharsh has been an Associate Governor for a year, looking specifically at special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Following a successful interview, the Board welcomed Dharsh for a four-year term.

We formally adopted our new strategy document, which was the focus of the governing body and Senior Leadership Team's (SLT's) work towards the end of last year, with valuable input from parents and carers collected at open evening and parents evening and via a survey. A priority for the year is making this a living document, embedded into all of our governance practices including our annual monitoring cycle. We discussed and agreed link roles - special areas of focus for different governors to take on, and membership of any panels and working parties. These will be published on our website once assigned.

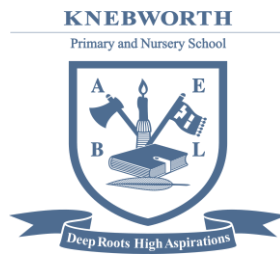
We said a big thank you and goodbye to Jane Hatton and Rony Ford, both of whom were approaching the end of their term as governors of Knebworth School. Both Rony and Jane have made an incredible contribution to the school and will be missed. We have three Governor vacancies and agreed a recruitment panel to work on the Board's behalf to find new governors. Sim Bains also completed her term as a staff governor and the Board thanked her for her amazing contribution. An election will be held for a new staff governor in the autumn term. Sim remains on the Board as an Associate Member, so the Board can retain her expertise.

Governors discussed data that the SLT had provided in the school's self-evaluation form last year, looking at comparisons within Hertfordshire and nationwide. Governors were particularly keen to understand how writing is being improved within the school. The board were pleased to hear that there has been a lot of emphasis placed on the teaching of writing and analysis of how to improve the gap in attainment between boys and girls in this area.

Last year, the Governing body commissioned a review of our own practice to look at how we can continue to improve. We discussed progress against the plan agreed with the external reviewer, which is positive.

Governors were reminded that we have agreed a new process for safeguarding monitoring. Each governor shares the responsibility for this, although Nicola Watson is the lead safeguarding governor. When governors conduct their visits, they will ask safeguarding questions and note any feedback and actions on the governor visits form. Governors discussed the importance of pupil voice activities particularly in seeking assurance around safeguarding.





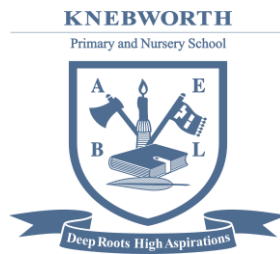
Governors discussed the pupil premium strategy and what impact the rising cost of living may have on the school, its budgets and our community. We agreed updated policies on Safeguarding, Whistleblowing, Code of Conduct, Admissions and Attendance and agreed that the school will develop a child friendly version of the attendance policy. We agreed a new Extended Care policy, which now names the children of staff as a priority group for waiting lists, and Menopause, Flexible Working and Social Media policies.

The first meeting of the school year typically requires agreeing lots of ways of working for the coming year, and this was no different. It was a packed agenda and will set the governing body up for a successful year.

Written by Gemma Wood



Deep Roots



Governor Blog November 2022

This was the second meeting (of six) of the Full Governing Body (FGB) where Sophie Harris was welcomed as the new staff governor.

Gemma Rajiah, Assistant Head and Inclusion Manager, presented an update on the schools arrangements for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the report from the recent Additional School Visit (ASV) by Herts County Council (HCC). Some key facts of our school:

- Approx. 6.3% of learners (27) are SEND (National Ave 16.6%)
- Approx. 5.6% of learners (24) receive SEN support. (National average 12.6%)
- Approx. 11% of children are in receipt of Pupil Premium Grant (PPG). Eight of the children who are identified with SEND are also in receipt of PPG.

The report was very positive and no substantial concerns were found. In the majority of areas, the school's arrangements were rated as "expected". However, teachers' understanding of the needs of children with SEND and how teachers differentiate and use distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them, were assessed as "exemplary". The school is working hard to develop the inclusion hub and to promote parental engagement. A recent survey identified that 92% of parents said their children were happy at school and also a request for an ADHD workshop, the first workshop with parents having been well received. This was a very interesting and encouraging report. Dharsh Perera is the link SEN governor.

During the meeting we discussed the external governance review which was commissioned to develop our practise and strengthen our governance. The review highlighted lots of areas of strength within the board and also allowed us to reflect on parts of our leadership which need further development. One of these areas was stakeholder feedback and we talked about the ways in which we can ensure we maximise the opportunities for listening and responding.

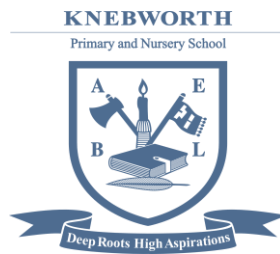
Governor vacancies - we currently have three. We will be seeking candidates with the required skills from various routes: a children's advert in the parish magazine, business networking event, were suggested.

This term we also had our commissioned HCC visit where the school requested a safeguarding focus. It was highlighted that the school has a strong safeguarding culture and its safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Knebworth School has a healthy budget which is well managed by the school leadership team. It was discussed that some costs are rising and these need to be carefully monitored and should be considered when undertaking next year's budget planning. With the introduction of a Business Manager in the office team, we now have additional oversight over budget monitoring and reporting. With the new cycle approach to our FGB meetings it was discussed how this would align.

We also discussed the recent maths book review where strong mastery practice was evident and consistent. Governors were impressed with the robust systems in place for monitoring mathematics. The maths mastery approach is a strength in the school.

Deep Roots



The Teachers' Pay policy was also approved at this meeting, subject to confirmation of government approval of pay scales.

Governor visits procedure, including standard documentation and recording is going well.

Recently, Governors received some in-house training around Ofsted and finance. Both sessions were extremely useful and helped to deepen governor's understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

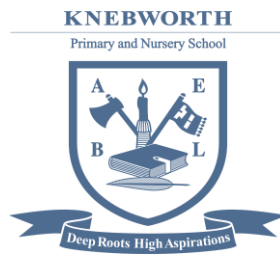
Governors were reminded to complete the skills audit questionnaire recently posted by the clerk.

Heads Report

- ISDR, the data used by Ofsted to assess school performance was discussed at this meeting. This report shows that the school is among the highest nationally for our greater depth figures in reading and maths. It is encouraging to see that the schools data is either in line or above national figures.
- Attendance. One of the highlighted areas in the report was the persistent high absence of children with SEND in 2019. This is being monitored and addressed by the school.
- Governors agreed the following performance targets for 2023: Reading, Writing and Maths all 80%. The white paper target for 2030 is 90%, to which the school aspires.

Written by Bob Hall





Governor Blog March 2023

The Governing Board met on the 30th March to discuss a host of topics which included the possibility of an Ofsted visit, school budget, policies and strategies.

Knebworth School is delighted to appoint Sarah Connolly, Aanchel Bhabuta, Ann Whelan (Co-opted Governors) and James Lawson (Associate Member). Hopefully you'll get to know our new recruits via the school newsletter in the next few weeks (please lookout for 'Meet the Governors' section).

The board discussed the school's financial position, and it is understood that Knebworth is in a positive position despite a deficit, which is offset by the school's carry forward funds. It has been noted that the schools new financial advisor has been very efficient and will work closely with us after Easter to monitor the financial situation.

Feedback was provided in regards to Safeguarding and Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND) visits. The SEND link governor reported on our new robotic technology, and how they can support our children with additional needs.

In other good news, the school has received a grant of £18,500 to offset our carbonisation. It has been agreed by the board to draft a plan on how the funds will be utilise – this work is to commence in the summer term.

It has been established the school's website needs enhancement (although it is monitored and information is updated). Therefore, we have appointed Juniper Education the opportunity to update our website so that it is bespoke to the school.

The board discussed the potential of an Ofsted visit this year, and how to prepare for the visit. It is fair to say Knebworth School is in a strong position and continues to drive for improvement.

It would be fantastic if anyone would like to join the board as there are two vacancies available with Bob Hall and Robert Tutt leaving the board, and we thank them for their years of dedication and support.

Written by Brian Buckingham

