

Virtual Meeting Policy

Adopted: June 2020

Last reviewed: December 2024

For review: annually (or more often if required)

Rationale

The rationale of this virtual meetings policy is to:

- Enable the Board and its Committees (including Local Governing Boards) to continue their work and maintain strategic oversight where face-to-face meetings aren't possible
- Provide a framework in which to run meetings virtually and include those attending virtually
- Provide flexibility so governors and Trustees can attend meetings virtually where they would otherwise not have been able to attend

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on:

- The Department for Education's (DfE's) [school governance update – March 2020](#)
- [The School Discipline \(Pupil Exclusions and Reviews\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

The Board's ability to make alternative arrangements for meetings

The Chair or Clerk can contact governors/Trustees directly to agree these alternative arrangements.

The Board has determined that the following arrangements will apply.

Roles and responsibilities

The Chair

The Chair will chair virtual meetings, and meetings in which some participants are attending virtually, in the same way as face-to-face meetings.

The chair will ensure, as far as is possible that all governors/Trustees:

- Are set up on the chosen platform (Zoom or Google Meets).
- Have tested their connection and access to the platform
- Are aware of the expectations on attendees set out below

The Clerk

The Clerk will give written notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda at least 7 clear days in advance to attendees

Where there are matters demanding urgent consideration, written notice and a copy of the agenda can be given within a shorter period as the Chair directs.

The Clerk will minute virtual meetings, and meetings in which some participants are attending virtually, in the same way as face-to-face meetings.

The Clerk will make sure the minutes reflect that the meeting is virtual, or if a governor/Trustee is attending virtually.

The Clerk will minute all decisions, and whether anything needs to be ratified at a later date, for example due to loss of connection.

The Chair will read the privacy terms and conditions of the chosen platform and make sure its security features are enabled.

All governors/Trustees

To ensure confidentiality and the smooth running of the meeting, those attending virtually will:

- Attend the whole meeting
- Attend with the webcam/video switched on where possible
- Focus on the business of the meeting in the same way as if they were attending in person
- Remain on mute unless they are speaking
- Say their name before they start speaking
- Prevent unauthorised individuals overhearing conversations (for example, by using headphones)
- Be mindful of their surroundings – they will consider the privacy of the room, including, but not limited to, who or what is visible or audible in the background
- Ask questions during the meeting by waiting until the Chair invites questions at the end of each agenda item

Virtual meetings

Fully virtual meetings will only be held if face-to-face meetings are not possible.

Difficulty joining the meeting

If after all reasonable efforts, it does not prove possible for a governor/Trustee to participate by telephone or video conference, the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate.

The Clerk will record in the minutes that the governor/Trustee in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

Recording the meeting

In exceptional circumstances the Clerk may wish to record the meeting to aid them when writing the minutes.

At the start of the meeting the Clerk will make sure all governors/Trustees agree to the meeting being recorded.

Where approval is granted, it is the Clerk alone who has permission to record the meeting. No one else has authority to record the meeting.

The recording will be handled in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and once the minutes have been approved, the recording will be deleted (and at the latest within two weeks of the date of the meeting).

Quorum

All governors/Trustees attending virtually count towards the quorum.

If individual governors/Trustees lose connection to the meeting, they will no longer count towards the quorum. The meeting can continue undisrupted if it is otherwise quorate.

If the meeting becomes inquorate then discussions may continue, but no votes can be held unless the meeting is quorate.

If all governors/Trustees lose connection to the meeting then the Clerk will postpone the meeting and reschedule. Where this is not possible, the Clerk will send the matters for consideration via email and will expect comments from governors within seven days.

Voting

Governors/Trustees may vote on any agenda item for which they have been fully present.

Secret ballots will be allowed where possible. Governors/Trustees can share their vote privately with the Chair/Clerk via email or in a private phone call.

Where a virtual secret ballot cannot be arranged, then each governor can decide to vote publicly or abstain.

Conflicts of interest

Where a governor/Trustee declares a conflict of interest, they will withdraw from the meeting by leaving the call.

Once the Board is ready for the governor/Trustee to re-join, the clerk will notify them by email, text or phone call.

Virtual attendance at face-to-face meetings

Governors/Trustees may attend meetings virtually if they are unable to attend in person.

Any governor/Trustee wishing to attend a meeting virtually should act in accordance with the arrangements set out in above.

The governor/Trustee will explain why they're unable to attend physically, and their virtual attendance at the meeting will be subject to the Board's approval at the start of the meeting.

Where the Board does not grant approval, the Clerk/Chair will notify the governor/Trustee immediately and the Clerk will minute this decision.

The meeting will be chaired by a governor present in person.

Difficulty joining the meeting

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The clerk will record in the minutes that the governor in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

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Any governor/Trustee attending virtually counts towards the quorum.

If the governor/Trustee loses connection to the meeting, they will no longer count towards the quorum. The meeting can continue undisrupted if it's otherwise quorate.

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Conflicts of interest

Where a governor/Trustee attending virtually declares a conflict of interest, they will withdraw from the meeting by leaving the call.

Once the governing board is ready for the governor to re-join, the clerk will notify them by email, text or phone call.

Links with other policies

This policy will be used in conjunction with the following policies:

- Data protection policy and privacy notices
- Exclusion policy
- Admissions policy
- Conflicts of interest policy
- Governor code of conduct
- ICT and internet acceptable use policy
- Scheme of Delegation