

Governing Board Virtual Meeting Protocol

Introduction

The School Governance (England) (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) Regulations make provision for governing bodies of maintained schools in England to: “approve alternative arrangements for governors to participate or vote at meetings of the Governing Board including but not limited to by telephone or video conference”.

The Governing Board of _____ School has determined the following arrangements will apply. These arrangements apply to meetings of the full Governing Board and to committee meetings.

Guidance on virtual meetings and the facilitation of the meeting can be gained via the Clerk to Governors or the LA Governance Services Team

Virtual Attendance at Face to Face Meetings

- 1.1 Where a governor wishes to attend a meeting of the Governing Board by either telephone or video conferencing the Chair and Clerk must be notified at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting to ensure that appropriate arrangements can be made where possible. The governors will be asked their reasons for not attending the meeting in person and their attendance virtually will be subject to the approval of the Governing Board at the beginning of the meeting, though this approval will not be withheld without good reason. Where approval is withheld the reason for this will be minuted and the governor informed immediately.
- 1.2 Governors attending the meeting either by telephone or video conference will be entitled to vote on any issue providing they have been ‘present’ for the whole agenda item which the vote relates to. Where a secret ballot is required this will be facilitated where possible (e.g. by taking a telephone call off speaker phone and the governor sharing their vote verbally with the clerk) or via a direct message service. Where this is not possible the governor will be required either to vote publicly or abstain.
- 1.3 Governors attending the meeting virtually will contribute to the quorum for the meeting. If the technological link is lost, they will cease to contribute to the quorum, but this will not prevent the meeting continuing in their absence unless it has become inquorate.
- 1.4 The meeting will be chaired by a governor who is present in person.
- 1.5 If, after all reasonable efforts, it does not prove possible for a governor to participate by telephone or video conference the meeting may still proceed provided it is otherwise quorate.

Virtual Meetings

- 1.6 The three statutory full Governing Board meetings and termly scheduled committee meetings will be face to face meetings, wherever possible. However additional and extraordinary meetings can take place via telephone or video conferencing as long as the usual quorum of governors is ‘present’.

- 1.7 Where a meeting is taking place virtually every effort will be made to enable all governors to access the meeting.
- 1.8 Where a meeting is taking place virtually the usual statutory notice arrangements will apply and all papers to be considered will be circulated at least seven days in advance of the meeting, except where the chair has exercised his/her right to waive the usual notice in an emergency situation.
- 1.9 Virtual meetings will be minuted in the same way as other meetings, either by the clerk being present virtually or by a governor who is present, other than the headteacher, taking the minutes, and these will be presented to the next meeting of the full Governing Board.
- 1.10 Virtual meetings should not be recorded by any governor or the clerk without the approval of the Governing Board and for a specified purpose.
- 1.11 **Governors joining or leaving at intervals throughout the meeting should verbally announce this to ensure quoracy and accuracy of the minutes.**
- 1.12 **To limit background noise and to ensure the focus of the meeting, Governors should 'mute' their microphones when not speaking.**
- 1.13 **Questions or interjections, where possible, should be made by using the 'reactions' or 'raise hand' function on the software utilised. This helps the Chair to maintain order of the meeting and allows individuals to be heard clearly.**
- 1.14 **The confidentiality of the meeting must be maintained and governors should be mindful of their surroundings and whether the discussion of the meeting can be overheard. Meeting in a private room or the wearing of headphones can reduce this risk.**
- 1.15 **Consideration of conflicts of interest and voting mechanisms will be considered prior to the meeting. Meeting 'lobby areas' or the temporary removal of a governor from the meeting, who may have a conflict throughout a particular discussion, will be utilised. Secret voting will also be considered for contentious issues in order to protect individuals.**

Review of these Protocols

These protocols are to be reviewed at least annually, but any governor with any concerns about its operation can request that it is reviewed at any time.

Date: _____

(January 2021 updates detailed in red text)