

## **Policy on Governor Virtual Meeting Attendance**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **Maintained Schools**

- 1.1 The School Governance (England) (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) Regulations 2013 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”.
- 1.2 In relation to this the Governing Board of **Insert School/Trust Name** has determined the following arrangements will apply.
- 1.3 These arrangements apply to meetings of the **Trust Board/ Full Governing Board/Local Governing Board** or committee meetings.

### **2. Academies**

Any Trustee can attend meetings remotely under the DfE's model articles of association for academy trusts (article 126), as long as:

- They've given notice of their intention to do so and provided the telephone number on which they can be reached and/or the video-conferencing platform they'll be using at least 48 hours before the meeting, and
- The Trustees have access to the appropriate equipment

The model articles add that “if after all reasonable efforts it does not prove possible for the person to participate by telephone or video conference, the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate”.

(Refer to your own articles of association, though in case they differ)

### **3. Definitions**

Face to Face Meetings are meetings where the majority of governors are physically present at the location listed on the meeting agenda.

Virtual Attendance at a meeting is where a Governor is not physically present at the location listed on the meeting agenda but participates or votes at a meeting through virtual means including but not limited to telephone or video conference.

Virtual Meetings are meetings where the majority of governors are not present at the same physical location and participate or vote at a meeting through Virtual Attendance.

#### **4. Scheduling of Face to Face Meetings and Virtual Meetings**

Where possible the statutory (three) full Governing Board meetings and termly scheduled Committee meetings will be Face to Face Meetings. The decision to hold these as virtual meetings will only be in exceptional circumstances.

Additional or extraordinary full Governing Board meetings and Committee meetings can take place as Virtual Meetings (as long as the usual quorum of Governors are present through Virtual Attendance).

Meetings will be convened and scheduled by the Clerk to the Board in line with The School Governance (England) (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) Regulations 2013.

#### **5. Quorum**

Governors attending through Virtual Attendance 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.

#### **6. Virtual Attendance at Face to Face Meetings**

- 6.1 Where a Governor wishes to attend a meeting of the Governing Board by either telephone or video link 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.
- 6.2 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 (eg by taking a telephone call off speaker phone and the Governor sharing their vote verbally with the Clerk), or by email to the Clerk. Where this is not possible the Governor will be required either to vote publicly or abstain.
- 6.3 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. This will be noted within the minutes.
- 6.4 The meeting will be chaired by a Governor who is present in person.
- 6.5 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 with its business provided it is otherwise quorate.

#### **7. Virtual Meetings**

- 7.1 The statutory Full Governing Board meetings (three) and termly scheduled Committee meetings will be face to face meetings. The decision to hold these as virtual meetings will only be in exceptional circumstances. However additional and extraordinary meetings can take place via telephone or video conference call as long as the usual quorum of Governors is 'present' on the call.

- 7.2 Where a meeting is taking place virtually every effort will be made to enable all Governors to access the meeting.
- 7.3 Where a meeting is taking place virtually the usual statutory notice arrangements will apply. The Clerk will convene the meeting 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.
- 7.4 Virtual meetings will be minuted in the same way as other meetings by the Clerk being present virtually. Only in exceptional circumstances will they be recorded by a Governor who is present, other than the Headteacher, and these will be presented to the next meeting of the Full Governing Board.
- 7.5 Virtual meetings should not be recorded by any Governor or the Clerk without the approval of the Governing Board and for a specified purpose and will be destroyed as soon as the Clerk is satisfied the minutes are recorded.

## **8. Review of this Policy**

- 8.1 The policy will be reviewed at least annually, but any Governor with any concerns about its operation can request that it is reviewed at any time.

## Appendix 1

### The Key for Governors' Virtual Meeting suggested protocols:

#### Getting started

- Make sure all Governors have access to a decent internet connection. Most people's connections at home are good enough, but if you're in an area with poor connectivity you may need to make additional arrangements
- Encourage everyone to call in with their webcam/video switched on, if possible. It's much harder for everyone to participate, and for you to moderate the meeting, if you can't see everyone
- The Chair or Clerk should set up the call on whatever platform you choose, and circulate the link to everyone else
- If possible, test the platform or system you're using before the meeting

#### During the meeting

- Try to make meetings shorter – remote meetings are harder to manage, so shorter is better
- Time delays can happen, so make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute and ask questions
- If you normally sign an attendance record at the start of a meeting, you'll need to manage this in a digital format instead. It's fine to have the Clerk record who's present (and indicating that they're remote)
- If you'll be discussing confidential information, make sure everyone can be in an appropriate location (to avoid other people overhearing confidential details)
- Check in regularly with the Clerk – time delays and variable sound quality can make it hard to take accurate minutes
- If you're in a location with lots of background noise, mute your microphone when you're not speaking – this improves call quality for everyone.