

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE BRIEFING PAPER – 2020 AUTUMN TERM 1

This briefing paper is a summary of recent key developments and announcements which have implications for the governance of schools. Governors and Governing Boards are asked to consider any implication for the governance of their school.

This paper does not constitute definitive guidance or advice on whether any of these developments have an impact on the governance of your school or how to respond.

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1. BUSINESS DELIVERY – RISK ASSESSMENT

The Department for Education School Governance Update March 2020 (last updated 17th July 2020) states that the DfE ‘advises against governing bodies meeting in person, and to instead adopt alternative arrangements.’

It is our advice that all meetings continue to be held remotely unless there is no reasonable alternative and a full and thorough risk assessment has been completed by the school for each meeting and individual attending.

This will need to be completed one week ahead of the meeting prior to the circulation of the agenda and papers. The Clerk will need details of the risk and adjustments made for each individual based on the risk identified.

As a company we have continued to invest in resources to ensure that remote governance remains as strong and as effective as face to face. We can host meetings using our subscriptions to Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

1.1 **Virtual Governance Policy**

The Virtual Governance Policy is available on our website. Unless advised otherwise we will assume you will adopt our model policy.

<https://clerkingandappeals.co.uk/useful-papers-documents/>

Attendees at meetings must ensure that the professional and confidential nature of the meeting is observed at all time.

Meetings are confidential and the contents should not be shared deliberately or accidentally with anyone who is not an attendee of the meeting.

1.2 **DocuSign**

We have invested in DocuSign software. This will allow us to collect essential documents which need to be completed and/or signed remotely. We will shortly be sending to all Chairs of Governors those minutes which were not signed in the Summer Term.

Our administrator will send the following documents to all Governors to complete and sign:

- Register of Business Interests
- Disqualification Declaration
- Read/Compliance Receipt for Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1
- the NGA Code of Conduct

We would appreciate it if you would return these as soon as possible after receipt.

2. **GBASE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

We continue to develop GBase as a cloud-based resource to help our Trusts and Schools further to develop effective governance. We have worked through the Summer to improve and develop operational functions.

We plan to issue all Trustees, Governors and Associates with guidance on how to access GBase before the half term in October, along with a user summary guide.

3. **KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION**

The updated Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance came into effect on 1st September 2020. This can be accessed using the link below.

It is a statutory requirement that every Trustee/Governor/Member has read Part 2 of the document. You will be asked to sign a read receipt for this. Please note that we recommend that Governors read both sections.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912592/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_Sep_2020.pdf

4. FINANCE AND BUSINESS

4.1 Academies Financial Handbook 2020 (AFH20)

The Academies Financial Handbook 2020 came into effect on 1st September 2020 and can be accessed using the link below. The emphasis of the changes is aimed at improving internal scrutiny. The summary of changes is contained on page 9.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ef0a9a5d3bf7f6c03ed25b7/Academies_Financial_Handbook_2020.pdf

4.2 Teacher / Support Staff Pay Increment

The Government has agreed the Teacher Pay Increment of 2.75% for upper and lower pay range boundaries and 5.5% increment in starting salary for new teachers. The unions have also accepted the Local Government Association (LGA) offer of 2.75% increment for support staff.

Schools should ensure that their Pay Policies and Pay Scales are updated accordingly.

5. GOVERNANCE ANNUAL PLANNER / SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS FOR AUTUMN 2020

If you do not already have an Annual Governance Planner in place, we recommend you consider developing one. The aim is to plan the business the Board wants to cover through the year. Please contact our Director, Charmaine Strelitz, Charmaine@clerkingandappeals.co.uk, if you would like her to support you in developing this useful tool.

Agenda items to be covered through the Autumn term include:

- Election of Chair and Vice Chair of Governors
- Annual Governance Business forms/declarations (signed documents to be completed via DocuSign please look out for your email)
 - Register of Business Interests
 - Disqualification Declaration
 - NGA Code of Conduct (assuming adoption by the Governing Board)
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 2
 - Governing Board Standing Orders
 - Scheme of Delegation (if approved in line with budget circulated for information as a reminder of delegations)
 - Governors Attendance/Allowance/Visits Policies
 - Virtual Governance Policy
- Appoint Link Governors
- Committee Structures
 - Appoint Committees
 - Review/Approve Terms of Reference
 - Arrangement for Headteacher Performance Management
- Admissions Arrangements / consultation if applicable
- Trust Boards to receive closing budgets for approval before December 2020 ESFA return
- Pay Policy to be reviewed and updated with new pay scales
- Single Central Record review and assurance
- Governors Skills Audit (review and training/recruitment plan to address any gaps)
- Website Review