



Governing Board Update



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Dear colleagues,

Firstly, we hope everyone is keeping well.

Like many of you we are working remotely and remember that you can contact us as before by phone or email with any questions you have.

The information coming from the Department of Education and other agencies is changing rapidly. We have tried in this briefing to provide you with a summary of the key issues. Our apologies if we've missed anything this week.

Should you have any news you want to share with other governing boards, please drop us an email at office@governor.support and we'll arrange to share with boards across Hillingdon.

The task that schools and their staff have in ensuring continuity of education and making the reduced provision work on the ground, it is appropriate for all non-urgent business is delayed, the guidance says. Governing board meetings should be restricted to purposes including making business critical decisions (e.g. budget approval, ratifying school leadership appointments) and monitoring the wellbeing and welfare of pupils, staff and stakeholders.

The guidance also states that the work undertaken by panels – such as exclusions and complaints – is technically on hold, as it would be during a school holiday period, as schools are closed.

Establish a regular and manageable channel of communication between the leadership team, chair, clerk and board members.

Chairs and their clerks need to identify the urgent business that cannot be delayed during the period that schools are closed and are providing reduced provision.

Governing boards should arrange virtual meetings by telephone and or video conference. Examples include [Zoom](#), [Skype](#) or [Microsoft Teams](#). Model protocol is included in annex A.

[Schools have been told to review their child protection policies and warned they may have to rely on other schools' safeguarding leads in response to the coronavirus outbreak.](#)

New guidance on safeguarding during COVID-19 has been issued by the Department for Education.

It comes as schools are establishing new ways of working, providing childcare only to the most vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers.

All schools are required to have a written child protection policy, but the new guidance states that it is "likely" a school's existing policy "will not accurately reflect new arrangements in response to COVID-19".

It is therefore important that schools review and revise their policy and "keep it under review as circumstances continue to evolve", the guidance says.

Although having a trained designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy available on site is the "optimal scenario", the government has accepted that this "may not be possible".

If a DSL isn't available, schools could consider either having their trained DSL or deputy available by phone or online video or sharing DSLs or deputies with other schools and colleges, who would be available by phone or video.

"Where a trained DSL or deputy is not on site, in addition to one of the above options, the department recommend a senior leader takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

[National voucher scheme](#)

If your school catering service cannot provide meals or food parcels, you should offer families of pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals an alternative.

The DfE have developed a national scheme to provide supermarket vouchers via the Edenred online portal. Schools will not have to pay for these vouchers as the costs for this scheme will be picked up centrally by DfE.

Schools will receive an email today from DfE's supplier Edenred regarding how to access and administer the voucher scheme locally. Find out more [here](#).

**** The DfE confirmed in guidance issued this morning that the voucher scheme is "term-time only", and that it is up to schools if they want to provide their own meals service during Easter. No extra funding for such provision will be provided.**

[Schools across England are stepping up to save small businesses in their supply chains by speeding up payments](#)

The government released new guidance for public bodies last week, telling them to continue to pay suppliers "as normal", even if their service delivery is disrupted or suspended by coronavirus.

[Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp](#)

To use the free GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp, simply add 07860 064422 in your phone contacts and then message the word 'hi' in a WhatsApp message to get started.

[Ofsted](#)

Ofsted will not be publishing reports from recent inspections of schools, until they reopen as normal for all children/students.

All routine inspections of schools have been suspended.

Urgent inspections where specific concerns have been raised can still go ahead.

[Links to useful guidance](#)

[COVID-19: guidance for education settings,26 March 2020](#)

[COVID-19: guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)

[COVID-19: travel advice for education settings](#)

[Guidance for schools about temporarily closing](#)

[Free school meals guidance for schools](#)

[Corona Virus Act 2020](#)

[Guidance for the public on mental health & wellbeing aspects of](#)

[School governance update, 25 March 2020](#)

[Governing in challenging circumstances \(National Governance Association\)](#)

Keep safe and stay in touch.

Best regards

Maria and Ron

Draft for discussion

(Insert name of school)

Insert school
logo

Policy on Governor Virtual Meeting Attendance

Introduction

Maintained Schools

[The School Governance \(England\) \(Roles, Procedures and Allowances\) Regulations 2013](#) make provision for governing boards of maintained schools in England to: “approve alternative arrangements for governors to participate or vote at meetings of the governing body including but not limited to by telephone or video conference”.

In relation to this the governing board of *(Name of School)* has determined the following arrangements will apply.

These arrangements apply to meetings of the full governing board and to committee meetings.

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.

Virtual Attendance at Face to Face Meetings

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.

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). Where this is not possible the governor will be required to abstain.

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. The clerk will note the time the connection was lost.

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

***See note in event of emergency**

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.

Virtual Meetings

The three statutory full governing board meetings and termly scheduled committee meetings will be face to face meetings. 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. *** See note in event of emergency**

Where a meeting is taking place virtually every effort will be made to enable all governors to access the meeting.

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.

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.

*** See note in event of emergency**

Virtual meetings should not be recorded by any governor or the clerk without the approval of the governing board and for a specified purpose.

Note: This protocol does not apply to any formal hearings e.g. pupil exclusion, parental complaint, where all panel members must be physically present.

***Note:** in the event of an emergency such as Covid-19, where the majority or all governors are unable to attend a face to face meeting an exception may be made.

Review of this Policy

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.