

General Q & A and discussion

1) Is anyone intending to hold face to face meetings?

GSS Response:

This is a decision that full governing boards (FGBs) will need to make for themselves. Should FGB's decide that they would like to go ahead with a face to face meeting, we would say that they must ensure that they have completed a detailed risk assessment to evidence and support their decision in doing so.

2) Regarding meetings of 6 or more, will this also apply to internal meetings in a school do you think?

GSS Response:

It is unsure of what the implications will be for schools with the change in the legislation that the government has just introduced. However, it is likely that this will extend to all settings. Already a number of schools have abolished year group and school assemblies, so it is likely that many will extend this to full staff briefings/meetings.

It is likely that further clarification on this will come out from the government in due course.

3) Training – any possibility of Exclusion and Safeguarding training? Admissions training?

GSS Response:

Safeguarding training has been scheduled for 16th November 2020 from 18:30 – 20:00. Please book here.

In reference to Exclusion and Admissions training – historically there has not been enough interest and/or take up, as a number of schools have other training available – such as faith schools, whose admission criteria is different to maintained schools.

In order to offer this going forward, we would need to ensure that there were enough attendees to make this viable. Please do let us know if this would be useful, providing us with numbers from your governing boards that would attend if offered.

We would also like to request that you:

- speak to your governors about any other training that they would like to see on offer this academic year.
- ask your governors of when would be best to hold the Headteachers Performance Management training that was due to be held next week (Monday 14th September 2020) as we plan to reschedule this due to low take up.

- 4) Are you still doing one governing board training session per term as part of the SLA agreement?**

GSS Response:

Yes, we are committed to still offering this, albeit virtually.

- 5) Did you say Headteachers Performance Management can be just two governors plus and external advisor?**

GSS Response:

The minimum number of governors required for this is two governors plus an external advisor. However best practice is three.

- 6) Does anyone have a protocol for ZOOM meetings they are willing to share?**

- 7) Has anyone used a system for electronic signing of minutes?**

Angie Marchant – ‘I am exploring a system called ‘Signable’.

Further details can be found [here](#).

- 8) Signing Admissions Appeals Hearings Outcomes – who signs the letter?**

GSS Response:

It is recommended that outcome letters are sent out by the clerk, subject to being reviewed and signed by the Chair of the panel that heard the appeal.

It is our understanding that the current guidance may stipulate that the Clerk can sign the letter and we are looking into this and will amend this if required.

Clerk's Briefing

Additional questions and queries – 10th September 2020

Governor Elections

The guidance has not changed on this. If your governing body feels that the school and/or itself is in a position to go ahead with these as normal, they should ensure that the process is fair and transparent. Alternatively, however the board could operate with vacancies on it or indeed transfer governors from one category to another. The attached NGA COVID 19 Recovery and Continuity guidance provides further information on this.

School Yearly Planners

We have been asked for possible templates and although we do not have a GSS one (at present), we have sourced the attached, which may assist you in formulating one of your own.

Signing of documents – specifically of Declaration of Interests

You will need to include this as an agenda item and get your board members to update their pecuniary interest form at the start of the academic year so that the information can be published on the school website.

We would recommend that the pecuniary interest forms are emailed to governors, and when completed they are either posted to you for filing in school when possible or alternatively members may be able to scan their signed documents and email them to you, retaining the original for filing later. Similarly, any that need the chairs signature.

As good practice, we would also recommend including a declaration of interest as an agenda item for all meetings as a reminder to everyone in case there have been changes, or that there are specific conflicts with the items for discussion at the meeting.

Catch-Up Funding

Extract from DfE guidance

Funding allocation

Schools' allocations will be calculated on a per pupil basis, providing each mainstream school with a total of £80 for each pupil in years reception through to 11.

Special, AP and hospital schools will be provided with £240 for each place for the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

Payments

This funding will be provided in 3 tranches. The DfE will provide schools with an initial part payment in autumn 2020, based on the latest available data on pupils in mainstream schools and high needs place numbers in special and AP.

The DfE will then distribute a second grant payment in early 2021, based on updated pupil and place data. For mainstream schools, they will use the 4 to 15 pupil headcount from the October 2020 census.

A further payment will be made during the summer term 2021.

Though funding has been calculated on a per pupil or per place basis, schools should use the sum available to them as a single total from which to prioritise support for pupils according to their need.

As the catch-up premium has been designed to mitigate the effects of the unique disruption caused by coronavirus (COVID-19), the grant will only be available for the 2020 to 2021 academic year. It will not be added to schools' baselines in calculating future years' funding allocations.

Further information about the Catch-Up Funding can be found [here](#).

Meetings of 6+ people

Following our Clerk's briefing further guidance has emerged about the gathering of 6 or more individuals in a group – this can be found [here](#). Educational settings will be exempt from this, as well as governance meetings as highlighted below. However as we mentioned in the Clerk's briefing should your governors wish to go ahead with face to face meetings, we would recommend that a thorough risk assessment is carried out and is reviewed on a regular basis.

Exceptions to the rule will be:

- where everyone lives together or is in the same support bubble, or to continue existing arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents
- for work, and voluntary or charitable services
- for education, training, or registered childcare (including wraparound care)
- fulfilling legal obligations such as attending court or jury service
- providing emergency assistance, or providing support to a vulnerable person
- for you or someone else to avoid illness, injury or harm
- participate in children's playgroups
- wedding and civil partnership ceremonies and receptions, or for other religious life-cycle ceremonies – where up to 30 people will be able to attend
- funerals – where up to 30 people will be able to attend
- organised indoor and outdoor sports, physical activity and exercise classes (see the list of [recreational team sports](#), [outdoor sport](#) and exercise allowed under the [gyms and leisure centre](#) guidance)
- youth groups or activities
- elite sporting competition or training
- protests and political activities organised in compliance with COVID-19 secure guidance and subject to strict risk assessments

School Websites

A list of all those things that a maintained school should publish on their website can be found [here](#).

A list of all those things that an academy school should publish on their website can be found [here](#).

School Exclusion

Review policy and process. Although not a statutory policy to publish, good practice to include on the school website. Your board may also wish to consider publishing data on fixed and permanent exclusions, and trends over time, also not statutory.

Annual Business/Pecuniary Interests Declaration

Maintained schools and academy trusts must maintain and publish a register of business interests that includes all governors, associate members, members, trustees, local governors, and accounting officers. Each individual should complete an annual declaration and provide in year updates that must be communicated to the clerk as soon as is reasonable. Clerks should ensure that there is a system in place that allows governors/trustees to make declarations whenever their interests and circumstances change. It is good practice to include as a standing item on all board and committee agendas, to ensure governors declare any changes or conflicts with items on the agenda.

Publishing business interests and governance arrangements The DfE's Governance Handbook states that people who govern hold an important public office and their identity should be known to their school(s) and wider communities. Schools and academies are therefore required to publish on their school/academy website up-to-date details of business interests and the overall governance arrangements that are in place. This should be in a readily accessible format (avoiding the need to download or open a separate document) and includes all governors and associate members in maintained schools and all members, trustees, individuals of any local governing boards and the accounting officer in academy trusts. [Maintained Schools](#) [Academy Schools](#)

Clerk's Briefing

Additional questions and queries – 14th September 2020

Parent Elections

As promised, we have investigated options of running parent governor elections electronically in a fair and transparent way and have come across the following organisation UK Engage who may be able to assist your school if interested. Please find some further information on this attached and should your school be interested in using them, please do make direct contact with them.

Governing Board Meetings – DfE guidance

For further clarification, the London Governance Support Service has received the following statement from the DfE.

Thanks for your query. Please find the Department's stance on social distancing for governing boards below:

'The Department's advice remains as it was in the July Governance Update. Governing boards (chairs) should speak with the school leaders, and work out a pragmatic solution which takes into consideration the school's risk assessment, and how the health and safety of any visitors, alongside staff and pupils, will be protected.

We believe boards need to continue to take a pragmatic approach in regards to governing board meetings. We would expect the chair to keep the conversation open with the board members, to continue to test their views on how they wish to meet, and make arrangements as necessary, whilst observing social distancing. It could indeed be that some board members are happy to meet in person, and that some people want to dial in virtually. Therefore, arrangements for meetings must facilitate all such members' needs, so that boards can function effectively - clerks will be essential in facilitating this.'

[Governance Continuity through COVID 19](#)

Embedded in the title above is a link to:

'This report which presents findings of a small-scale research project to investigate the challenges for school governance during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. The research was carried out with the National Governance Association (NGA) and sought to understand the decisions and actions of governors and trustees in response to the short- and longer-term challenges presented by lockdown measures in England'.