

Your questions

Q. If a policy states that the local authority (LA) must be invited, must they be?

A. If a policy states this, and in maintained schools the LA must be informed and/or invited as part of a complaints/appeal/disciplinary etc., this must be done. As otherwise this could mean that a hearing is adjourned and/or cancelled. As well as this it could give rise to an appeal by the individual as the school has not adhered to policy.

If it is unclear, as a Clerk you should ask the question to ensure that all the processes as set out in policy are followed.

Q. The Clerks were asked for their feedback on holding meetings virtually.

A.

Pros included:

Time efficient

More join the meetings

Convenient

Cons included:

Governors not muting when appropriate

Background noise

Distractions due to being at home with children etc.

Tips included:

Comfort breaks (cameras and mic's off) - to allow for toilet breaks, refreshment break, etc.

Recording meetings virtually – in order to help the Clerk. Recommended that the control of this lies with the Clerk to ensure that the recordings are deleted immediately afterwards. Need to also ensure consent as per GDPR rules. Should not be shared as the record is not for the purposes of those not present to listen to the recording. If governors do not attend, they should review the minutes as they would have done traditionally.

Q. Should the names of governors be recorded in the minutes, when making comments, asking questions etc.?

A. It was noted that a definitive answer is not out there and that some governing boards do include initials whereas others do not.

It was however noted that good practice would be to not include initials, to allow for more open discussion around issues that could be contentious, so as to maintain the anonymity of viewpoints etc. If it was felt that viewpoints should be included for absolute clarity (of who said what) it was noted that this could be included as a confidential item of the minutes.

Q. ... following a discussion around school finances for academies.

A. It was noted that maintained schools can if they wish source DfE approved Financial Advisers that will come into a school to look at its finances. The link to this information can be found [here](#).

Q. How are parent governor vacancies being managed/dealt with?

A. It was noted that different schools are using different mechanisms: Google Forms, Survey Monkey etc. The question of anonymity and security of voting in reference to GDPR was raised and it was noted that whilst some offered this, others did not. It was also noted that to deal with the COVID situation paper copy voting was still being used, with a delay of 72 hours handling paper copies being used to safeguard staff etc.

It was also noted that If a secure electronic system is used a paper voting option must be available for any parents who do not have access to the internet. To ensure that everyone has equal and fair access to be able to vote.

Other methods are also available, but it was noted that some of them were time consuming and/or costly.

Q. Tips for a Clerk dealing with their first complaints panel?

A.

A pre-meeting with the panel

A stipulated running order

Designated Chair of Panel

Confirm with all those attending, no other means of recording should be used.

Reminder re. confidentiality

Lift items out of the Complaints Policy – such as running order etc.

Help us to help you and your board

- A reminder to update your governing board membership information on the DfE Get information about schools' website. Applies to both maintained and academy schools. Please also send us a copy of any changes.
- Virtual Governance, what has worked well, what has proved challenging?
- Looking to the future, what governance support does your board most value, and what other changes or services would they most want?

A round up of DfE & Ofsted November updates for Governance, both maintained and Academy boards

[Catch up premium - Published 19 November 2020](#)

School allocations will be calculated on a per pupil basis.

Mainstream school will get £80 for each pupil in from reception to year 11 inclusive.

Special, AP and hospital schools will get £240 for each place for the 2020 to 2021

Schools will get funding in 3 tranches.

1. Autumn 2020 – this is based on the latest available data on pupils in mainstream schools and high needs place numbers in special, AP, hospital schools and special schools not maintained by a local authority.
2. Early 2021 – based on updated pupil and place data. This payment will also take account of the initial part payment made in autumn 2020 so that schools will receive a total of £46.67 per pupil or £140 per place across the first 2 payment rounds.
3. Summer 2021 term - a further £33.33 per pupil or £100 per place.

Question(s) for your board to ask your headteacher and or senior leadership about how this funding is being used and the impact it has made.

[Teaching about relationships, sex, and health - updated 19 November 2020](#)

Governing boards should ask their headteachers about the progress in meeting the statutory guidance. You should also consider the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in delivering the curriculum. In particular to health and safety and safeguarding policies.

Question(s) for your board to ask your headteacher and or senior leadership how this is being delivered due to the Covid-19 situation.

[Schools have been advised by the government to consider buying longer shelf life food products to “minimise the effect” of any supply chain disruption because of Brexit - updated 17 November 2020](#)

In updated, schools were reminded the new UK Border Operating Model will apply to all goods entering the UK from 11pm on December 31.

The guidance states it is “important for all schools, and local authorities to prepare for potential changes to food supplies so they can minimise the effect on pupils and young people in their care”.

This includes contacting suppliers to check whether they will need to change meals or ingredients, make changes to school menus and that their secondary suppliers “are prepared”, something schools were first warned about in guidance last year.

The latest guidance adds while the school food standards allow changes to school meals, it reminds leaders they will still have to meet nutritional standards, provide free meals to some pupils, and manage special dietary needs.

Question(s) for your board to ask your headteacher and or senior leadership how this may affect our school.

[Schools should provide four hours of work a day for self-isolating pupils, with teachers expected to check in daily with every child under planned new government guidance on remote education](#)

The DfE has published a temporary continuity direction under the coronavirus act 2020, which states all state-funded school age children must be provided “immediate access to

remote education” should they miss school due to coronavirus. This will have effect until the end of the current school year unless it is revoked by a further direction”.

The guidance sets expectations that three hours of work should be set each day for primary pupils, and four hours for secondary pupils.

The government will also expect teachers to check-in daily with every child off school because of the pandemic. The current guidance states that schools would “ideally” provide pupils “daily contact with teachers”.

Question(s) for your board to ask your headteacher and or senior leadership about what is in place and how this is working. Also consider safeguarding implications.

What maintained schools must publish online – updated 12 November 2020

The information that schools maintained by their local authorities must publish on their websites.

- **Changes made:**
 - Schools that do not have a website
 - Coronavirus (COVID-19) catch-up premium

Updated sections on:

- Admission arrangements
- Exams and assessment results
- Curriculum’, ‘Pupil premium
- Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium
- PE and sport premium for primary schools
- Equality objectives
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) information
- Governors’ information and duties

Schools financial value standard (SFVS) – updated 10 November 2020

The SFVS document, checklist and dashboard guidance, and additional resource documents are appropriate for the 2020 to 2021 reporting year.

Reminder about Online reporting of PE and sport premium funding

You must publish details of how you spend your PE and sport premium funding by the end of the summer term or by 31 July 2021 at the latest. If you have any carried forward funding from academic year 2019 to 2020 you should show separately how this funding has been spent and confirm that it has been spent before 31 March 2021.

Online reporting must include:

- the amount of PE and sport premium received
- a full breakdown of how it has been spent
- the impact the school has seen on pupils’ PE, physical activity, and sport participation and attainment
- how the improvements will be sustainable in the future

You are also required to publish the percentage of pupils within your year 6 cohort in the 2020 to 2021 academic year who met the national curriculum requirement to:

- swim competently, confidently, and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres
- use a range of strokes effectively, for example, front crawl, backstroke, and breaststroke
- perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations

Attainment data for year 6 pupils should be provided from their most recent swimming lessons. This may be data from years 3, 4, 5 or 6, depending on the swimming programme at your school. It is essential to retain attainment data from swimming lessons in years 3 to 5 to be able to report this accurately in year 6.

Action for all primary school governing boards

[Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings](#) - Updated 20 November 2020

The latest updates to this guidance are as follows:

- [System of controls: prevention](#) (Section 1)
- [System of controls: response to any infection](#) (Section 1)
- [Special residential settings](#) (Section 1)
- [Attendance](#) (Section 2)
- [Workforce](#) (Section 2)
- [Safeguarding](#) (Section 2)
- [Wraparound provision and extra-curricular activity](#) (Section 2)
- [Curriculum expectations](#) (Section 3)
- [Behaviour expectations](#) (Section 3)
- [Contingency planning for remote education](#) (Section 5)
- [SEND legislation](#) (ceasing temporary changes)

[GCSE and A level exams](#)

Students now have more time to prepare for their exams next year, as most AS, A levels and GCSEs will be held 3 weeks later to help address the disruption caused by the pandemic.

- The summer exam series will start on 7 June and end on 2 July for almost all AS and A levels and GCSEs.
- Results days are Tuesday 24 August for A and AS levels and Friday 27 August for GCSEs so students will start the following academic year as normal.

Question(s) for your board to ask your headteacher and or senior leadership about what is in place in case there is a change in policy by the DfE.

[Academy trusts: governance](#)

Links to relevant guidance and resources for academy trust governors.

[What academies, free schools and colleges should publish online](#) -updated 12 November 2020

The information that academies, including 16 to 19 colleges and any educational institution that has academy arrangements, should publish on their websites.

[Academy trusts could face tougher finance checks](#)

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) updated their guidance for operating academy trusts as a going concern on 27 October 2020. Academy trusts are required to prepare their financial statements on a 'going concern' basis; this demonstrates that they have the resources needed to operate for at least the next 12 months.

Ofsted

[National restrictions from 5 November](#)

- During the national lockdown Ofsted will carry out their work remotely where they can. They will only go on site where it is necessary to do so, or in response to urgent concerns.
- The programme of autumn visits to schools and colleges will take place remotely.
- The Ofsted chief inspector has ruled out an "inspection frenzy" when normal business for the watchdog is resumed, suggesting the reintroduction of full inspections could be "gradual".
- Education secretary Gavin Williamson, speaking on 18th November, said his decision on when inspections restart will be made in the coming weeks, adding that Ofsted plays a "vital role as we work through the pandemic".
- Ofsted also now additional powers to routinely inspect 'outstanding' schools when normal business is resumed. However, the government has given the watchdog until 2027 to complete inspecting the near 3,500 'outstanding' schools.

[Ofsted release second briefing note on findings from interim visits](#)

The briefing note outlines key findings on attendance, adaptations to the curriculum and some of the main challenges that leaders, staff and pupils are facing. Ofsted reported that there was a mixed picture across schools around the way that the curriculum is being taught; in most schools, all usual subjects were being taught. Most schools said that they made adaptations to their curriculum in response to gaps in pupils' learning and coronavirus restrictions. Remote learning also appeared to impact pupil skills such as writing but was seen as a positive way of learning for pupils with special educational needs.

The findings also show that staff and school leaders are seeing a significant increase to their workload in addition to ensuring that safety measures are in place. Leaders are also seeing a decline in pupil mental health and pupil knowledge. These issues have influenced the way that schools are spending catch-up funding such as, additional pastoral staff, attendance support officers and releasing staff to plan for remote learning.

Question(s) for your board to ask your headteacher and or senior leadership about staff workload, pupils learning and everyone`s mental health.

Other useful information

Vodafone

Headteachers and education trusts across the UK have highlighted home connectivity as a major concern for school children that have fallen behind in their studies due to Covid-19 restrictions, particularly in deprived areas.

Vodafone are offering up to 250,000 free data SIMS with 30GB of data for 90 days to children in primary and secondary schools. Terms apply. Please note, **Headteachers** are the only people who can place orders for these SIMs. Find out more [here](#).

Please share this with your headteacher

National Governance Association - Chairing a board: developing governance, sharing leadership

The report takes an in-depth look at the current state of board leadership, outlining who is and isn't currently stepping forward into chairing positions, the manageability of the role and practice of current chairs, the recruitment process and the importance of developing current and future chairs.

We will include this in the handouts online.

Diverse Governance webcast series -[Book your place](#)

A series of free webcast events led by Diverse Educators alongside Inspiring Governance, the New Schools Network and Governors for Schools.

The series of events covers:

- How to make your governing board inclusive – tips for recruitment, Thursday 3 December, 4 – 5 pm.
- How to make your governing board inclusive – inclusive behaviours. Thursday 14 January, 4 – 5pm.
- What is the governing board's strategic role in delivering an inclusive education? Thursday 4 February, 4 – 5pm.