



Headteacher: Ms T Wilden B.A. (HONS)

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Initial Policy date | October 2021 | Next scheduled review | September 2023 |
| Governor approved | October 2021 | Key person/people | Chair of Governing Board/ Clerk |
| Model Policy | No | Model localised | |
| Pupil leadership team review | | Y / N | N/A |

Virtual Governance Policy

What is virtual governance?

Virtual Governance has been defined as the use of video or teleconferencing technology for governing board and committee meetings (rather than meeting face to face) and monitoring school operations and supporting school leaders without visiting school sites in person.

Governance boards are corporate bodies who should be transparent and accountable to their stakeholders. Decisions are most likely to be effective when there is an engaging discussion. Circumstances may occur, where physical attendance may not be possible, and it would be pragmatic and sensible for a governor to take an active part through virtual attendance. Any form of virtual participation needs to ensure that the principles of good decision making are not undermined. The corporate view is shaped by robust discussion and engagement of the full board.

The [School Governance \(Roles, Procedures and Allowances\) Regulations](#) – Regulation 14, provide that Governing bodies of maintained schools *‘may 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.*

Governing boards should have approved their arrangements for participating and voting in virtual meetings using the provision within maintained school governance procedures regulations. A simple protocol or set of ground rules (agreed by the board and documented by the clerk/governance professional) should be in place to cover virtual meeting practices.

The dynamics of virtual meetings clearly differ from in-person communication. Most governing boards progress quickly and efficiently through the agenda during virtual meetings; however, having courageous and challenging conversations in a virtual environment can be more difficult. Governing boards should reflect on their interactions and consider if their meeting protocol and practices promote effective teamwork in a virtual environment.

Questions in advance

Questions submitted (usually via email) in advance of meetings can provide a good starting point for conversations in virtual meetings. However, there should be ample opportunity during the meeting for meaningful discussion, ensuring that governors fulfil their responsibility to challenge and hold leaders to account. Chairs, school leaders and clerks must work together to find effective and efficient ways to prepare for and run meetings. All parties need to understand the routines and expected conduct before and during meetings.



Headteacher: Ms T Wilden B.A. (HONS)

Virtual meetings arrangements.

Where the governing board decides that a meeting should take place using alternative arrangements (e.g. by telephone or video conference) that have been previously agreed then following will apply:

- the usual (statutory) notice and arrangements for issuing papers.
- all participants to receive clear instructions regarding how to access the meeting.
- all participants will note and follow any instructions given on how to manage their participation at the meeting.
- the governing board will abide by their normal rules, procedures and code of conduct adopted by the governing board and give regard to the duty to maintain confidentiality.
- governors will contribute towards a safe and secure environment for the meeting by giving due regard to the school's policies relating to data protection and the appropriate use of ICT.
- the minutes of the meeting will be taken by the clerk to the governing board and the meeting should not be recorded by any governor or the clerk without the approval of the governing board and for a specified purpose.

Only those who participate in a meeting, including those doing so by virtual means, count towards the quorum and can vote. If the video or telephone link is lost to someone in virtual attendance at a meeting, they would have to be deemed to have left it until such time as the link is re-established.

Participation and Voting in meetings

Where the governing board has approved and has in place alternative arrangements for governors to participate and vote in meetings (e.g. by telephone or video conference) and a governor wishes to use these alternative arrangements they should.

- restrict themselves to using the arrangements agreed by the governing board.
- inform the clerk to the governing board that this is their intention as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours before the meeting is due to take place (subject to the meeting being convened giving the normal notice period).
- communicate and co-operate with the clerk to the governing board as necessary to ensure that the alternative arrangements can be put in place and work well for all concerned.
- Any secret ballot would have to be arranged so that the virtual attendees could communicate their vote to the clerk only (e.g. taking the call off speakerphone).

Meeting ID and passwords will be sent to participants via their email address, to maintain privacy.



Headteacher: Ms T Wilden B.A. (HONS)

For good practice, every attendee should follow the Governor Services protocols outlined at Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

Protocols for virtual meetings

All participants should check their connections in good time before the meeting starts.

These meetings are formal governor meetings that are simply using a different platform. Therefore, codes of conduct and normal expectations apply to all governors.

All participants should be seated somewhere where they are not going to be interrupted and background noise is reduced to a minimum. Interruptions and noise are distracting to other participants.

Everyone should maintain confidentiality just as they would in a face to face meeting. You should be in a private room where you cannot be overheard.

Remember as you are signing in to join the meeting, you may be able to be heard before you are seen.

It is good practice for the chair of the meeting to be present in the room 10 mins before the meeting is due to start. Chair can then welcome each participant as they join the room.

If your meeting is a panel meeting for a complaint/discipline or appeal hearing, or a full GB meeting relating to a restructure, please keep early conversation and chat to a minimum as there may be people who are not governors already in the room.

There may be some participants who are not joining on video – it may be all participants are on microphone only. This is challenging for chairs so remember to stop at key points and invite questions. You may choose to do this individually to ensure everyone has an opportunity.

Once all are present in the room. The chair should perform introductions and outline the agenda, in particular for any who are not governors.

The chair should be clear about the expectations in terms of what the purpose of the meeting is and share arrangements for how participants will be able to ask or answer any questions, maybe including the use of the 'hands up' emoticon feature.

Governors should not use the 'chat' function on the virtual platform during the meeting to ensure transparency and ensure accurate recording of all points and discussions.



Headteacher: Ms T Wilden B.A. (HONS)

If Governors arrive in the meeting late or have to leave early, they should inform in the Clerk in the meeting the so that attendance numbers can be recorded for accuracy of minutes and ensure quoracy at all times.

It would be sensible to allow any visitors the opportunity to share their submissions with governors at the top of the agenda after the welcome and pecuniary interest items which are quite quick.

Once the visitors to the meeting have finished their submissions, chairs should thank them for joining them and invite them to leave. Chairs should remember that leaving remote meetings can take a couple of minutes for connections to clear. Please be completely confident that all other parties have exited (your platform should tell you) before the meeting continues and any potentially confidential conversations can continue.