

Governing Body of the Wallisdean Federated Schools

Governing Body Virtual Meetings Policy

Aims

The aims of this virtual meetings policy are to:

- Enable the governing body to continue its work and maintain strategic oversight where face-to-face meetings aren't possible
- Provide a framework in which to run meetings virtually and include those attending virtually
- Provide flexibility so governors can attend meetings virtually where they would otherwise have had to miss them

Legislation and guidance

This policy complies with the following legislation:

- The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013 (regulations 13 and 14)
- The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (regulation 3)

The Governing Body's ability to make alternative arrangements for meetings

Under The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013, the governing body can 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. This includes at full governing body meetings and committee meetings.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2019/20 and 2020/21, the governing body agreed and made arrangements for meetings to be held in person, virtually or hybrid (ie members present in person and on-line).

The governing body has determined that the following arrangements will continue to apply.

Roles and responsibilities

The Chair

The Chair will chair virtual meetings, and meetings in which some participants are attending virtually, in the same way as face-to-face meetings.

The Chair, in partnership with the Clerk, will make sure all governors

- Have tested their connection and access to the virtual platform
- Are aware of the expectations on attendees set out in section 4.3

4.2 The Clerk

The Clerk will give written notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda at least 7 clear days in advance to:

- Governors
- The Executive Head Teacher
- Associate members
- The local authority (LA) where an agenda item involves a change of school category

Where there are matters demanding urgent consideration, written notice and a copy of the agenda can be given within a shorter period as the Chair directs.

The Clerk will minute virtual meetings, and meetings in which some participants are attending virtually, in the same way as face-to-face meetings.

The Clerk will make sure the minutes reflect that the meeting is virtual, or if a governor is attending virtually.

The Clerk will minute all decisions, and whether anything needs to be ratified at a later date, for example due to loss of connection.

All governors

To ensure confidentiality and the smooth running of the meeting, governors attending virtually will:

- Attend with the webcam/video switched on where possible
- Focus on the business of the meeting in the same way as if they were attending in person
- Remain on mute unless they are speaking
- Prevent unauthorised individuals overhearing conversations (for example, by using headphones)
- Be mindful of their surroundings – they will consider the privacy of the room, including, but not limited to, who or what is visible or audible in the background
- Ask questions during the meeting by using the raised hands/chat facility.

Virtual meetings

Fully virtual meetings will only be held if face-to-face meetings are not possible.

Difficulty joining the meeting

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.

The Clerk will record in the minutes that the governor(s) in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

Recording the meeting

The Clerk may wish to record the meeting to aid them when writing the minutes.

It is the Clerk alone who has permission to record the meeting. No one else has authority to record the meeting unless they have explicit authority from governors to do so.

The recording will be handled in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and once it is no longer needed the recording will be deleted.

Quorum

All governors attending virtually count towards the quorum.

If individual governors lose connection to the meeting, they will no longer count towards the quorum. The meeting can continue uninterrupted if it is otherwise quorate.

If all governors lose connection to the meeting then the Clerk will postpone the meeting and reschedule. Where this is not possible, the Clerk will send the matters for consideration via email or GovernorHub, and will expect comments from governors within 5 working days.

Voting

Governors may vote on any agenda item for which they've been fully present.

Secret ballots will be allowed where possible. Governors can share their vote privately with the Chair/Clerk via email or in a private phone call.

Where a virtual secret ballot cannot be arranged, then each governor can decide to vote publicly or abstain.

Conflicts of interest

Where a governor declares a conflict of interest, they will withdraw from the meeting by leaving the call.

Once the governing body is ready for the governor to re-join, the Clerk will notify them by email, text or phone.

Virtual attendance at face-to-face meetings

Governors should aim to attend all meetings in person, but may attend meetings virtually if they are unable to attend in person.

Most meetings will be offered as hybrid to facilitate maximum attendance, but with face-to-face being the expectation.

For some meetings virtual attendance may not be appropriate.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Links with other policies

This policy will be used in conjunction with the following policies:

- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices
- Governors' Code of Conduct
- ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy

Adopted : Autumn 2020

Reviewed Annually

Ratified by FGB: Summer 2025