



Hollinsclough CE Academy

Virtual Meetings Policy – Governance and Staff: 2020

Mission Statement

To encourage high levels of achievement through the enthusiasm and joy of learning, coupled with a creative curriculum and a holistic approach to education that reflects Christian values and supports our community. We guarantee accessibility and availability to all.'

Developing potential

Aims

The aims of this virtual meetings policy are to:

- Enable the governing board to continue its work and maintain strategic oversight where face-to-face meetings aren't possible
- Enable the staff to continue to function effectively
- Provide a framework in which to run meetings virtually and include those attending virtually
- Provide flexibility so governors and staff can attend meetings virtually where they would otherwise have had to miss them
- Enable staff to communicate via Google Education using video, audio and email.

Development of this policy

This policy was formulated using government guidance developed from the COVID-19 pandemic;

- The Department for Education's (DfE's) [school governance update – March 2020](#)
- The DfE's guidance on [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with our Acceptable Use Policy

Governors and Staff

Virtual attendance at face-to-face meetings – Governors and Staff

Governors and staff may attend their respective meetings virtually if they are unable to attend in person.

Any Governor or member of staff wishing to attend a meeting virtually should act by following the arrangements set out in this policy.

Making alternative arrangements for meetings – Governors and Staff

Under our articles of association, any Governor or staff member can participate in a meeting by video conference if:

- They've been given notice of their intention to do so and provided with access to the video conferencing platform they'll be using at least 48 hours before the meeting, and
- They have access to the appropriate equipment to do so

As we have found throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, we can agree to hold meetings via video conferencing without having to meet first.

The chair or clerk can contact governors directly to agree to these alternative arrangements.

The board has determined that the following responsibilities/arrangements will apply to all meetings.

Likewise, this applies to staff meetings

Roles and responsibilities – Governors Only

The Chairman

Meetings will be chaired as normal, in the same way as face-to-face meetings.

The chair will make sure all governors;

- Are set up on our Google Education Platform
- Have tested their connection and access to the platform
- Are aware of the expectations on attendees described in this policy

The above will also apply to staff meetings

The Clerk

In line with standard governance practice, the clerk will send out to each governor written/email notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda and where possible related documentation at least seven clear days in advance of the meeting.

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

Attendance and Confidentiality – Governors and Staff

As with normal face to face meetings, those attending using video conferencing will be required to ensure confidentiality and the smooth running of the meeting, governors/staff will:

- Attend the whole meeting
- Attend with the webcam/video switched on
- 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
- Say their name before they start speaking in the first instance – Governors only
- Prevent unauthorised individuals from 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 captions area

The above is also applicable to staff meetings

IT Support

Our Bursar will review the security of Google Education in line with our IT and Security related policies. If issues relating to the secure operation become apparent, i.e. a meeting was hacked by an outside person or body. Issues of this type would need to be escalated to Google.

Virtual meetings

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

Difficulty joining the meeting – Governors and Staff

If after all reasonable efforts it does not prove possible for a governor/staff member to participate by telephone or video conference, the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate (quorate applying to Governors meetings only).

The clerk will record in the minutes that the governor/staff member in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

Recording the meeting – Governors only

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

At the start of the meeting, the clerk will make sure all governors or staff agree to the meeting being recorded via Google Education

Where approval is granted, it is the clerk alone who has permission to record the meeting. No one else has the authority to record the meeting unless they have explicit authority from governors or in the case of a staff meeting, the staff present 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.

Being Quorate - Governors Only

All governors attending via video conferencing count towards the quorum.

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

If the meeting becomes inquorate, then discussions should end until such time that a meeting can be reconvened.

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 and will expect comments from governors within 24 hours of the meeting

Voting – Governors only

Governors may vote on any agenda item for which they have 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 – Governors and Staff

Where a governor declares a conflict of interest or a potential conflict arises, they will be required to withdraw from the meeting at that point by leaving the call. They can then be invited to return after the issue has been discussed. These invites will need to be sent via email.

Elements relating to Conflicts of Interest can be equally applicable to staff meetings.

Pupils

Google Education and video/audio communication

As part of our online education provision through our adoption of the Google Education (GE) platform, our staff can communicate with pupils using video, audio and email. As part of that, all audio and video communications are recorded for rebroadcast, training, professional security and development purposes.

These recordings are a requirement and will be retained for up to 6 years after the youngest pupil recorded leaves the school.

Provision for holding exclusion panels virtually

The timeframes set out in [The School Discipline \(Pupil Exclusions and Reviews\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) remain in force.

However, it may be possible that these deadlines cannot be met due to the circumstances placed on the school, i.e. as with the Coronavirus pandemic.

It is for the governing board to determine if these deadlines can be met by meeting virtually or if the meeting should be delayed.

Holding a governor exclusion panel meeting virtually

We will conduct an exclusion panel virtually via Google Education if all parties have:

- Appropriate devices
- Access to reliable, and affordable internet service – if some parties access the internet through their mobile phone and do not have unlimited data, we will not require them to appear via video conference

Delaying the governors exclusion panel meeting

Where virtual meetings are not possible, we will delay the meeting and hold the exclusion panel as soon as is practicable.

Equality Duty

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

British Values

Children who attend our academy experience an enabling environment in which they will develop self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Coupled with this, they will develop the ability to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England.

Within this enabling environment, your child or children will develop the ability over time to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely.

While with us, our parents can expect their children to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England, and to develop a personal character that is tolerant and can foster harmony between different cultural traditions, along with respect for their own and other cultures.

We firmly believe and encourage our pupils to show respect for other people; and for democracy and the support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

To be part of our academy, it is unacceptable on the part of any stakeholder to promote discrimination against people or groups based on their belief, opinion, or background.

Implementation of this policy

Our academy will manage the implementation of this policy with the support and guidance of the appropriate body/bodies as defined at the time of writing.

General

This policy and its guidance will always reflect the present and future needs of all stakeholders and to support this we are always open to suggestions for changes and alterations of and to any specific individual provision/requirement to ensure full access to all.

Signed. *David Brookes*

Designation: Chair of Governors

Date. May 2020

Signed. *Janette Mountford-Lees*

Designation: Principal

Date. May 2020

This policy is to be reviewed by Governors during Autumn term 2022