

# Virtual Meetings Policy



NANSTALLON SCHOOL



Approved by: **Governing Board**

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## Contents

1. Aims.....	2
2. Legislation and guidance .....	2
3. The board’s ability to make alternative arrangements for meetings .....	2
4. Roles and responsibilities.....	3
5. Virtual meetings.....	4
6. COVID-19: holding exclusion panels virtually .....	4
7. Virtual attendance at face-to-face meetings.....	5
8. Monitoring arrangements.....	6
9. Links with other policies .....	6

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### 1. 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
- 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

### 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on:

- The Department for Education’s (DfE’s) [school governance update – March 2020](#)
- The DfE’s guidance on [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- [The School Discipline \(Pupil Exclusions and Reviews\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

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)

### 3. The board’s ability to make alternative arrangements for meetings

Under [The School Governance \(Roles, Procedures and Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#), the governing board can approve alternative arrangements for governors to participate or vote at meetings of the governing board, including, but not limited to, by telephone or video conference. This includes at full governing board meetings and committee meetings.

#### COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, we can agree to hold meetings via telephone or video conferencing without having to meet first.

The chair or clerk can contact governors directly to agree these alternative arrangements.  
The board has determined that the following arrangements will apply.

## **4. Roles and responsibilities**

### **4.1 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 will make sure all governors:

- Are set up on Zoom / Microsoft Teams
- Have tested their connection and access to the 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 headteacher
- 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.

The clerk will read the privacy terms and conditions of Zoom/Teams and make sure its security features are enabled.

### **4.3 All governors**

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

- Attend the whole meeting
- 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
- Say their name before they start 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 when the chair invites questions at the end of each agenda item

## **4.4 IT specialist**

A member of IT staff will review the security of Zoom/Teams.

## **5. Virtual meetings**

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

### **5.1 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 in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

### **5.2 Recording the meeting**

At the start of the meeting the clerk will make sure all governors aware that the meeting will not be recorded and no governor should record the meeting.

### **5.3 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 undisrupted if it is otherwise quorate.

If the meeting becomes inquorate then discussions may continue, but no votes can be held unless the meeting is 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, and will expect comments from governors within 5 days.

### **5.4 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.

### **5.5 Conflicts of interest**

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

Once the governing board is ready for the governor to re-join, the clerk will notify them by phone call or text.

## **6. COVID-19: holding exclusion panels virtually**

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

However, it is possible that these deadlines cannot be met due to 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.

### **6.1 Holding the meeting virtually**

## **We will conduct an exclusion panel virtually via zoom/Teams, if all parties have:**

- › Appropriate devices
- › Access to a reliable, 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

### **6.2 Delaying the meeting**

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

## **7. Virtual attendance at face-to-face meetings**

Governors may attend meetings virtually if they are unable to attend in person.

Any governor wishing to attend a meeting virtually should give 3 days notice to the clerk where possible.

The governor will explain why they're unable to attend physically, and their virtual attendance at the meeting will be subject to the governing board's approval at the start of the meeting.

Where the board does not grant approval, the clerk/chair will notify the governor immediately and the clerk will minute this decision.

The meeting will be chaired by a governor present in person.

### **7.1 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 in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

### **7.2 Quorum**

Any governor attending virtually counts towards the quorum.

If the governor loses connection to the meeting, they will no longer count towards the quorum. The meeting can continue undisrupted if it's otherwise quorate.

If the meeting becomes inquorate then discussions may continue, but no votes can be held unless the meeting is quorate.

### **7.3 Voting**

Any governor attending virtually may vote on any agenda item for which they've been fully present.

Secret ballots will be allowed where possible. The governor 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 the governor can decide to vote publicly or abstain.

### **7.4 Conflicts of interest**

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

Once the governing board is ready for the governor to re-join, the clerk will notify them by text or phone call.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the chair Sheena Morton. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

## **9. Links with other policies**

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

- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice
- Positive Behaviour Policy (Exclusion Procedure Section)
- Admissions Policy
- Conflicts of interest policy
- Governor Code of Conduct
- ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy