

Virtual Governance Policy

Reviewed September 2022

Virtual Governance Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Governing bodies will continue to take a pragmatic approach to their meetings. In line with national restrictions, and guidance on social distancing, the school will continue to consider its own risk assessment when deciding on meeting arrangements to ensure the health and safety of all those involved.

1.2 In relation to this, the governing body of Abbey Primary School has determined the following arrangements will apply.

1.3 These arrangements apply to meetings of the full governing body.

2. Virtual Attendance at Meetings

2.2 Where a governor wishes to virtually attend a meeting (or part of a meeting) of the governing body by either telephone, video link or other agreed medium the chair and clerk must be notified at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting (wherever possible) to ensure that appropriate arrangements can be made. The governor will be asked their reasons for not attending the meeting in person and their attendance virtually will be subject to the approval of the governing body at the beginning of the meeting, though this approval will not be withheld without good reason. Virtual attendance at the meeting will be recorded as such in the minutes. Where approval is withheld the reason for this will be minuted and the governor informed immediately.

2.3 Governors attending the meeting virtually will be entitled to vote on any issue providing they have participated (i.e. heard/engaged) for the whole agenda item which the vote relates to. Where a secret ballot is required this will be facilitated where possible (e.g. by taking a telephone call off speaker phone and the governor sharing their vote verbally with the clerk). Where this is not possible the governor will be required either to vote publicly or abstain.

2.4 Governors attending the meeting virtually will contribute to the quorum for the meeting. If the technological link is lost they will cease to contribute to the quorum, but this will not prevent the meeting continuing in their absence unless it has become inquorate.

2.5 The meeting will be chaired by a governor who is present in person. If, due to circumstances, matters of safety, or when a Government directive deems close contact meetings not to be appropriate such that all attendees attend virtually, the meeting will be chaired by the usual committee chair or vice chair as appropriate.

2.6 If, after all reasonable efforts, it does not prove possible for a governor to participate by telephone, video conference or other agreed medium, the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate.

3. Virtual Meetings

3.1 The aim is that Governing Body meetings will be conducted in a face-to-face manner. All members should make every effort to attend personally. However, it is recognised that this may not always be possible and that the Governing Body should respond flexibly to personal, national and local circumstances. A blended or full-virtual approach may be adopted to suit individuals or the body as a whole and ensure that meetings can still take place (e.g. in the event of national/local lockdown). Additional and extraordinary meetings can take place via telephone, video conference call or other agreed medium as long as the usual quorum of governors is 'present'.

3.2 Where a meeting is taking place virtually every effort will be made to enable all governors to access the meeting.

3.3 Where a meeting is taking place virtually the usual statutory notice arrangements will apply and all papers to be considered will be circulated at least seven days in advance of the meeting, except where the chair has exercised their right to waive the usual notice in an emergency situation.

3.4 Virtual meetings will be minuted in the same way as other meetings, either by the clerk or by a governor/staff member (other than the headteacher) who is present virtually taking the minutes, and these will be presented to the next meeting of the full governing body.

3.5 Virtual meetings should not be digitally recorded by any governor or persons present without the express prior approval of the governing body and for a specified purpose.

4. Review of this Policy

4.1 The policy will be reviewed at least annually, but any governor with any concerns about its operation can request that it is reviewed at any time.