



## **BLUE COAT C E (AIDED) INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS' FEDERATION**

# **Virtual Governance Policy**

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## 1. Aims

The aims of this virtual meetings policy are to:

- 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
- Enable the governing board to continue its work and maintain strategic oversight where face-to-face meetings aren't possible

## 2. 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)

## 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.

If the government or public health officials impose or recommend restrictions on face-to-face contact, the governing board may vote to hold all regular meetings virtually until it is practical to resume normal procedures.

## 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 Microsoft Teams (a cloud based platform for video conferencing)
- 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 executive 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, e.g. due to loss of connection.

The clerk will read the privacy terms and conditions of Microsoft 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 (e.g. by using headphones or being isolated in a room)
- 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 raising your hand and waiting until the chair invites questions at the end of each agenda item. Alternatively, you may wish to use the chat messaging board in Microsoft Teams. The chair will keep an eye on the chat for questions or feedback.

(For guidance on how to use Microsoft Teams, please see appendix 1)

### **4.4 IT specialist**

A member of IT staff will review the security of Microsoft Teams. (See Appendix 2)

## **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**

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 agree to the meeting being recorded via Microsoft Teams.

Where approval is granted, 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 UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and once it is no longer needed the recording will be deleted. (See appendix 3 for GDPR Key Principles)

## 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 uninterrupted 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 circulate the matters for consideration via email and will expect comments from governors within five working 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 email, text or phone call.

## 6. 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, where possible, give at least **five working days' notice** to the Chair or Clerk.

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.

### 6.1 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.

## **6.2 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.

## **6.3 Voting**

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

## **6.4 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 email, text or phone call.

## **7. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Executive Headteacher, or sooner if there is a significant change to the platform or an update to data protection legislation. Each review will be submitted for approval by the full governing board.

## **8. Links with other policies**

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

- Data protection policy and privacy notices
- Exclusion policy
- Admissions policy
- Conflicts of interest policy
- Governor code of conduct
- ICT and internet acceptable use policy

## Appendix 1: How to Use Microsoft Teams – Step-by-Step

### 1. Download or Access Teams

- **Desktop:** Download from Microsoft's official site.
- **Mobile:** Install via the App Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android).
- **Web:** Visit [teams.microsoft.com](https://teams.microsoft.com) to use it in your browser.

### 2. Sign In or Create an Account

- Use your **Microsoft 365 account** or create a free Microsoft account.
- The federation will provide login credentials for school use if requested.

### 3. Explore the Interface

- **Activity:** See mentions, replies, and notifications.
- **Chat:** Start private or group conversations.
- **Teams:** Join or create teams for projects or departments.
- **Calendar:** Schedule and join meetings (syncs with Outlook).
- **Files:** Access shared documents and collaborate in real time.

### 4. Create or Join a Team

- Go to the **Teams** tab.
- Click **Join a team**.
- Choose **Create team** or enter a **code/invite link** to join an existing one.

### 5. Schedule and Join Meetings

- Go to **Calendar** and click **New Meeting**.
- Fill in details, invite participants, and set a time.
- Join meetings via the calendar or meeting link.

### 6. Share and Collaborate on Files

- Upload files in **Chat** or **Channels**.
- Edit documents together using integrated **Word, Excel, or PowerPoint**.
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### 7. How to Raise Your Hand in Microsoft Teams

- **Desktop/Web App:** Click the **Raise hand** icon (a hand with a line above it) in the meeting toolbar at the top of the screen.
- **Mobile App:** Tap the three dots (**More options**) and then select **Raise hand**.

The clerk, chair and other attendees will see that you've raised your hand. You'll be called on when it's your turn, or the chair may unmute you directly.

### 8. How to Send Messages During a Teams

#### **Desktop/Web App:**

1. Click the **Chat icon** (speech bubble) in the meeting toolbar.
2. The **Meeting Chat pane** will open on the side.
3. Type your message in the box at the bottom and press **Enter** to send.
4. Use **@mentions** to tag someone directly (e.g., @Alex).

#### **Mobile App:**

1. Tap the **three dots** (...) for **More options**.
2. Select **Chat**. Type your message and tap the **send icon** (paper plane).

### **9. Pro Tips**

- Messages are visible to **everyone** in the meeting.
- You can **share files, links**, and even **reactions**.
- After the meeting, the chat remains accessible in your **Chat tab**.
- If the meeting is recorded, your messages are saved alongside it.

### **10. Customise Settings**

- Click your **profile picture** (top right) to:
  - Set your status (Available, Busy, Do Not Disturb).
  - Adjust notifications.
  - Change theme or language.

**Violating the Acceptable Use Policy may result in restricted access or disciplinary action.**



## Appendix 2: Key Areas for IT to Review in Microsoft Teams Security

### **1. Authentication & Access Control**

- **Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)**: Ensure it's enabled for all users.
- **Single Sign-On (SSO)**: Verify integration with Microsoft Entra ID (formerly Azure AD).
- **Conditional Access Policies**: Restrict access based on location, device compliance, or risk level.

### **2. Data Protection**

- **Encryption**: Confirm that data is encrypted both in transit and at rest using TLS and SharePoint encryption.
- **Data Loss Prevention (DLP)**: Set up policies to prevent sensitive data from being shared inappropriately.

### **3. Guest and External Access**

- Review guest access settings to ensure external users have limited and secure permissions.
- Use secure channels and control external sharing options.

### **4. Compliance and Privacy**

- IT should verify that Teams is configured to meet your organisation's specific compliance needs.

### **5. Monitoring and Auditing**

- Enable **audit logs** and monitor user activity for anomalies.
- Use **Microsoft Secure Score** to assess and improve your organisation's security posture.

### **6. Third-Party Apps and Integrations**

- Review permissions and security of any third-party apps integrated with Teams.
- Disable unused or risky apps to reduce attack surface.

## Appendix 3: Key Principles of UK General Data Protection Regulation

The **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** is the United Kingdom's data protection law that came into effect on **1 January 2021**, following Brexit. It mirrors the core principles of the **EU GDPR**, but allows the UK to tailor its own data protection framework independently.

### Data must be processed legally and openly.

1. **Purpose limitation** Data should only be collected for specified, legitimate purposes.
2. **Data minimization** Only the necessary amount of data should be collected.
3. **Accuracy** Personal data must be kept accurate and up to date.
4. **Storage limitation** Data should not be kept longer than needed.
5. **Integrity and confidentiality** Data must be protected against unauthorized access and breaches.

### Rights of Individuals Under UK GDPR

- **Right to be informed** about how your data is used
- **Right of access** to your personal data
- **Right to rectification** of inaccurate data
- **Right to erasure** ("right to be forgotten")
- **Right to restrict processing**
- **Right to data portability**
- **Right to object** to processing
- **Rights related to automated decision-making and profiling**

### Enforcement and Oversight

The **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)** is the UK's independent authority responsible for upholding information rights and enforcing data protection laws. You can explore their detailed guidance on the ICO's official UK GDPR page.

If you're working in education, healthcare, business, or tech and want help applying UK GDPR principles to your specific context, I can help tailor a compliance checklist or policy draft. Just say the word.