

Russell Street School

Remote/Virtual Meeting Policy

Approved by: Russell Street School Governing Board

Last reviewed on: November 2024

To review: annually

Contents:

1. Statement of intent/Aims
2. Legislation and guidance
3. The board's ability to make alternative arrangements for meeting
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Virtual Meetings
6. COVID-19: holding exclusion panels virtually
7. Virtual attendance at face-to-face meetings
8. Monitoring arrangements

Statement of intent

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
- This policy addresses the procedures which must be followed when conducting virtual meetings.

Signed by:

Headteacher Date:

Chair of governors Date:

2. Legislation and guidance

2.1 COVID-19 specific guidance

This policy is based on:

- The Department for Education's (DfE's) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update/maintained-schools-school-governance-update-july-2020>
- The DfE's guidance on [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion/changes-to-the-school-exclusion-process-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion/changes-to-the-school-exclusion-process-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

2.2. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulations
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

2.3 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)

2.4. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Data protection GDPR policy
- ICT acceptable use policy
- eSafety Policy
- Governor code of conduct
- Behaviour (including Exclusions) policy

3. The board's ability to make alternative arrangements for meeting

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.

4. Roles and responsibilities

1. The clerk to the governing board is responsible for:

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

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.

2. The chair of the governing board is responsible for:

Chairing of all virtual Governing Board meetings, and meetings in which some participants are attending virtually, in the same way as face-to-face meetings. Committee chairs will chair committee meetings in the same manner.

The chair will make sure all governors:

- Are set up on Zoom or MS Teams
- Have tested their connection and access to the platform
- Are aware of the expectations on attendees set out in section 4.3

The chair will read the privacy terms and conditions of Zoom and MS Teams and make sure its security features are enabled (with School's IT specialist if needed).

- Ensuring that all members of the governing board are aware of the procedures outlined in this document.
- Notifying members in advance that the meeting will be conducted virtually.
- Considering any objections to meetings taking place virtually.
- Deciding whether a recording is appropriate during the virtual meeting, and notifying members that a recording is taking place, prior to the meeting.
- Ensuring that recordings of any meetings are properly dealt with in line with the school's Data Protection Policy.

4.3. Members of the governing board will:

- Be aware of, and act in accordance with, the procedures outlined in this document.
- Act in accordance with the Governing Board Code of Conduct and agreed Standing Orders (where adopted) whilst in virtual board meetings.
- Not take covert recordings of meetings.
- Notify the chair of any objections they have to the meeting being held virtually.

- Notify the chair of any objections they may have to a recording being made.
- Be respectful of the rights of individuals who do not wish to be recorded.
- 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, or follow protocol as agreed by Governing Board
- 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

5. Virtual Meetings

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

5.1 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 seven days notice to the chair/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.

5.2. Technological difficulties (Fully virtual meeting or virtual attendance at face to face 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.

5.3 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 Zoom or MS 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 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and once it is no longer needed the recording will be deleted.

5.4 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 send the matters for consideration via email, and will expect comments from governors within 7 days.

5.5 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.

5.6 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.

6. COVID-19: holding exclusion panels virtually

This section is COVID-19 specific guidance.

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 or MS 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. Monitoring arrangements

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