

# Mossley Hollins High School



## Governors Virtual Meeting Policy

At Mossley Hollins we will ensure that at every level, in all our work and throughout all aspects of the school community and its life, all will be treated equally, with respect and dignity, free from discrimination and harassment. Each person will be given fair and equal opportunities to develop their full potential regardless of their age, disability, gender, gender-identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity (refers to staff / employment), socio-economic background and special educational needs. Our school will tackle the barriers which could lead to unequal outcomes for these protected groups, ensuring there is equality of access and that we celebrate and value the diversity within our school community. The school will work actively to promote equality and foster positive attitudes and commitment to an education for equality

### Data Protection Statement

The procedures and practice created by this policy have been reviewed under our Data Protection Policy in line with GDPR.

Accepted by the Governing Body .....

### Introduction for Maintained Schools:

Educational Regulations for Maintained schools form the basis for this policy and state:

The School Governance (England) (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) Regulations 2013 – section 14 (8) allows governing bodies of maintained schools in England to:

“approve alternative arrangements for governors to participate or vote at meetings of the governing body including but not limited to, by telephone or video conference”.

### Meeting definitions:

Normal meeting attendance – face to face – physical presence;

Virtual attendance – single governor’s attendance at a Governing Board meeting but participates and votes through virtual means eg telephone or video conference;

Virtual meeting – where the majority of governors are not present at the same meeting location, but are able to participate and vote through Virtual attendance using telephone call conferencing or video conference.

### Meeting convening:

- The 3 main statutory Governing Board meetings should take place with all governors physically present in the same location, but any extraordinary full Governing Board meeting and committee meeting could take place as Virtual meetings provided the quorum is met.
- The Governing Board reserves the right to convene main statutory meetings as Virtual meetings when *exceptional* circumstances prevail. However, the usual quorum of governors must be present through Virtual attendance;
- Maintenance and confidentiality of all Governing Board meetings held in a Virtual capacity must be secured by all governors and steps taken by all governors to ensure this.

### Guidelines for safeguarding and security of discussions when not present in the same room:

- Governors are advised to use the school email address which was provided by school when they became a school governor and should be used on all occasions when a Virtual meeting of the school’s governing board is called. (A personal email address might be accessed by other people in your household)

The following points should be observed by all governors when holding a Virtual meeting by video link or making a Virtual attendance on any occasion when school is not the meeting venue. The following guidelines could also be applied to conference calls on the telephone;

- Please make sure that you are using a room that is private for you so that you can speak safely, securely and unheard by anyone else in your household or people around you.
- Please make sure that there are no distractions in the background that other governors can see, and remove any personal items from the view of people taking part in the Virtual meeting.
- Please make sure that other people in your family cannot be identified in the background frame or from any of your own personal possessions that are on display in the background.
- It is recommended that you dress appropriately for the meeting, as you usually would for a meeting with the governors,
- Confidentiality is a key to the success of a Virtual meeting, so earphones or a headset would be useful so that no one else can hear the discussions that are taking place in the meeting.

### Meeting attendance – Virtual – arrangements for a single governor:

- Governors must notify the Chair and Clerk at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made to enable this.
- First meeting agenda point to discuss - Governor must state why they cannot physically attend the meeting in person.
- The governor's Virtual attendance must be approved by the Governing Board and may be subject to the approval of the Governing Board, however if good reason for not physically attending the meeting is reported to the Governing Board, then approval should not be withheld by the Governing Board without good reason.
- The reason for not approving Virtual attendance must be minuted and the governor must be informed straightaway.
- Voting rights of governors participating through Virtual attendance: Governors attending a face to face meeting in a Virtual capacity will be entitled to vote on any permissible issues and must remain a part of the meeting in their Virtual capacity for the duration of that specific agenda item.
- Voting in a secret ballot: This will be facilitated by taking a telephone off speaker phone and the governor attending Virtually will share their vote verbally with the clerk. Where this is not possible – the governor must either make their vote public over the speaker phone or abstain from the vote.
- Quorum: The governor attending in a Virtual capacity will contribute to the quorum of the meeting as long as their telephone link is secure, dependable and stable, but if the telephone link is lost, then the governor will *not* be part of the quorum and it must be confirmed that the meeting is *still* quorate and able to continue.
- Telephone problems and other possible issues: If all efforts have been made to allow the governor to attend Virtually and it has not been possible for the governor to connect with the Governing Board meeting, then the meeting must continue on, providing that the quorum is still maintained.
- The Chair must be physically present at a face to face Governing Board meeting and not attend in a Virtual capacity.

#### Holding a Virtual Governing Board meeting:

- All Governors must be contacted to gain their approval for the Virtual meeting / Conference call.
- Agree who is Admin host – Chair / Clerk – (for clarity) and set up for the meeting.
- All reasonable effort must be made to enable all governors to access the meeting using Virtual attendance.
- Platform used for conference calling or Video links must be GDPR compliant.
- Statutory notice arrangements do still apply to the Virtual meeting – issue of notice seven days before the meeting date unless emergency situation meeting circumstances apply and the Chair has decided to put aside the normal notice arrangements.
- Every decision to be decided at a Governing Board meeting must be determined by a majority vote.
- Virtual meetings will be minuted in the same way as normal by the clerk, who will provide the minutes to the next meeting of the full Governing Board.
- Virtual meetings will *not be recorded* by any governor or the clerk without express permission of the Governing Board and for a specific declared reason.

#### Next steps to take:

- In summary it is possible to hold a governing board or committee meeting by telephone, email or video conference. However, you'll need to decide and agree on arrangements in advance of the meeting.
- Agree the Virtual Meeting and Attendance Policy at the first virtual meeting if it has not already been done.
- Decide what are the key decisions to be ratified and/or information that needs to be considered this term/early next term and seek agreement from Governing Board/SLT how to proceed.
- Where you can postpone any business do so.

- Plan ahead. when organising a meeting – can all governors access the meeting; how will you all hear/see each other; will email conversations be acceptable although not best practice to use for a Governing Board meeting.
- Voting on confidential matters are not suitable to be carried out 'Virtually';
- Be pragmatic, these are unprecedented times. If governors are not meeting, even so - decisions need to be made; use email to agree how you will meet remotely / make decisions / communicate with each other – what works best for your Governing Board.

When to review this policy:

The Governing Board can review this policy at least every year and whenever a governor requests that it is reviewed.