



# Ashford CE Primary School

## Alternative Participation in Meetings and Virtual Meeting Protocol

The Governing Body expects governors to be present at all meetings. Where this is not possible it was agreed at the Full Governing Body meeting on 17.9.2024 that members of the governing body of Ashford CE Primary School are able to participate and vote virtually at full governing body and committee meetings. Virtual participation includes, but is not limited to, telephone, Skype, Zoom, Teams and other video conference tools.

### Alternative Participation Protocol (Where meetings are being held in person)

- A maximum of two governors may attend virtually for any single meeting
- Notice of virtual participation must be given, to the Clerk to the Governing Body, by the governor who wishes to participate no later than 72 hours prior to the meeting (3 days' notice) and the reason for non-attendance in person.
- Virtual participation must only be requested through absolute necessity. It must not be utilised for convenience.
- It is the responsibility of members of the governing body wishing to participate virtually to ensure they are able to do so through a secure method in an environment conducive to confidential and private communication.
- Virtual participation must be for the entire meeting and not just for specific agenda items or solely for voting purposes
- It is the responsibility of those participating virtually to ensure they have a reliable connection.
- If the communication connection fails and reasonable attempts to reconnect are unsuccessful virtual participation will no longer be possible and the agenda will not be delayed. The clerk will note the time that the connection was lost.
- Quorate meetings are the responsibility of the clerk who will monitor this throughout meetings involving virtual participation and advise governors if the meeting becomes inquorate.
- If there is to be a vote, by secret ballot, governors participating virtually will *not* be able to vote.
- Where there is no visual connection all meeting participants will start their comments by stating their name.
- If there is no visual connection the outcome of any vote taken through a show of hands will be communicated to the individual attending virtually. The virtual attendee will need to cast their vote by stating if they wish to vote in favour or against.
- The chair will always attend the meeting in person.
- The clerk will always attend the meeting in person.



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For any formal proceedings, such as staff grievance and discipline, considerations of exclusion, admission or complaints and for any appeal hearings only physical attendance is acceptable and therefore this protocol will not apply.

### **Alternative Participation Protocol (Virtual Meetings)**

The Governing Board expects governors to be present at all meetings. Where this is not possible, including during the current Coronavirus pandemic, meetings will take place and decisions will be made virtually. This protocol outlines how meetings will be conducted, enabling the Governing Board to discharge its duties effectively and efficiently.

- Rules of quorum for governing board meetings remain in place for all virtual meetings. Ensuring quorate meetings is the responsibility of the clerk, who will monitor this throughout any virtual meeting and advise the board if a meeting becomes inquorate.
- It is the responsibility of individual governors, the clerk and members of staff, participating in virtual meetings, to ensure they can do so through a secure method in an environment conducive to confidential and private communication. All attendees participating in a virtual meeting using technology must declare that they are in an environment which is secure, and which protects confidentiality.
- Virtual participation must be for the entire meeting and not just for specific agenda items or solely for voting purposes.
- It is the responsibility of those participating virtually to ensure they have a reliable connection.
- If the communication connection fails and reasonable attempts to reconnect are unsuccessful, virtual participation will no longer be possible and the agenda will not be delayed. The clerk will note the time that the connection was lost.
- If there is to be a vote, governors should have relevant documents seven days prior to the meeting. The chair will decide how to ensure that all eligible votes are sought.
- If there is to be a vote, by secret ballot, this should be considered in advance of the meeting by the chair and clerk. An appropriate secure and confidential method of conducting a secret ballot must be in place enabling all governors to vote.
- All meeting participants will mute their microphone unless invited to speak by the chair. Instructions will be outlined at the beginning of each meeting indicating what those attending should do if they wish to speak.
- If there is no visual connection, virtual meeting participants will always start their comments by stating their name.

This protocol does not apply to any formal hearings e.g. pupil exclusion, parental complaint, where all consent will be sought to conduct such a meeting virtually.