

Dene House Primary School

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Virtual Meeting Policy (Governing body)

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Date of next review: September 2027

Lead: Lee Blake (Headteacher) and Anne-Marie Lee (Chair of Governors)

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Statement of intent

Dene House Primary School is committed to supporting trustees, the LGB, clerk to the board of trustees and clerk to LGBs when having to hold virtual meetings in the event that face-to-face meetings are not possible. This policy addresses the procedures which must be followed when conducting virtual meetings.

For the purposes of this policy, the 'governing board' refers to the board of trustees at MAT level, and the LGB at individual academy level, where relevant.

Governing boards should always have due regard for the academy's articles of association.

Legal framework

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
- The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- **Data Protection Policy**
- **ICT Policy**
- **E-Security Policy**
- **Governing Board Code of Conduct**

1. Roles and responsibilities

The **clerk to the governing board** is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the protocol for conducting virtual meetings is agreed upon by all members of the board prior to the meeting taking place.
- Recording, within the written minutes of the meeting, the details of the virtual meeting, in the same way as a face-to-face meeting.

The **chair of the governing board** is responsible for:

- 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.
- Ensuring that recordings of any meetings are properly dealt with in line with the school's **Data Protection Policy**.

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** 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.

In the absence of either the **chair** or the **clerk**, their responsibilities, as outlined in this procedure, will be carried out by a designated member of the governing board.

2. Conducting remote meetings

Any trustee or local Governor will be able to participate in meetings of the trustees or LGB by telephone or video conference provided that:

- They have given notice of their intention to do so at least 48 hours before the scheduled meeting.
- They have detailed the telephone number they will be contactable on and/or appropriate details of the video conference suite from which they will be taking part at the time of the meeting, at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- They have access to the appropriate equipment.

1.1. If a remote attendee is not available for the any reason, the meeting will go ahead without the participation of the remote attendee, so long as the meeting is otherwise quorate.

1.2. The attendance of remote attendees will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and on the published meeting attendance record.

1.3. If a vote takes place during the meeting, the remote attendee will be entitled to participate in the vote as usual. In an open vote, the remote attendee will be asked directly what their vote is. In a closed vote, the clerk will ensure the remote attendee is asked to confirm their vote in a confidential manner. For example, the conference video and speakers will be turned off whilst the remote attendee casts their vote to the clerk.

1.4. In the event of a trustee/local governor being unable to confirm their closed vote remotely, they will be required to vote publicly or abstain.

1.5. The vote of the remote attendee will not be recorded separately in the minutes of the meeting.

3. Chair's emergency powers

In the event of unexpected or unavoidable circumstances, where it is unsafe for trustees/local governors to meet face-to-face and alternative arrangements cannot be made, the chair of the governing board is permitted to make the decision for a remote meeting to be held.

4. Remote meeting processes

Meetings of trustees/local governors will be convened by the clerk.

Each trustee/local governor will be given at least seven clear days' notice before the date of a meeting. They will receive:

- Notice in writing, signed by the clerk and sent to each trustee/local governor at the address provided by each trustee/local governor from meeting to meeting.
- A copy of the agenda for the meeting.

If there are matters which require urgent consideration, it will be sufficient if the written notice of the meeting and the copy of the agenda are given within shorter notice periods.

The chair will be appointed from the membership of the meeting attendees, excluding any member of staff who works for the school.

The meeting will be clerked in the same way as any other meeting of the board. If the clerk is unavailable, normal procedures will be followed to ensure their duties are fulfilled in their absence. Members of staff who work for the trust will not be appointed as interim clerk.

Any existing conflict of interest pertaining to the agenda will be declared at the start of the meeting. If a conflict of interest prevents an attendee from participating in any part of the meeting, the clerk will ensure the attendee ceases participation from the call/conference until the board has finished discussing/voting.

Minutes of any meetings will be recorded by the **Clerk to the Governing body, in the case of Full LGB meetings, or a designated person**

Minutes will be agreed by all attendees and signed by the chair at the next meeting. If the next meeting is held remotely, the minutes will be agreed at that meeting and signed by the chair outside of the meeting.

5. Confidentiality, security and data protection

Full consideration will be given to the privacy and security features of the chosen remote meeting platform and software will not be used if the security provision is insufficient.

The meeting shall not be recorded on any digital device or programme used by the clerk, any trustee/local governor unless:

- The intention to record the meeting is made clear to all attendees prior to the recording being made, with the opportunity to express any objections.
- All attendees provide consent to the recording taking place.

- It is agreed that recording the meeting will assist with the accuracy of creating a written record of the meeting.

If attendees agree to the recording of the meeting, the following must apply:

- At the meeting, before recording is commenced, the chair will notify all attendees that recording will take place.
- Attendees who are not present at the start of the meeting will be notified upon their arrival that a recording is being made.

Within the minutes of a meeting, details of the following will be noted:

- Any objections to the meeting being recorded.
- The chair's consideration and final decision regarding the commencement of recording.

Whether attendees other than the clerk are permitted to make recordings is at the discretion of the board. When this decision is being made, the purpose of the recording will be taken into account.

All actions taken by the board, including the creation, storage, retention and disposal of recordings, will be in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR and Freedom of Information Act 2000, where relevant.

Where a confidential item is on the agenda, attendees will be informed of this at the beginning of the meeting, prior to the commencement of recording.

Confidential items will only be included within a recording of a meeting if the purpose and intention of the recording of the item is clear and justifiable.

Monitoring and review

The effectiveness of this procedure will be monitored by the **chair** and **clerk** of the governing board.

Any amendments to this procedure will be agreed upon by all members of the governing board, discussing and addressing any objections which may arise.

This policy is reviewed **annually** by the whole governing board.

The next review date for this policy is **September 2024**.