

Virtual Meetings Policy

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v1.0	24 March 2020	Babcock Model / N McDermott	First Published Version. Updated with specific reference to DMAT and Office 365
v1.1	13 May 2020	J Hooper	Amendment to include formal hearings and inclusion of Confidentiality Declaration
v1.2	13 May 2022	M Greener	No changes

1. Context

- 1.1. Virtual attendance will only be used through necessity; it is not to be used as the default position for attendance unless agreed in advance by the board.
- 1.2. The board accept that, in line with Regulations, the trustees and local academy committee members of Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust will be able to participate and vote at full board and committee meetings virtually including, but not limited to, by telephone and Microsoft Teams, Facetime, or video and telephone conference.
- 1.3. Formal proceedings, such as staff grievance and discipline, considerations of exclusion, admission or complaints or appeal hearings, may be conducted virtually provided the **Confidentiality Statement for Virtual Committee Hearings** included as an Appendix is signed by all parties and returned to the Clerk ahead of the meeting.
- 1.4. All Governors and Trustees are bound by the [Code of Conduct for Governors and Trustees](#) including confidentiality and are required to respect the Seven Principles of Public Life.
- 1.5. The [Code of Conduct for Parents/Carers and Social Media Use Statement](#) and the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#) should be read in conjunction with this policy.

2. Protocol

1. For any formal hearings, the Clerk must ensure that signed Confidentiality Statements are returned in advance of the meeting. Advance notice of meetings will be in line with the specific policy and guidance relating to the reason for the meeting and must include notification of a virtual meeting. All parties should be notified of the relevant Codes of Conduct in advance of the meeting.
2. For participation in meetings which are not hearings, notice must be given to the clerk by the governor/trustee who wishes to participate virtually no later than 24 hours prior to the meeting. The Clerk will send a meeting invite via Microsoft Teams for the Trustee to 'Join' at the nominated time.
3. Any recording of the meeting must be agreed by all parties at the beginning of the meeting and be minuted by the Clerk, or the recording must not take place.
4. Recordings will be used for the purpose of minute taking and will not be removed from Teams for any other purposes.
5. Virtual attendance will be for the whole of the meeting not just for specific agenda items, or solely for voting purposes

6. Should there be a requirement for a vote, whether by secret ballot or non-secret ballot, ballots will be created by Clerks using Microsoft Forms (or Google form equivalent), ensuring the settings enable one response per person. Polls can be created instantaneously by Clerks via this mechanism and therefore if a ballot becomes necessary during the meeting, and the quorum will not be achieved at the meeting due to virtual attendance, the agenda item may proceed via this mechanism or the Chair may determine that the agenda item will be postponed until a quorum can be physically present.
7. 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 may cast their vote by stating if they wish to vote in favour, or against
8. If an urgent document is to be tabled at the meeting then the governors/trustees attending virtually will not be able to participate or vote for that agenda item unless it is possible for them to access the document electronically. Good practice guidelines for all Clerks and governing bodies will ensure that electronic folders are created in SharePoint or similar for all meetings and associated documents will be created therein, to reduce the need for emailing documents.
9. If the connection fails and reasonable attempts to reconnect are not successful the virtual attendees will no longer be able to participate in the meeting. The agenda will not be delayed due to a technical failure
10. Where any of the points above render a meeting inquorate the relevant agenda item(s) will be deferred to the next meeting
11. Any governor/trustee attending virtually will consider confidentiality and will not participate from a setting where their conversation can be overheard. They will contribute from a quiet location giving their full attention to the meeting
12. If there is no visual connection all attendees will start their comments by stating their name. Governors/trustees attending virtually will show courtesy to other members of the board and the clerk, speaking in turn and repeating comments as requested.
13. The governor/trustee attending virtually must be able to hear all discussions during the meeting clearly
14. Where the majority of governors/trustees are physically present the chair will be permitted to attend virtually.
15. Any meeting where the majority of governors/trustees are attending virtually will be limited to not more than 120 minutes in length.

3. Guidance

The following links provide additional guidance

Creating a poll in Microsoft Forms

https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Create-a-form-with-Microsoft-Forms-4ffb64cc-7d5d-402f-b82e-b1d49418fd9d#PickTab=Forms_for_the_web

Changing Settings to ensure one vote per person

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/adjust-your-form-or-quiz-settings-in-microsoft-forms-f255a4ba-e03c-4e12-b880-f7e8b62e0665>

Select the three dots in the top right of the Form and ensure the box is ticked

Settings

Who can fill out this form

- Anyone with the link can respond
 - Only people in my organization can respond
- Record name
- One response per person

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT FOR VIRTUAL COMMITTEE HEARINGS

For all persons participating in:

First Committees (Staff Disciplinary), Nominations Committees, Appeal Committees (Staff Dismissal / Permanent Exclusion)

Any information provided and/or discussions undertaken / advice given during the course of this hearing must remain strictly confidential.

In advance of attending a Committee hearing in a virtual setting, in any capacity, attendees must sign (electronically or physically) this undertaking of confidentiality, and confirm the following:

1. I am able to participate in this meeting in a state of confidentiality, situated where no other person can overhear or observe any part of proceedings unless they are formally involved in the meeting and minuted as attending
2. I undertake to ensure that no form of electronic recording of proceedings, audio or visual, will take place, unless by prior consent of all parties and by one nominated person
3. I undertake to ensure that any physical notes I make whilst participating in the meeting, will be afterwards destroyed or (in the case of Governors) returned securely to the Clerk to Governors for retention / destruction
4. I undertake to ensure that any documentation relating to proceedings will be destroyed or (in the case of Governors) returned securely to the Clerk to governors for retention / destruction

For Governors: The Education (School Government) (Terms of Reference) (England) Regulations 2000 details the responsibilities of governors in relation to these matters. Disclosure of information will only be made in accordance with the requirements of the process, by those nominated to do so, and distributed only to those who *must* have access.

3. Terms of Reference

3(2) in exercising their functions the governing body shall have as their terms of reference the principles that they shall –

- a) Act with integrity, objectivity and honesty in the best interests of the school, and
- b) Be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and in particular shall be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to interested persons*.

3(3) Nothing in paragraph 3(2) (b) shall require the governing body to disclose material relating to –

- a) A named teacher or other person employed or engaged, or proposed to be employed or engaged, at the school
- b) A named pupil at, or candidate for admission to, the school
- c) Any matter which by reason of its nature, the governing body or a committee of the governing body are satisfied should remain confidential.

**interested persons means the person to whom the issue relates and/or his/her representative and/or an officer of the Local Authority.*

I, the undersigned understand the level of confidentiality required for this hearing. I confirm my compliance with the undertaking listed above. I confirm that any information I have in relation to this hearing is retained only in accordance with the provisions of the GDPR and the policies of the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust. I also understand that the outcome can only be reported to the full Academy Committee or Trustees under Part 2 confidentiality.

Role	Name	Signature	Date of Hearing

Note: This form must be signed and returned to the Clerk to Governors before the start of any formal virtual committee hearing. Failure to do so may result in a block to joining the meeting.