



PolyMAT
VIRTUAL TRUST BOARD, SUB-COMMITTEE & ACADEMY
COMMITTEE MEETING ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed: September 2023
Approved: September 2023
Revision due: September 2024

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to facilitate virtual trust board, sub-committee and academy committee meetings to take place. The policy must be agreed by the board prior to use.

It will ensure that these boards and committees are quorate and that members are able to consider the papers, hear the points of other trustees/ academy committee members and participate in decision making.

Legal guidance:

The PolyMat Articles of Association and the scheme of delegation provide that:

1. Any Trustee or Academy Committee member shall be able to participate in meetings of the Trustees or committee by telephone or video conference provided that:
 - a. they have given notice of their intention to do so detailing the telephone number on which they can be reached and/or appropriate details of the video conference suite from which they shall be taking part at the time of the meeting at least 48 hours before the meeting; and
 - b. the Trustees have access to the appropriate equipment.
2. If after all reasonable efforts it does not prove possible for the person to participate by telephone or video conference the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Headteacher/ Head of School/CEO will;

- Provide a secure mechanism for Trustees/ Academy Committee Members to have a virtual presence at the meeting.
- Provide a suitable, secure online meeting platform or telephone link.
- Confirm that meetings meet the requirements of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations), and ensure that the DPO (Data Protection Officer) confirms that the systems to be used are in line with the school's agreements and policies.

The virtual trustee or academy committee member will:

- Join the meeting five minutes prior to the start, making sure they have the meeting documents to hand.
- Ensure that their surroundings are secure and that any confidential or sensitive information cannot be heard by a third party.
- Consider the privacy of the room, including who or what is visible or audible in the background.
- Confirm that the meeting's integrity is secure at the start of the virtual meeting.
- Virtually attend for the whole meeting not just for a one item or vote.
 - Be able to confirm their identity before commencement of the meeting.

Meeting Protocols;

- The chair will ensure that all Trustees or Academy Committee Members understand and agree to the arrangements and that they have an opportunity to participate. The chair will propose a mechanism for members to indicate they wish to speak.
- Papers will be circulated at **least one week** in advance of the meeting.
- Trustees or Academy Committee Members should not vote on any issues where the papers have been tabled and they have not had access to the detail. Secret ballots will be allowed where possible. Where a virtual secret ballot cannot be arranged, then a Trustee or Academy Committee Member can decide to vote publicly or abstain.
- Those attending virtually will contribute to the quorum. If the technological link is lost they will cease to contribute to the quorum, but this will not prevent the meeting continuing in their absence unless it has become inquorate.
- Virtual Meetings will be minuted in the same way as face-to-face meetings and the clerk will attend and record the names of Trustees and Academy Committee Members present. The minutes will record that the meeting was virtual.
- Participants will use mute when not speaking, use webcams where possible and seek to reduce background noise.

Appendix A - advice to Chairs

1. At the start of the meeting, the Chair should:-
 - Welcome Governors / Trustees and ask everyone to use their webcams if possible as reading facial expressions, hand gestures and body language is as important in a virtual meeting as it is for a face to face meeting – it is also possible for the Chair to see if a member is trying to attract attention to speak
 - Remind attendees to mute their microphones if they have potential background noise, as it is tempting to multi-task if they are muted and members might not necessarily remain engaged; they may also forget to unmute before speaking and thus not be heard.
 - Ask members to turn off their mobile telephones and to remember that rustling paperwork, talking to others and walking away from the meeting can be very distracting.
 - Ask members to treat each other with respect, not hold side discussions and attempt to listen without disrupting – it is best practice to indicate to the Chair when a member wishes to intervene either by raising their hand virtually or saying their name
2. Keep the pace of the meeting slow – it might take Governors slightly longer than at face-to-face meetings to take on the information and to respond.
3. Refrain from long diatribes. Members should keep what they have to say short and simple and speak a little slower than they normally would to make themselves more easily understood and for the Clerk to capture

what is said for the minutes. The most successful virtual meeting is focused, sharp and interactive.

4. Using visuals will help members to concentrate – therefore, using screen share to present documents being discussed will keep everyone focused and 'on the same page'.
5. Using a headset is an advantage as it eliminates background noise and makes the voice sound clearer.
6. Most online meeting tools have the capability to record meetings. It must be noted, however, that all members of the meeting must agree to this recording which will then be minuted.

Agreed by the board on: 11 September 23

Annual Review date: September 24