



# Virtual Attendance Policy

For all schools in the Bosco Catholic Education Trust

This Policy has been approved and adopted by the  
Bosco Catholic Education Trust.

<b>Approved:</b>	<b>For review:</b>
May 2022	May 2025

## **Bosco Catholic Education Trust Mission Statement**

The Bosco Catholic Education Trust is a Christ-centred family of Catholic academies, within the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, working together as one body to provide an outstanding education for all. As Catholic schools, we endeavour to develop confident, compassionate and faithful young people. Through partnership, collaboration and mutual support, we seek to enable all those entrusted to our care to become the person God called them to be.

“Serve the Lord joyfully”

### **1. Aims**

The aims of this virtual meetings policy are to:

- Enable the trust board and the local governing committees to continue their work and maintain strategic oversight where face-to-face meetings are not possible
- Provide a framework in which to run meetings virtually and include those attending virtually
- Provide flexibility so trustees and governors can attend meetings virtually where they would otherwise have had to miss them

### **2. Legislation and guidance**

This policy is based on:

- The Department for Education’s (DfE’s) [school governance update – March 2020](#)
- The DfE’s guidance on [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- [The School Discipline \(Pupil Exclusions and Reviews\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

### **3. The board’s ability to make alternative arrangements for meetings**

Under our articles of association, any trustee can participate in a meeting of the trustees by telephone or video conference if:

- They have given notice of their intention to do so and provided the telephone number on which they can be reached and/or the video conferencing platform to be used at least 72 hours before the meeting, and
- The trustees have access to the appropriate equipment

## **COVID-19**

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, we can agree to hold meetings via telephone or video conferencing without having to meet in person first.

The chair or governance professional can contact trustees and governors directly to agree these alternative arrangements.

The trust board has determined that the following arrangements will apply.

### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

#### **4.1 The chair**

The chair will chair virtual meetings, and meetings in which some participants are attending virtually, in the same way as face-to-face meetings.

The chair will make sure all trustees and governors:

- Are set up on Teams
- Have tested their connection and access to the platform
- Are aware of the expectations on attendees set out in section 4.3

#### **4.2 The governance professional**

The governance professional will

- give each trustee or governor written notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda at least 7 clear days in advance of the meeting.
- Where there are matters demanding urgent consideration, written notice and a copy of the agenda can be given within a shorter period as the chair directs.
- minute virtual meetings, and meetings in which some participants are attending virtually, in the same way as face-to-face meetings.
- make sure the minutes reflect that the meeting is virtual, or if a trustee or governor is attending virtually.
- minute all decisions, and whether anything needs to be ratified at a later date, for example due to loss of connection.
- read the privacy terms and conditions of Teams and make sure its security features are enabled.

#### **4.3 All governors**

To ensure confidentiality and the smooth running of the meeting, trustees and governors attending virtually will:

- Attend the whole meeting
- Attend with the webcam/video switched on where possible

- Focus on the business of the meeting in the same way as if they were attending in person
- Remain on mute unless they are speaking
- Prevent unauthorised individuals overhearing conversations (for example, by using headphones)
- Be mindful of their surroundings – they will consider the privacy of the room, including, but not limited to, who or what is visible or audible in the background
- Ask questions during the meeting by [include details, e.g. adding them to the video conferencing platform’s messaging board, or waiting until the chair invites questions at the end of each agenda item]

#### **4.4 IT specialist**

A member of IT staff will review the security of Teams once a half term.

### **5. Virtual meetings**

Fully virtual meetings will be held at the discretion of the chair of the board or committee.

#### **5.1 Difficulty joining the meeting**

If after all reasonable efforts it does not prove possible for a trustee or governor to participate by telephone or video conference, the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate.

The governance professional will record in the minutes that the trustee or governor in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

#### **5.2 Recording the meeting**

The governance professional may wish to record the meeting to aid them when writing the minutes.

At the start of the meeting the governance professional will make sure all trustees and governors agree to the meeting being recorded via Teams.

Where approval is granted, it is the governance professional alone who has permission to record the meeting. No one else has authority to record the meeting unless they have explicit authority from trustees or governors to do so.

The recording will be handled in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and once it is no longer needed the recording will be deleted.

### **5.3 Quorum**

All trustees/governors attending virtually count towards the quorum.

If individual trustees/governors lose connection to the meeting, they will no longer count towards the quorum. The meeting can continue uninterrupted if it is otherwise quorate.

If the meeting becomes inquorate then discussions may continue, but no votes can be held unless the meeting is quorate.

If all trustees or governors lose connection to the meeting then the governance professional will postpone the meeting and reschedule. Where this is not possible, the governance professional will send the matters for consideration via email, and will expect comments from trustees and governors within 48 hours.

### **5.4 Voting**

Trustees and governors may vote on any agenda item for which they have been fully present.

Secret ballots will be allowed where possible. Trustees and governors can share their vote privately with the governance professional via email or text message.

Where a virtual secret ballot cannot be arranged, then each trustee or governor can decide to vote publicly or abstain.

### **5.5 Conflicts of interest**

Where a trustee or governor declares a conflict of interest, they will withdraw from the meeting by leaving the call.

Once the board or committee is ready for the trustee or governor to re-join, the governance professional will notify them by email or text.

## **6. COVID-19: holding exclusion panels virtually**

**This section is COVID-19 specific guidance.**

The timeframes set out in [The School Discipline \(Pupil Exclusions and Reviews\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) remain in force.

However, it is possible that these deadlines cannot be met due to the coronavirus pandemic. It is for the local governing committee to determine if these deadlines can be met by meeting virtually or if the meeting should be delayed.

## **6.1 Holding the meeting virtually**

The committee will conduct an exclusion panel virtually via Teams, if all parties have:

- Appropriate devices
- Access to a reliable, affordable internet service – if some parties access the internet through their mobile phone and do not have unlimited data, the panel will not require them to appear via video conference

## **6.2 Delaying the meeting**

Where virtual meetings are not possible, the committee will delay the meeting and hold the exclusion panel as soon as is practicable.

## **7. Virtual attendance at face-to-face meetings**

Trustees and governors may attend meetings virtually if they are unable to attend in person. Any trustee wishing to attend a meeting virtually should act in accordance with the arrangements set out in section 3 of this policy.

The trustee or governor will explain why they are unable to attend physically, and their virtual attendance at the meeting will be subject to the board's or committee's approval at the start of the meeting.

Where the board or committee does not grant approval, the chair will notify the trustee or governor immediately and the governance professional will minute this decision. The meeting will be chaired by a trustee or governor present in person.

### **7.1 Difficulty joining the meeting**

If after all reasonable efforts it does not prove possible for a trustee or governor to participate by telephone or video conference, the meeting may still proceed with its business provided it is otherwise quorate.

The governance professional will record in the minutes that the trustee or governor in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

### **7.2 Quorum**

Any trustee or governor attending virtually counts towards the quorum.

If the trustee or governor loses connection to the meeting, they will no longer count towards the quorum. The meeting can continue uninterrupted if it is otherwise quorate.

If the meeting becomes inquorate then discussions may continue, but no votes can be held unless the meeting is quorate.

### **7.3 Voting**

Any trustee or governor attending virtually may vote on any agenda item for which they have been fully present.

Secret ballots will be allowed where possible. The trustee or governor can share their vote privately with the chair via email or text message.

Where a virtual secret ballot cannot be arranged, then the trustee or governor can decide to vote publicly or abstain.

### **7.4 Conflicts of interest**

Where a trustee or governor attending virtually declares a conflict of interest, they will withdraw from the meeting by leaving the call.

Once the board or committee is ready for the governor/trustee to re-join, the governance professional will notify them by email or text message.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the governance professional. At every review, it will be approved by the trust board and shared with the local governing committees.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy will be used in conjunction with the following policies:

- Data protection policy and privacy notices
- Exclusion policy
- Admissions policy
- Conflicts of interest policy
- Governor code of conduct
- ICT and internet acceptable use policy