



# CASTLEMAN ACADEMY TRUST

## Protocol For Using Virtual Arrangements at Governance Meetings

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Please note that this policy is one of the suite of CAT Policies for School Standards Boards to acknowledge.

## CASTLEMAN ACADEMY TRUST

### Protocol For Using Virtual Arrangements at Governance Meetings

#### **Section 1 - The protocol that applies to the governing board when using alternative arrangements to hold their meetings**

Where the governing board decides that a meeting should take place using alternative arrangements (e.g. by telephone or video conference) that have been previously agreed then the following will apply:

##### Notification of meeting

- The usual (statutory) notice and arrangements for issuing papers except where the chair has exercised their right to waive the usual notice;
- All participants to receive clear instructions regarding how to access the meeting including where they can access support if they experience difficulty;

##### Confidentiality

- On joining a meeting remotely, participants must confirm to the meeting that they are situated in a private area, being mindful of, but not limited to, who or what is visible or audible in the background.
- Governors must take responsibility for ensuring that all remote discussions take place in a secure and confidential way and that the conversation cannot be overheard by others;
- Governors will give due regard to the school's/trust's policies relating to data protection and the appropriate use of IT;

##### Conduct at meetings

- Governors should attend with webcam/video switched on where possible, focus on the business of the meeting in the same way as if they were attending in person and remain on mute unless they are speaking;
- The governing board will abide by their normal rules, procedures and code of conduct adopted by the governing board;
- All participants will note and follow any instructions given on how to manage their participation at the meeting. For example, confirming attendance, speaking through the chair of the meeting, voting on matters etc;
- The Chair will observe participants where possible to help ensure that those who wish to contribute to debates and ask questions are able to do so. Participants will be reminded how to use features such as 'raise hand' or 'online chat' to ensure their contribution cannot be missed;
- Voting will take place in a clear and unambiguous way;
- The minutes of the meeting will be taken by the Governance Officer to the governing board and the meeting should not be recorded by any governor/trustee or the Governance Officer without the approval of the governing board and for a specified purpose.

##### Difficulty Joining the meeting

- If, after all reasonable efforts, it does not prove possible for a governor/trustee to participate by telephone or video conference, the meeting may still proceed with its business providing it is otherwise quorate.
- The Governance Officer will record in the minutes that the governor/trustee in question attempted to participate but was unable to do so.

## Quorum

- All governors/trustees attending virtually count towards the quorum.
- If individual governors/trustees lose connection to the meeting, they will no longer count towards the quorum. The meeting can continue undisrupted if it is otherwise quorate.
- If the meeting becomes inquorate, discussions may continue but no votes can be held unless the meeting is quorate.
- If all governors/trustees lose connection to the meeting, the clerk will postpone the meeting and reschedule. Where this is not possible, the Governance Officer will send the matters for consideration via email, and will expect comments from governors/trustees within a specified time-frame.

## Conflicts of Interest

- Where a governor/trustee declares a conflict of interest, they will either be assigned to a break-out room to leave the meeting, or they will withdraw by leaving the call.
- Once the governing board is ready for the governor/trustee to re-join the meeting, the Governance Officer will either close the break-out room or notify them by an agreed means (e.g. email, text or phone call).

## **Section 2 - The protocol that applies to governors/trustees using alternative arrangements to participate and vote in face-to-face meetings**

Where the governing board has approved and has in place alternative arrangements for governors/trustees to participate and vote in face-to-face meetings (e.g. by telephone or video conference) and a governor/trustee wishes to use these alternative arrangements they should:

- Restrict themselves to using the arrangements agreed by the governing board;
- Inform the Governance Officer to the governing board that this is their intention as soon as possible but no later than 72 hours before the meeting is due to take place (subject to the meeting being convened giving the normal notice period);
- Communicate and co-operate with the Governance Officer to the governing board, school or trust as necessary to ensure that the alternative arrangements can be put in place and work well for all concerned;
- Abide by the points in Section one above.