



## Governance Update: Full Re-opening of Schools in September 2020

### New government guidance

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) re-issued guidance for the full and safe re-opening of schools in September 2020: [Guidance for full opening - schools](#)

### Principles for good governance during Covid-19

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the DfE re-issued guidance for governors during the Covid-19 pandemic, which remains a current and helpful resource for governing bodies: [School governance – coronavirus \(covid-19\) update](#)

We suggest that Chairs of our governing boards are guided by the following key principles as they continue to work with school leaders during the Covid-19 pandemic:

1. Collaborative, supportive and open relationships between the governors, head teacher and senior leadership team continue to be vital. Head teachers remain responsible for day-to-day operational decisions, while it is the role of governors to provide strategic direction, oversight and support to the senior leadership team.
2. The welfare of pupils and staff should be at the heart of all decision-making. Governors remain responsible for safeguarding and promoting the health and wellbeing of children, and for the welfare of all school staff. Governors should:
  - **Be satisfied** that senior leaders are communicating effectively with staff, parents, carers and the local community.
  - **Be ready** to advocate within the school community about the safe, full reopening of the school in a way that reflects the school's vision and values, such as co-signing communications to staff, parents and carers to reassure them about the safety measures that the school has put in place to minimise risk of transmission.
  - **Ensure** they are satisfied that the staffing arrangements promote good work-life balance, accommodate flexible working for extremely clinically vulnerable staff, and address staff mental health and wellbeing.
  - **Update**, in conjunction with school leaders, the school's safeguarding policy and procedures, including any contingency plans for localised lockdowns or self-isolation of classes or year group bubbles.
  - **Resume** the school's usual uniform policy, if it was relaxed during the summer term.
3. The head teacher and senior leaders remain responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the school's risk assessment and updating it as local circumstances or government guidance changes. The risk assessment should be treated as a 'living document', and governors should regularly review:
  - the robustness of the risk assessment; and

- the school's implementation of the DfE's public health advice and system of controls to minimise transmission risk.
4. Governors also remain responsible for overseeing the school's financial position. In response to the pandemic, governors should monitor whether the school:
- Has claimed for exceptional pandemic-related costs incurred up to July 2020: [Covid-19 Financial support for schools](#)
  - Has clearly defined plans for use of its catch-up premium funding: [DfE Guidance for spending the catch-up premium](#)
  - Is able to access technological support for disadvantaged children in the event of remote learning: [DfE Guidance for getting help with technology for remote education](#)
5. Governors should also:
- **Review** the breadth and depth of the school's curriculum for both in-school and remote learning, including pupil physical and mental health and wellbeing.
  - **Evaluate** the school's contingency planning for remote learning in the event of localised lockdowns or the self-isolation of classes or year groups, with a particular focus on facilitating effective learning for vulnerable/disadvantaged children and children with SEND. The DfE requires that this planning must be completed by the end of September 2020.
  - **Update**, in conjunction with school leaders, the school's strategic improvement plan to account for the impact of Covid-19.
  - **Evaluate** the school's cyber security risks using the [National Cyber Security Centre's questions](#).

We also recommend that you refer to the NGA's advice about school governance during Covid-19: [NGA Information and guidance for governing boards during Covid-19](#)

## In-person governor meetings

Some governing bodies have resumed in-person meetings on school premises, or hybrid meetings with some governors joining remotely. There is no current restriction on governors meeting in person, subject to the terms of your school's risk assessment and the additional cleaning burden that would fall on the school staff. The safety of school staff should be paramount and meetings should take place out of school hours.

If a hybrid meeting style is used, with some governors joining via remote online access, then Chairs and Clerks should ensure that the meeting is properly functional from a voting and discussion perspective.

## LDBS advice and services

Your School Link Adviser, HR Adviser and our Head of Governance Services, Anne Messer, are all happy to assist if you have any questions or would like practical advice during this time. Please refer to our website for individual contact details: <https://www.ldbs.co.uk/history/our-staff/>

10<sup>th</sup> September 2020