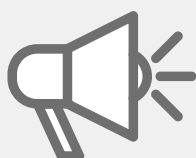


CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): INFORMATION FOR GOVERNING BOARDS



NGA has made its [GOLDline advice service](#) provided to GOLD governing boards members, available to all governing boards that have questions relating to the information sheet.



1 THE LATEST PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

- The government is now providing daily news briefings on the impact of COVID-19 and the measures being taken to minimise the risk to public health. The briefing given on Monday 16 March announced new measures urging people to work from home if possible, stop all unnecessary contact and travel, and avoid pubs and restaurants.
- The government is also urging anyone with symptoms to stay at home for 14 days, rather than seven. Furthermore, anyone who lives with someone who is ill is also being told to stay at home for 14 days.
- The precise details including guidance for education settings can be found on the [gov.uk website](#). You can contact the DfE helpline by phone: 0800 046 8687 or email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk



2 COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

In these challenging and unusual circumstances it is more important than ever that those governing and working in schools and trusts communicate well and support each other. As well as maintaining the dialogue over current issues and the response, supportive messaging to staff and stakeholders will also be appreciated, especially by school leaders who are under a great deal of pressure.



3 SCHOOL CLOSURES DUE TO COVID-19

- There has been no change to the government's position on school closure: no school should close in response to a suspected (or confirmed) case of COVID-19 unless directed to do so by Public Health England or under the advice of their local Public Health protection team.
- Public Health England has stated that school closures "may be necessary" in response to staff shortages caused by COVID-19.
- Whilst the decision to close is operational, school leaders will most likely have a discussion with the chair of the governing board before taking their decision to close the school.
- The Secretary of State has allowed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to temporarily suspend all routine inspections of schools, further education, early years and social care providers.

4 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL GOVERNANCE



- In view of the most recent measures announced by the government and to minimise the risk of spreading the virus, NGA advises governing boards that they hold only essential meetings and suspend governing activities that involve visiting the school.
- This may require time bounded board level processes linked to employer responsibilities, exclusions, complaints etc. to be placed on hold until it is reasonably practicable, if it is not possible to manage them remotely. Governing boards and clerks will assess this on a case by case basis, co-ordinating with others (such as parents) who may need to attend such meetings and seeking advice as necessary.
- Those governing boards that are currently carrying out a head teacher recruitment process are advised, if at all possible, to continue with their schedule for appointing prior to Easter, therefore ensuring that the successful candidate can take up their post in September. This is likely to involve interviews being conducted remotely.

5 Maintaining the business of the governing board



- NGA advises governing boards to put in place arrangements to meet remotely, consider their levels of delegation so that fewer governors/trustees can make decisions and decide their approach to chair's action especially when pupil and staff safety is paramount.
- [Maintained school governance procedures regulations](#) give governing boards the power to 'approve alternative arrangements for governors to participate or vote at meetings of the governing board (and committees) including but not limited to by telephone or video conference'. The [model articles of association for academy trusts](#) state that trustees can attend meetings remotely subject to certain stipulations set out in article 126. Academies should nevertheless refer to their own articles for clarity.
- Alternative meeting arrangements and in certain situations, the powers that chairs have to act in cases that require urgent consideration, will allow governing boards to continue to discharge their core functions, albeit in very different circumstances.
- In cases where there is no provision for, or where it is just not possible to approve or implement alternative meeting arrangements, the chair's powers to act etc, NGA advises governing boards to be sensible, pragmatic and responsible about discharging their functions. Where it proves impossible to make a decision or discharge a function operating strictly by the rules, there should at least be a communication and audit trail explaining why the alternative approach was taken. More than anything governing boards should ensure that the COVID-19 issue does not create an environment which allows for a lack of care and diligence.