



A special edition of our bulletin for governors and trustees in IPC Services schools and academies.

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Stay Safe

We hope that you and your loved ones are well.
Please look after yourselves and stay safe.

We are only an email or phone call away so don't
hesitate to get in touch if there's anything we can
do to support you.

May we start this update with a huge thank you to all our governors and trustees for your continuing leadership and support for schools/academies and their communities. These are challenging times and please be assured that you are very much appreciated for all that you do and the commitment you show.

Responding to COVID -19

We remain committed to supporting our Governing Boards through the current pandemic and associated restrictions, with the main change holding meetings virtually. Whilst we all look forward to a return to face-to-face meetings, meetings via virtual platforms are working well and governors/trustees are effectively carrying out their responsibilities.

We wanted to remind you of few things that should be considered when meeting virtually, as follows: -

- the usual (statutory) notice and arrangements for issuing papers apply, except where the chair has exercised their right to waive the usual notice;
- all participants need to receive clear instructions regarding how to access the meeting including where they can access support if they experience difficulty;
- 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 governing board will abide by its normal adopted rules, procedures and code of conduct and give regard to the duty to maintain confidentiality;
- governors/trustees will contribute towards a safe and secure environment for the meeting by giving due regard to the school's policies relating to data protection and the appropriate use of ICT; and
- the minutes of the meeting will be taken by the clerk to the governing board and the meeting should not be recorded by any governor/trustee or the clerk without the approval of the governing board and for a specified purpose.

Monitoring Priorities

Despite the misleading dialogue that schools are closed, our children continue to be educated, whether this be remotely or in school, so governing boards should continue to balance their responsibility to hold leaders to account with providing much needed support. The monitoring priorities that are recommended Governing Boards pay particular attention to at this time are listed below:

- risk management and safeguarding
- wellbeing across the school community, including that of the governing board themselves
- resource allocation and management - including budget considerations moving ahead for the next three years
- providing remote education
- maintaining the curriculum and continuity of learning for all pupils
- support and plans in place to reduce the impact of lockdown on disadvantaged pupils
- asymptomatic COVID-19 testing for all pupils and staff

Health and Safety Update

Guidance continues to be updated on an almost daily basis. Up to date information can be found on the following website: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance and support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-and-support)

Wellbeing

The pandemic has had a huge impact on schools and trusts as workplaces. The demands on staff and leaders of education during the lockdown are considerable as schools adjust to new norms of working rotas, using technologies, remote education and new forms of welfare and pastoral support.

How can governing boards ensure that staff and leaders feel supported whilst adjusting to new methods of working?

Reduce burdens where possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively consider non-essential routine activities and/or administrative and data burdens that can be paused or stopped.
Create a supportive environment with constructive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure executive leaders know they are not alone and can bring worries and concerns to the Chair and/or the Board.• Explicitly use reassurance.• Give assurance that leaders are not alone in managing risk - share the burden of risk.
Focus on balance and opportunities for a sense of fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explicitly encourage leaders to keep their balance.• Have a watching brief and clear expectation that leaders take leave and have downtime.
Create a culture in which physical and mental health is openly encouraged	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explicitly encourage leaders to keep physically healthy.• Create a culture where it is normal and expected for leaders to seek help, including help with mental wellbeing.

Ofsted Update

Ofsted has announced a move to a remote methodology for spring term 2020 inspections (with the exception of where there is a specific need to visit the site, for example to inspect specific safeguarding concerns).

Guidance (in line with other organisations) continues to be updated to reflect changes in national restrictions. The most updated information is summarised as follows:-

- Deferring Ofsted inspections: it is worth noting that Ofsted has suggested that a self-isolating headteacher would not necessarily be viewed as grounds for deferral: “In the case of a section 8 monitoring inspection for a school judged to require improvement, have serious weaknesses or require special measures, we consider that the contribution of the headteacher is important in finding out the likely future support and challenge for the school. We may, therefore, defer the section 8 monitoring inspection if the headteacher is out of school, unless the headteacher is absent for a prolonged period of time, for example due to ill health or because they are required to self-isolate. Leaders may ask for the deferral of an inspection by making a request to the lead inspector on the day of notification; we will not normally consider deferral requests if we receive them after 4.30pm”.
- Remote inspections would be conducted with up to 48 hours’ notice, usually last two days and involve two HMIs.
- Focus of inspections:
 - actions being taken to provide education in the current circumstances
 - how effectively leaders are adapting the existing curriculum to meet current challenges; inspectors will discuss with leaders what they had achieved by the start of the pandemic, where they are currently with curriculum planning and how they are getting back on track; this includes discussing whether any actions have been reasonably delayed or altered by COVID-19 restrictions
 - how effectively leaders are providing education remotely
 - how effectively leaders are providing education for vulnerable pupils and for other pupils attending school on site
 - leaders’ plans to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, whether they are in school or being educated at home
 - examining whether those responsible for governance are making an effective contribution to leaders’ actions in providing the best possible education for all pupils in the current circumstances; this includes examining the decisions leaders have taken about the curriculum
 - considering the impact of the support and challenge provided to the school around their curriculum and current education provision, including from any external partners
 - activities and evidence gathering:
 - ❖ meetings with headteacher, SLT, Trust CEO or other Trust delegate
 - ❖ meetings with representatives of the Trust
 - ❖ reviewing remote learning
 - ❖ discussions with staff and pupils
 - ❖ review minutes of governance
 - ❖ staff questionnaire
 - ❖ parent view
 - Calls will not be recorded Judgements. In arriving at a final judgement, inspectors will consider the extent to which leaders’ actions are helping or hindering the provision of education to all pupils at the current time. The lead inspector will make a single overarching judgement. This will be either of the following:

- ❖ leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances
 - ❖ leaders and those responsible for governance are not taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector will provide feedback to leaders about what they are finding. At the end of the inspection, they will give more detailed feedback. Reporting will follow what is set out in the section 8 handbook, except that:
- ❖ the draft report will be shared with the school within 18 days; this will have been quality assured
 - ❖ the school has 5 working days to comment on the draft, process and findings
 - ❖ the final report will be shared with the school within 30 days after the visit
 - ❖ any complaints have to be made within 5 days of receiving the report.

How will inspectors explore remote education?

- The focus will be on how schools are teaching the curriculum; as such, inspectors will not judge remote lessons.
- They are interested in whether schools and teachers have a clear sense of what they want pupils to learn and how this is built over time.
- Ofsted will **not** expect to observe live lessons, though they will sit in them if invited by the school. In this circumstance they would ask the school to ensure the teacher is aware in advance of the lesson and is comfortable with this.
- Inspectors will meet remotely with staff and pupils, but they will only meet with pupils who are being educated on-site. They will not meet remotely with pupils who are learning at home.

Admission Appeals for School Places

Changes made to school admission appeals due to Covid-19 have been extended to 30 September 2021. These changes originally came into force in April 2020 and were due to expire on 31 January 2021. The extension means these new regulations will continue (subject to parliamentary procedure) to 30th September 2021.

Summary of the coronavirus changes:-

- disapply the requirement that appeals panels must be held in person and instead give flexibility for panel hearings to take place either in person, by telephone, video conference or through a paper-based appeal where all parties can make representations in writing
- relax the rules with regard to what happens if one of the 3 panel members withdraws (temporarily or permanently) to make it permissible for the panel to continue with and conclude the appeal as a panel of 2
- amend the deadlines relating to appeals for the time that the new regulations are in force

The admissions appeals code guidance has been updated to reflect the changes.

Governor Training

Introduction to Governance: spring term: 12 March 2021 at 10.00am;

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