

CPSMA Guidance Note in relation to Teleconferencing/Video-Conferencing Board of Management Meetings during the COVID-19 Crisis.

In response to queries from our members in relation to the use of video conferencing to facilitate Board of Management meetings, CPSMA has prepared the following guidance note.

Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019-2023

[The Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019-2023](#), Section 13.3 provides for the use of a “conference call” to facilitate a Board meeting in some limited circumstances:

“(g) All decisions of the Board shall be taken at a properly convened meeting. It is recognised that, in some limited circumstances, the use of a conference call may be required to facilitate a Board meeting. In such circumstances, this fact must be recorded in the minutes and the Board must be fully satisfied that the confidentiality of the meeting’s proceedings will be maintained at all times. In accordance with (d) above, the meeting shall remain quorate throughout the entire course of the meeting.

Given the national guidance in relation to social distancing, it is not currently possible to hold face-to-face Board Meetings.

Notwithstanding this, Boards of Management may require a convened meeting to discuss urgent agenda items and to make decisions on pressing matters.

Given the extraordinary times that the COVID -19 crisis has plunged us into, the “limited circumstances” referred to in the Governance Manual will allow Boards of Management to convene remotely to discuss urgent issues.

Conducting a Board of Management meeting using Video-conferencing/Tele-conferencing

1. Preparation: The Chairperson and Secretary to the Board of Management will need to make the same pre-meeting preparations as they would for an ordinary board meeting. This includes the preparation of the agenda and relevant correspondence. The agenda should be included in the notice of the meeting.

The notice of the meeting will state that the meeting will be convened remotely, using the agreed platform (e.g. Google Hangouts, WebEx, Microsoft Teams) and should include information on the use of the platform, including the security provisions required for the platform being used. Information on the above-listed platforms can be found in Appendix 1 of this Guidance note.

A “test” meeting using any of these platforms should be conducted with all participants in advance of the first meeting.

In addition, audio equipment and the “virtual meeting space” should be tested at least 15 minutes prior to the meeting, so that the meeting can commence at the scheduled time.

2. Normal Board of Management meeting protocols will apply. Minutes will be retained in the same manner. Those joining the meeting by remote access will be considered “present” for the purposes of forming a quorum. Like all other Board Meetings, the meeting must be quorate throughout.
3. Where phones and other on-line media platforms have been used to host the meeting, this should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
4. Confidentiality: Board Members should be reminded of their responsibility to keep the matters discussed at the meeting confidential – refer to Section 8, [Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 -2023](#) .
5. Set out the “Ground Rules”:
 - a. No electronic recordings of the meeting
 - b. Ask each member to confirm that they are participating on their own, without the possibility of being over-heard or recorded.
 - c. Ask them to observe the usual protocol of contributing formally, through the Chair. This will allow one voice to be heard at a time, and the Chair will ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to contribute.
6. The Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR)

The Department of Education and Skills has advised that, for the duration of the Covid-19 emergency measures, the requirement to provide a Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) will not apply to board meetings held remotely, whether by video conference or teleconference. This is because it is not possible to meet the requirement to provide to board members the specified documentation at the board meeting.

The Principal must continue to maintain the relevant data and records for the CPOR which shall be provided at the next face to face meeting of the Board. The data in the report must reflect cases arising since the previous CPOR was provided to the Board of Management

7. The agreed report should be drawn up at the end of the Board meeting, as normal.

If you have any specific queries in relation to this Guidance note, please contact our Advice Service on 01 6292462.

Appendix 1

Videoconferencing/Teleconferencing options

There are many digital options available to conduct remote Board of Management meetings. For the purposes of this Guidance Note, information on three examples of such digital options is provided for consideration by the Board of Management.

Cisco WebEx

WebEx is one of the most trusted and used digital platforms for business video conferencing worldwide, providing end-to-end encryption for all users. WebEx users set up an account and then invite participants to scheduled meetings. While a cost is usually involved, a package allowing for a free 90 day licence has been announced during the Covid-19 period.

Go to the WebEx homepage [here](#) to create an account and get set up.

Google Hangouts

There are advantages to using Google Hangouts over WebEx. One, almost every person has a Gmail account making setup much easier and two, it is free for meetings of any duration.

Click [here](#) to set up an account.

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is part of the Office 365 package. Once downloaded, the organiser can create a team and add members. Guests can be invited by using their email addresses.

Click [here](#) to find a short video on setting up Microsoft Teams.