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Virtual Meetings and Training Protocol

Statement of intent

Staffordshire University Academies Trust (SUAT) and its Academies are committed to supporting virtual meetings and training events in a secure, confidential and effective manner, in the event that face-to-face meetings are not possible and in order to support a decrease in our carbon emissions by reducing travelling. This document addresses the protocols which must be followed when conducting virtual meetings and training events.

The Board of Trustees will conduct all virtual meetings in line with the Trust's Articles of Association.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This protocol has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013

2. Roles and responsibilities for governance

2.1. The Chair of the Trust Board / Local Academy Council is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the protocol for conducting virtual meetings is agreed upon by all members of the board or committee prior to the meeting taking place.
- Recording, within the written minutes of the meeting, the details of the virtual meeting, in the same way as a face-to-face meeting.
- Ensuring that the meeting takes place in an environment which is suitable, secure, and not overseen or overheard by others.
- Ensuring that all members of the board are aware of the procedures outlined in this document.
- Notifying members in advance that the meeting will be conducted virtually or with a blended approach.
- Considering any objections to meetings taking place virtually, and make provision for physical attendance where possible.
- Deciding whether a recording is appropriate during the virtual meeting, and gaining explicit written consent to do so.

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- Ensuring that recordings of any meetings are properly dealt with in line with data protection obligations, and consultation with the Data Protection Officer for SUAT is undertaken prior to recording any meetings.
- Attending the meeting in an environment which is suitable, secure, and not overseen or overheard by others.
- Ensuring that links and logins to virtual meetings are kept secure, and provided only where necessary according to the attendance of the meeting and any applicable restrictions to attendees, for example, confidentiality purposes.

2.2. Members of the Trust Board / Local Academy Council will:

- Be aware of, and act in accordance with, the procedures outlined in this document.
- Act in accordance with the relevant Code of Conduct whilst in virtual meetings.
- Not take covert recordings of meetings.
- Notify the Chair of any objections they have to the meeting being held virtually.
- Notify the Chair of any objections they may have to a recording being made.
- Be respectful of the rights of individuals attending the meeting.
- Notify the Chair of non-attendance in advance of the meeting.
- Attend the meeting in an environment which is suitable, secure, and not overseen or overheard by others.
- Ensure that links and logins to virtual meetings are kept secure.

- 2.3. In the absence of the Chair, their responsibilities, as outlined in this procedure, will be carried out by the Vice Chair of the Trust Board / Local Academy Council or the Chair of any relevant committee.

3. Roles and responsibilities for training and online events

3.1. The person Hosting / Chairing the virtual meeting, training, or online event will:

- Ensure that all members of the meeting/training are aware of the procedures outlined in this document.
- Consider whether the nature of the meeting/training is suitable for conducting virtually.
- Notify attendees in advance that the meeting/training will be conducted virtually.
- Consider any objections to meetings taking place virtually and make provision for physical attendance where possible.
- Decide whether a recording is appropriate during the virtual meeting/training, and if so, obtain explicit written consent from all participants, in to do so.
- Ensuring that recordings of any meetings/training are properly dealt with in line with data protection obligations, and consultation with the Data Protection Officer is undertaken prior to recording any meetings/training events.

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- Host the meeting/training in an environment which is suitable, secure, and not overseen or overheard by others.
- Ensure that links and logins to virtual meetings are kept secure, and provided only where necessary according to the attendance of the meeting and any applicable restrictions to attendees, for example, confidentiality purposes.

3.2. Those attending the virtual meeting / training event will:

- Be aware of, and act in accordance with, the procedures outlined in this document.
- Act in accordance with the relevant Code of Conduct whilst in virtual meetings/training sessions.
- Not take covert recordings of meetings/training sessions.
- Notify the Host of any objections they have to the meeting/training being held virtually.
- Notify the Host of any objections they may have to a recording being made / notify the Host if they do not provide consent.
- Be respectful of the rights of individuals attending the meeting/training and treat the meeting / training session with the same etiquette if it were in person.
- Notify the Host of non-attendance in advance of the meeting/training.
- Attend the meeting/training in an environment which is suitable, secure, and not overseen or overheard by others.
- Ensure that links and logins to virtual meetings/training sessions are kept secure.
- Inform the Host / Chair of circumstances where they are required to depart from the meeting / training session early.
- Attend the meeting / training on time, or inform the Chair / Host in circumstances where they may be late.
- Test their connection in advance of the meeting taking place to ensure adequacy.

4. Preparing for remote meetings / training sessions / events

- 4.1. Any staff member, Trustee, volunteer or speaker attending a virtual meeting or training event will be required to:
- Give notice of their intention to attend the online event, ahead of the event taking place.
 - Provide a secure email address for the link to the training / meeting to be sent to, ahead of the event taking place.
 - Have access to the appropriate equipment in order to attend the event.
- 4.2. If a remote attendee is not available for any reason, the meeting/training will go ahead without the participation of the remote attendee, unless their role is integral to the delivery of the event.

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- 4.3. The attendance of remote attendees will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting / training log and on the published attendance record.
- 4.4. An agenda will be provided in advance of meetings.
- 4.5. Those attending the meeting/training have sufficient knowledge regarding the use of the remote/online platform.
- 4.6. The invitation/link for the meeting/training does not extend beyond those who have been specifically invited by the Chair/Host. Requests for additional attendees must be made with the Chair/Host.
- 4.7. Meeting/training links are not permitted to be shared beyond the individuals for which they were originally intended.
- 4.8. Attendees will not share their meeting / training event login details with third parties.
- 4.9. Attendees will not invite others to attend the meeting/training with them or make their screen or speakers available to others by any other means.
- 4.10. Attendees (including the Chair/Host) will base themselves in an environment which is secure as possible, for the duration of the meeting, giving particular regard to any items which are confidential, sensitive or personal in nature. Consideration should be given to:
 - Whether the content of the meeting has the potential be overheard and if so, the appropriateness of closing doors / windows / utilising head phones
 - Their location and background; whether their setting has any written information of a sensitive, confidential or personal nature which could be seen by others
 - The positioning of their camera
 - Professional conduct with regards to all verbal communications
- 4.11. Attendees will mute their microphone when not speaking, to prevent interference.
- 4.12. Attendees will use their camera to permit the Chair/Host to verify attendance and understanding of the content of the meeting/training.
- 4.13. Attendees should raise their hand within Teams when wishing to input into the meeting or training session and lower their hand following input.

5. Confidentiality, security and data protection

- 5.1. Full consideration will be given to the privacy and security features of the chosen platform. Software will not be used if the security provision is insufficient. The preferred platform for Hosting virtual meetings and training sessions is Microsoft Teams.

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5.2. The meeting shall not ordinarily be recorded on any digital device or programme. If recording is required, the Chair / Host must:

- Consult with the DPO in advance of the meeting / training taking place. The DPO will ascertain the necessity of recording the event, conduct a Data Protection Impact Assessment where necessary, and support the Chair / Host in drafting consent forms for meeting/training attendees.
- If agreeable by the DPO, ensure that all attendees provide fully informed and written consent, or provide verbal recorded consent, to the recording taking place.
- Ensure that the intention to record the meeting is made clear to all attendees prior to the recording being made, along with clear reasoning.
- Where required, the recording of the meeting/training event will be accompanied by a written record for the purpose of accuracy.

5.3. If attendees agree to the recording of the meeting, the following must apply:

- At the meeting, before recording is commenced, the Chair / Host will notify all attendees that recording will take place.
- Attendees who are not present at the start of the meeting will be notified upon their arrival that a recording is being made.
- The recording will be kept securely and will be password protected within the Teams platform.
- The recording will only be taken by use of Teams. Recordings will not be undertaken on any other devices or by any other means, particularly on personal devices.
- The recording will be retained only for as long as is strictly necessary, in accordance with the purpose for which it was originally taken and the Retention and Records Management Policy.
- The recording will be deleted where there is legal reason to do so or consent is withdrawn from one or more of the individuals in attendance.
- The recording will not be downloaded from Teams, especially to any personal devices.

5.4. Any device used to record a meeting will be used in line with the Trust's Data Protection, Online Safety and Safeguarding policies. Recordings are not permitted on a personal electronic device.

5.5. Whether attendees other than the Chair/Host are permitted to make recordings is at the discretion of the DPO when conducting the DPIA. When this decision is being made, the purpose of the recording will be taken into account.

5.6. Meeting chats are undertaken in accordance with the relevant code of conduct and with due regard to confidentiality and professional standards. Meeting chats are not exported or otherwise downloaded from the platform, or stored on personal devices.

5.7. Where a confidential item is on the agenda, attendees will be informed of this at the beginning of the meeting, prior to the commencement of recording.

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- 5.8. Confidential items will only be included within a recording of a meeting if the purpose and intention of the recording of the item is clear and justifiable.
- 5.9. The screen utilised for the meeting will not be shared with anyone either; not declared to or agreed with by the Chair/Host.
- 5.10. Attendees will declare anyone who enters their workspace whilst the meeting/training is in progress, so that the meeting/training can be paused if necessary. This will be decided by the Chair/Host.
- 5.11. If the any attendee should be required to share their screen / documentation during the course of the meeting / training, they shall take due care not to inadvertently (or otherwise) share any content of their device deemed confidential, sensitive or personal, for example, emails.
- 5.12. Attendees leaving the meeting/training before the session has ended should declare this to the Chair / Host. If the attendee is leaving temporarily, they should mute their speakers, close their camera and lock their computer. If leaving permanently, the staff member must leave the event and log out of the online platform.
- 5.13. Once the meeting/training has ended, the individual must click to leave the event and log out of the online platform.

6. Monitoring and review

- 6.1. The effectiveness of this protocol will be monitored by the Trust Board.
- 6.2. This policy is reviewed annually by the Trust.