

Training for Governors of Dubai schools

Board Chair's checklist for running effective meetings

1. **Arrive** in good time
2. Check all the **arrangements**, e.g. room layout, equipment, refreshments, facilities, Wi-Fi, Health & Safety – e.g. fire alarm / evacuation procedure
3. Act as **host** - welcome everyone on arrival, introduce newcomers and guests
4. **Start** on time
5. Deal with **administrative** matters, e.g.
 - Welcome and introductions of newcomers, congratulations, thanks, good wishes etc.
 - Apologies from absentees
 - “Housekeeping” e.g. breaks, refreshments, toilets, fire alarm, message taking, phones etc
6. Review the **agenda** and consider any adjustments necessary e.g. order, timing, items
7. Meeting **facilitation**:

- Be clear about what is happening.

Introduce each **agenda item**, including the purpose – e.g. is it for information inviting input from governors (challenge and support), or is the objective to reach a decision.

Where helpful, suggest an approach or format of discussion – e.g. 5 minute presentation then comments and questions.

- Facilitate **discussions**, e.g. encourage contribution from quieter governors, rein in the dominant or verbose, where necessary encourage different perspectives and balance - especially on contentious subjects. Consider what isn't being said, and if no one else does, name the “elephant in the room”.
- Keep things **on track** - allow one discussion at a time, control side conversations and interruptions, separate different subjects, discourage “rabbit holes”, “hobby horses” etc.
- Manage **time**
- Make good use of **summaries** to move the conversation forward, clarify issues, reach decisions and keep things on track.
- Seek clear **decisions** at the appropriate point and record and agree actions and responsibilities

Some other ideas to consider

- Consider starting with an **“ice-breaker”** – e.g. each person says one thing they’ve particularly enjoyed since the last meeting, or one thing you are looking forward to this term, or one recent highlight at the school you have noticed etc.
- Consider a **“lightning round”** where each person speaks for up to say, one minute. e.g, “we have all read the parents survey report, lets each take one minute to give our initial top of mind reaction to the findings.”

This can ensure everyone contributes and might quickly establish consensus. People are sometimes surprised what can be achieved in one minute!

- Introduce **variety**, e.g. agenda order, meeting time and location, order of contribution (who comments first), different meeting facilitator.

Try different approaches or formats – e.g. breakouts for detailed discussion, shorter pre-reads which are read at the start of the meeting (see Jeff Bezos three rules for effective meetings), break out walking discussions, silent thinking time, “brainwriting” (instead of usual brainstorming).

- Put **actions** on screen at end of meeting to recap and confirm decisions.
- Consider agreeing a **“meeting charter”** – your agreed ways of working together. As well as meeting behaviours, it could also include shared values and teamwork, even how you want to feel.
- Collect meeting **feedback** – e.g. simple online survey asking three questions such as: what works well, what could be better, what suggestions do you have, or ask people to suggest things you should stop doing, start doing, continue doing.

Discuss this feedback as a group. If you have a meeting charter you could, of course, review progress against the factors you previously agreed.

- Can you express some agenda items as **questions**? It might help focus the discussion and help people prepare thoughts in advance. For example:
 - Instead a meeting topic such as “Environmental Strategy”, you might ask: What more should we do to meet our environmental aims and objectives?
 - Instead of “Extracurricular Report” – What does high quality enrichment look like?
- For **online** or hybrid meetings consider what you can do to increase engagement and discourage tuning out, whilst making the most of potential advantages:
 - keeping video and mics on whenever possible, suggest “gallery view”
 - being even clearer about what’s going on - signposting more clearly
 - Shorter presentations, more short breaks

- Calling on people to contribute – more choreographed discussion

Possible advantages of online meetings:

- Higher attendance
- Alternative pre-work formats – e.g. file sharing and collaboration, video updates rather than pre-reads (these can also apply to in person meetings)
- Shorter, spread-out meetings, e.g. instead of a 3 hour meeting, use 3 x 1 hour meetings over 3 days
- Use of polls, chat function etc
- Invite “guest stars” - e.g. inputs on specialist areas
- Consider recording certain sections for absent colleagues.