

CLERKS' CHRONICLE

The official publication of the
National Association of School and College Clerks (NASCC)



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Welcome



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CLERKS

by Sharon Warmington | Founder and Clerk

Welcome to our new publication written by professional clerks, for both new and experienced Clerks across all education phases. After we return after half-term whilst still in our 3rd UK-wide lockdown, we wanted to bring something fresh and new to you.

Following our Interim Report on Clerks Pay and Conditions published last March (2020), NASCC is still working hard in the background to launch its new website, which has been significantly delayed due to the ongoing pandemic. Rather than delay any further, we wanted to at least start to communicate with Clerks as widely as possible, so this is the best way we know how.

If you're not already on our database, please get in touch so you can be added and receive direct communication about upcoming publications and the official launch of our website - just drop us an email or visit our current website to register your details/sign-up to our mailing list, which confirms to us that you're happy to be part of the NASCC family.

Our aim is to publish the Clerks' Chronicle every term (or half term if possible) however, as all our writers are working clerks, you know the demands of the role ebb and flow across the academic year, so you'll understand if some Newsletters arrive 'late'.

This is your publication, so if you'd like to submit an article to be included, share any clerking information for our Members or simply ask a question, please get in touch. The Clerks' Chronicle is here for you as Clerks, so grab a well-earned coffee, sit back and enjoy.

Spring Term – News Round-Up

A summary of information and news for this term

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

- We're all holding our breath to see if the government will re-open schools on 8th March 2021 - What do you think?

POLICIES/DOCUMENTS

- The Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidance was updated in January 2021 - Don't forget to send it out to governors.

ACADEMY SPECIFIC

- Dates for publishing final accounts (2019/2020) on websites has been extended 28th February 2021.
- File accounts with Companies House no later than 31st May 2021.

MAINTAINED SPECIFIC

- Finalise budgets for 2021/2022 ready for submission (check with your local authority to see if deadlines have changed).
- Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) submission deadline extended to 28th May 2021.

SUBSTANTIVE AGENDA ITEMS

- School/Academy Improvement Plan
- Skills Audit and Governance Update
- Budgets including Pupil Premium
- SEND

GENERAL AGENDA ITEMS

- Monitor the COVID-19 Catch-up Premium
- Review of Remote Learning Monitoring/Contingency Plan

OTHER STUFF

- If you Head is leaving they must give notice by 30th April 2021.
- Agree admission arrangements for September 2022 by 28th February 2021.
- Publish appeals information for September 2021 by 28th February 2021



What's the protocol when a Governor dies?

Having worked in various school settings as a Clerk, I've experienced governance in all its glory (and it's not so glorious moments). For every situation or event, there is a policy, but when I received a text message via FaceBook Messenger to inform me that a friend of mine had died less than 24 hours earlier, there was no policy for me to follow.

After dealing with the shock of what I was reading from the text exchange that immediately followed that first message, I knew I had a number of calls to make because this friend of mine was a Governor for an LGB that I'd previously clerked until a year ago. This same friend and Governor was also a Trustee for a MAT I'd been working with and one which had lost a much loved Head Teacher literally a few weeks previously.

I was outside the 'system' but needed to engage with that system and there was no policy that I was aware of, for me to follow as an ex-clerk! As my tears flowed for the loss of my friend, I thought about how best to communicate this news.

Should I call the Chair of Governors for the Local Governing Body ?

My heart sank again because I couldn't. You see I'd deleted all the contact information I had for every Governor after leaving the Trust, as part of my responsibility under GDPR.

If we were friends outside of our respective governance responsibilities, I had of course retained contact details or if a Governor contacted me directly and independently and asked for me to keep in touch, I was happy to retain their details. Unfortunately, this was not the case here.



Do I go straight to the Academy Trust's Company Secretary (whose number I'd also deleted) so that the Chair of Trustees could be informed? I had remained friends with one of the other Clerk's and the Assistant CoSec, so there was a way to make contact. I didn't do that either because I was trying to follow a hierarchy of communication ie top down; plus it was a Sunday, so I was also torn between making contact today or leaving it until the work week had officially started.

Procedure and protocol in these devastating situations are important, even when we're in distress, and having something in place to guide us, in my opinion, helps us to remain focused and as informed/informative as we can be.

All these thoughts were swimming around my head and reminded me of the phone call I received from a Parent Governor a few weeks previously, asking my opinion about their child being notified, by text, about the death of their Head Teacher. The text had gone out from SLT to all students, BEFORE the Governors or parents were notified!

My response to that Parent Governor was that had I been the Clerk, I would have tried to ensure Governors received the news first and agreed the communication procedure for parents and students, but as always, hindsight is a luxury and the senior leaders in that case were clearly reeling from the devastating news and doing their best in that situation.

I also added, that maybe once the 'dust had settled' then the matter of procedure, in such difficult circumstances, should be discussed at a future LGB if the Academy Trust hadn't drafted something by then.

Returning to my friend's passing and the situation I was in, here was the decision I made after my tears subsided long enough to think more clearly. I decided to contact someone who was not only employed by the Academy Trust (and who also personally knew my friend) but they were also someone who would take the decision out of my hands in terms of who to notify first.

I was right - this person knew exactly what to do, who to speak to and graciously took that burden off my shoulders at a time when I just wanted to continue to mourn.

As the days passed, I became the sole connection between the Academy Trust and the family.

"Can we send a card?" "What's the address?" "Who do we send it to?"

All these questions and more I needed to answer, to respond to, to help to assist and guide. I bounced between the role of ex-clerk, friend and 'family representative' which continued until the day of the funeral.

Based on these two recent experiences, I believe that we as Clerks are best placed to raise this matter or initiate the discussion amongst our own governing boards because it's likely we'll be the ones that our school will turn to, should this unfortunate and sensitive issue ever arise.



A SUGGESTED DEATH IN GOVERNING SERVICE POLICY

FOR GOVERNING BOARDS

Most, if not all, members of staff will be aware of a Death in Service Policy but this doesn't cover Governing Boards (unless at NASCC we've missed it somewhere). Here are our thoughts on the matter that could be drafted into a suitable policy, if you don't have one in place. NB: This is not statutory and must obviously be approached with sensitivity, perhaps directly with your Chair in the first instance.

- **Introduction** - A general paragraph explaining the purpose of the policy.
- **Scope** - Who the policy is for ie Trustees, Governors and the Clerk only, although it could extend to other volunteers where relevant, who are attached to your school or academy.
- **Being Notified** - Whilst notification of a death usually comes from a member of the individual's family, it may not. It could come from a mutual friend or a colleague and therefore, this section could outline who should be notified in the first instance, irrespective of where the news is heard/received.
- **Who to Notify** - Think about the way the news needs to be communicated through the various layers ie if in a MAT and a Governor plays 2 roles, who tells who? NASCC suggests that whatever happens, Governors (even if in an LGB)



should be notified before parents, and parents should be notified before students. With technology, this can happen quickly and directly, and helps parents to support their child, especially during the time they are out of school ie if the news comes at the weekend or during school holidays, before being reported in the media or wider school sector.

- **Communication** - Remember, social media alerts (text, WhatsApp) is a more common form of communication for younger generations, even when communicating bad news, so don't be offended if it comes to you via this method. Also, include who takes responsibility for when cards of condolences are sent and to where - think about the culture, as some cultures wish all communication, to be centralised at one individuals home ie the person who has passed. This also includes flowers and wreaths.
- **Time off** - Virtual funerals have become commonplace, given the ongoing pandemic and it's likely that these will continue, even when we come out of it. However, people may need time off to attend, so clarity needs to be given in the policy, as funeral lengths also differ according to culture. A 30 minute service for a cremation differs widely to a 4-hour church service and burial.
- **Legal Stuff** - Making updates and changes to your lists is fine in your own time, but timelines around changes to GIAS, the school or academy website and Companies House (for MATs), need to be done timely, but sensitively.

Finally, don't forget yourself. If you're employed by the school/trust, there's likely to be a process in place under a Death in Service Policy for you as an employee but if you're like many clerks who are independent, what would happen in your situation?

Does your family know who to contact if you become incapacitated in any way? It is certainly worth a discussion with your nearest and dearest.

All good wishes.
NASCC



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TIPS/TRICKS >

EMAIL

In today's society, email is a standard form of communication and whether you clerk for one or more organisations, we're sure you receive endless emails where the subject heading is not always clear in terms of who its from or what its about.

In this respect, think about sending emails yourself. How clear are your subject headings and do you even think about how the recipient can distinguish your emails from others they receive?

Here's a suggestion that we know works well for those with multiple email accounts, working for multiple schools.

For every email you send, use the initials of the school or organisation at the beginning of the subject line, so that when scrolling through, your Governor/Trustee can easily identify them.

Here's a few suggestions and let's assume that 'NASCC' is the name of the school.

[NASCC - Draft Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting - April 2020](#)

[NASCC - Confirmation of Meeting Dates 2020/2021](#)

[NASCC - Urgent Response Required - Safeguarding Policy](#)

It's easy to get used to doing this but what it means is that you can adopt the initials in almost all situations and it will quickly become recognisable for your Governors/Trustees too.

For those clerking in different schools, (even in the same trust) you will be able to scroll through to at least identify the school you're looking for and then start searching for the specific email. Yes, the search function works well too but again this is just an extra tip to speed things up.

Final note, if you carry this practice across into your 'file names' it makes electronic filing a bit easier too!



KNOWLEDGE >

CLERKING COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK



Available via the .gov.uk website. The Framework is dated April 2017 and NASCC is aware that the DfE are hoping to provide an updated version soon. In the meantime, if you're not familiar with it, download it and have a read (especially if you're new to clerking). If you are familiar with it and wish to highlight any gaps you feel were missed last time, get in touch with your views and we'll be sure to pass them on to the DfE.



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EFFECTIVE MINUTE TAKING

This online webinar series of 12 bite-sized modules will explore and provide guidance on Effective Minute Taking Skills with the primary aim of increasing your confidence, not just for scrutiny of your minutes, but as part of your professional development as a Clerk.

With workbooks, case studies and other bespoke tailored resources, this series (designed by a professional Clerk, for professional Clerks) includes:

Your Role in Meetings: You'll identify the steps of a meeting cycle, clarify the roles of the Chair and the Clerk to ensure that you really understand the responsibilities that come with your role.

Your Meeting Behaviour: This section highlights poor minute taking procedures

and bad practice, so you can see how not to do it; as well as identifying the best practice approach, so you can integrate these into your ways of working.

Agenda and Writing Minutes: Creating an agenda and identifying a variety of styles for writing minutes, will ensure you have a suite of options to choose from that can be used as and when you have different requirements, ie GB meetings, Exclusion Panels, Grievance Hearings etc.

Minute Taking Practice: The practical exercises will help you to develop an effective minute taking style, and possibly adopt more modern ways of working, such as taking minutes from videos of meetings or straight onto a laptop/tablet.



eClerk.co.uk

Here's a tip!

A pet hate from one of our members is around virtual meeting diary invites. Read on...



Now that we're all used to virtual meetings, irrespective of whether it's on Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meets or any other platform, the reality is that it's here to stay. However, my pet hate is when diary invites come through and the person doing the invite hasn't given any real thought to the subject or the receiver.

I've lost count of how many diary invites I've received that just say "Meeting Dawn Smith".

Dawn Smith is my name, and whilst that's sufficient for the person I'm meeting with, as it tells them that they are meeting with me, it doesn't tell me in my diary who I'm meeting. If like me, you have a number of meetings with different schools about different things, it'll be a very frustrating day, if your diary has your name littered through it, with no clue as to who will be joining you.

Here's a tip when sending the invitation, add it to your diary first as "**Zoom Meeting with Dawn Smith and Tom Moon - Clerking Services**". You may even wish to add the organisation you both belong to for extra clarification. Either way, at least both/all parties see who is attending and the topic for discussion.

I'm off now to find out who has just added "Education Training System" in my diary as a Teams meeting.....the mind boggles.

Name has been changed to protect the guilty 😊



Google Meet

Did you know:-

- Zoom's profits have gone up 380% in the last 12 months? It has raised 1.75 billion via a stock offering and is definitely here to stay.
- If you're using Microsoft Teams, as of December last year a new and very welcome feature is breakout rooms, which is particularly great for 'holding' people out of the main meeting until you're ready for them.
- Google have increased the options of their meeting platform, allowing you to start a meeting instantly or schedule one for the future.

Source: The internet



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At Education Governance Solutions, we provide governor training and clerking services across the UK, which includes external reviews of governance. With more than 30 years in governance, we can support your governing board, not only in specific areas of governance but also in the wider stakeholder community.



NBGN

NATIONAL BLACK GOVERNORS NETWORK

www.nbgn.co.uk

Governing Board diversity is not a new issue but it is a important one, and this is where the National Black Governors Network comes in. We are able to support your trustees, governors and senior leadership team in navigating this sometimes difficult landscape, whilst avoiding tokenism and tick-boxing.

