

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN REMOTE SCHOOL APPEAL HEARINGS

The School Admission Appeals Code 2022 comes into force on the 1.10.2022. This enables Local Authorities to hold school appeals in person, remotely via video conferencing or a mixture of the two (hybrid).

Appeal hearings held entirely by telephone are permitted only where video conferencing cannot be used due to connectivity or accessibility reasons.

This guidance refers to remote access (*note 1*) or virtual appeal hearings.

It is recommended you read the guidance notes for parents (*note 2*). Please note as with the usual process set out in the 'Appeals Guidance for parents, at least 5 working days before your remote hearing please submit additional documentation in support of your appeal to school.appeals@leics.gov.uk.

If you have additional needs to enable you to take part, or have questions about this document, please contact the school appeals team on: school.appeals@leics.gov.uk.

This document sets out guidance and the process to enable you take part in a virtual school appeal hearing using video.

The remote hearings will be conducted using Microsoft Teams (MS Teams). For instructions how to use MS Teams, see [Appendix 1](#).

Who will be participating in remote/ virtual hearing:

The following will be participants and will take part:

- 3 Independent Appeal Panel members
- The Clerk (legal adviser to the panel)
- Natalie Smith – Appeals Administrator, will be available in some main round secondary or primary first time admission hearings to 'greet you' when you join the meeting
- The Presenting Officer who will be representing the school
- All those appealing (for multiple appeals this will be in the first part. The second part of the appeal will be in private with individual appellants)

The virtual (or remote) school appeals process

For remote hearings there will be two 'virtual' hearing rooms for appeals to take place. You will have your camera on. The camera function will be enabled. All participants will have their cameras on – panel, clerk, presenting officer and appellants. If you do not have a device which allows you to use a camera please let Mrs Sankriwala know when you receive your invitation if you have not already indicated this on the appeal application form.

1 "remote access" means access to an appeal hearing to enable those who are not all present together at the same place to attend or participate simultaneously in the hearing by electronic means, including by live audio and live video link.

2 <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2017/1/5/school-appeals-guidance-for-parentsv2.pdf>

Hearing Room 1 – In multiple appeals to include all participants for the first stage/part of the appeal process.

Hearing Room 2 – For all stage 2 or individual appeals where there are multiple appeals. To ensure confidentiality, each appellant will have an individual log in for a virtual meeting space. You will be sent this in your hearing letter. This will also be shared with panel member and presenting officers.

Notes

At the second stage/part, you will have private restricted log in to enable you to present your appeal confidentially. At the second stage, the panel, Presenting Officer and the individual appellants will only be permitted to be present.

If you are unable to or do not wish to take part in the first stage, you can just take part in the second stage. However, it is preferable you take participate in all parts of the appeal hearing process.

Using Microsoft Teams

Using Microsoft Teams is very straight forward. Please set up your connection well in advance of your appeal, and test this prior to your hearing taking place. If you have questions, we will support you through the process.

Tips for taking part in a remote appeal hearing

Some practical guidance on preparing for and attending the virtual appeal hearings is set out below:-

Prior to the hearing

Before your remote/ virtual hearing:

1. Prior to the hearing:
 - i. Testing your connection;
 - a. Please be ready at least 15 minutes before the call.
 - b. Make sure the device you will use is fully charged (or plugged in), so you do not get cut off during the hearing.
 - ii. Ensure a private space, to observe confidentiality
 - iii. Create a quiet space to keep all noise and background noise to a minimum
 - iv. If necessary, please let key family members/friends know you should not be interrupted during the hearing.
 - v. If possible, blur your background or apply a background effect.
2. During the hearing:

Please note recording of your hearing is NOT permitted.

- i. Please - KEEP YOUR MICROPHONE ON MUTE UNTIL YOU ARE ASKED A QUESTION.
- ii. Please follow the clerk's instructions.
- iii. Do not speak until asked to do so, this is to prevent people speaking at once or being interrupted
- iv. Breaks /pauses in the hearing will be arranged in advance with the clerk,
- v. Try not to move around during the hearing.

- vi. Keep your microphone on mute until it's your turn to speak
- vii. If you need to have someone with you, a supporter you must confirm this to the clerk.
- viii. If you do not understand something, ask the clerk.
- ix. Please don't use foul or offensive language, this will cause your participation in the appeal being stopped immediately.
- x. Speak slowly – a note needs to be taken of the hearing by the clerk.

Once you have joined the meeting, please do not leave it. If you do so the clerk will need to adjourn proceedings and phone you to find out why you have left the hearing.

- If you leave the meeting and the clerk is unable to contact you, the panel will decide whether the hearing may go ahead without you, i.e. be dealt with on a written basis.

If you fail or are unable to attend the hearing, and it is impracticable to offer an alternative date the appeal may go ahead and be decided on the written information submitted, in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code 2022.

When will I know the outcome of the appeal?

The temporary regulations mean that decision letters will be sent within 5 school days of the hearing *wherever possible*.

Appendix 1: How to use Microsoft Teams (MS Teams)

Microsoft Teams is compatible with all computers and mobile devices operating the Apple, Windows and Android operating systems.

Unless you have waived the notice period for your hearing, approximately 10 school days before the hearing, you will receive a hearing letter with a web link to join the hearing.

Check your spam folder if you have not received it. If you have not received it by 10 school days before the scheduled hearing, please contact Natalie Smith on Natalie.Smith@leics.gov.uk.

To prepare to join an appeal hearing:

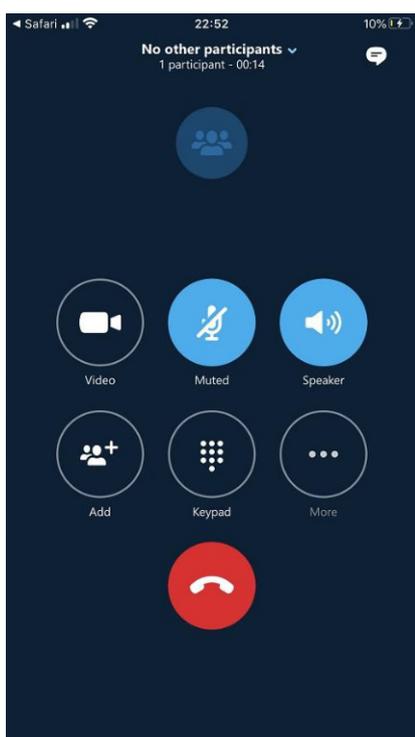
1. To Download MS Teams software on the device you'll use to join the hearing. The easiest way to do this is to click on the link sent for the hearing.

'Join Microsoft Teams Meeting' in your email from Natalie:



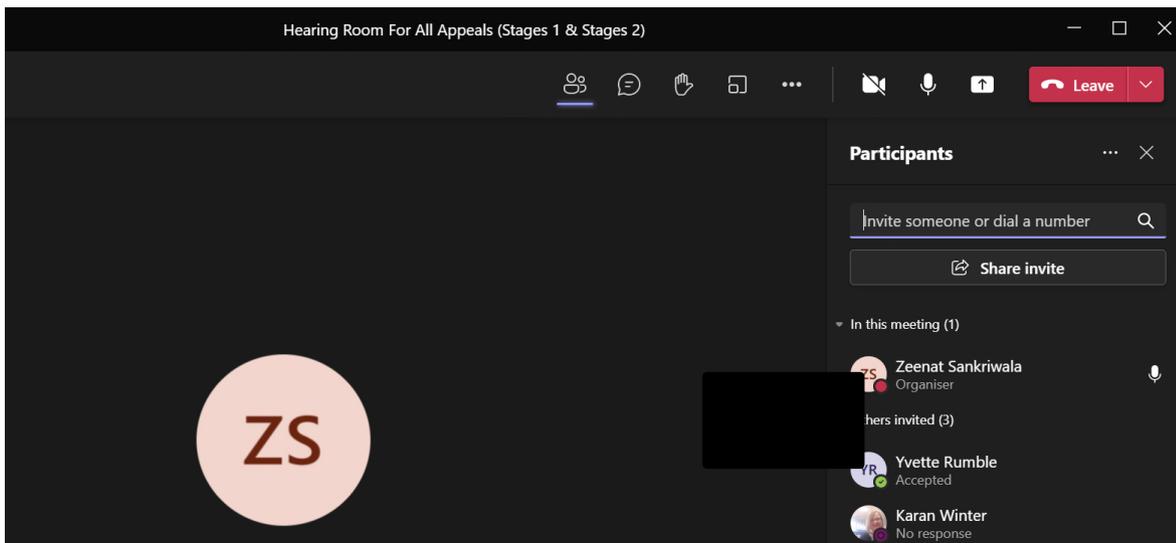
2. Follow the instructions to download MS Teams on to your device.
3. Select '*guest*' and when asked, type in your full name, you will be placed in a virtual lobby and will be invited into the meeting by a member of the school appeals team.
4. Once you have joined the meeting, we will ask you to mute your microphone with your video off until you are asked to speak the hearing screen will look like this

Hearing screen



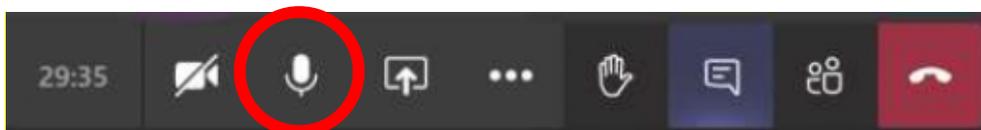
On the day of the hearing (using the same link), simply **click on the link in your meeting invite** and this will launch the Teams application that you would've already installed.

Once you've joined, you will be presented with the call window, that will look like this:



We ask everyone to remain on mute during the hearing unless you are invited to speak

Mute / Unmute

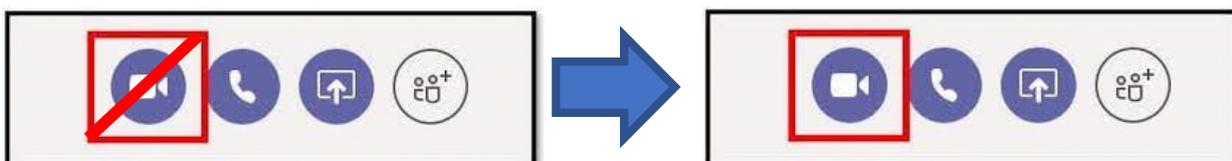


Clicking this will mute or unmute your microphone. If you are already muted, the icon will have a line through it to give you that visual cue.

Camera

Your camera facility will be enabled when you are sent the invitation. You will need to have your camera on for the duration of the hearing. If having the camera on causes any connectivity issues or you do not have a smart phone with a camera or computer with a camera, with the agreement of the presenting officer and your agreement the hearing can proceed on an audio basis.

To enable video calling, once in the meeting press the button below to switch your camera on by clicking on the icon below:



To enable, click on the camera icon to switch on camera as shown below:

Exit Meeting

When the meeting finishes, leave by pressing the **red end call button / Leave button**. If you do this by mistake, you can re-join the meeting by repeating step one of this guide.

