

Governor Code of Conduct

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Review Date:	

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GOVERNORS

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1. Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that the Trust expect all Governors to follow.

By creating this policy, the Trust aim to ensure that Governors carry out their role with honesty and integrity and help us to ensure each school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

The code is based on the Governance Handbook. It should be read alongside the Trust's constitutional documents (e.g. our Articles of Association, Terms of Reference and any Schemes of Delegation).

Failure to follow the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in the appendix.

Please note that this Code of Conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, the Governors will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

2. The 7 Nolan principles of public life

All Governors must follow these principles set out by the government at all times. They apply to anyone who holds a public office:

- **Selflessness** – will act in the public interest
- **Integrity** – will not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. The Governors will declare any conflict of interests
- **Objectivity** – will act and take decisions impartially, fairly, and on merit. The Governors will use the best evidence and avoid discrimination or bias
- **Accountability** – understand that they are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions. To make sure of this, the Governors will be scrutinised where necessary
- **Openness** – will act and take decisions openly and transparently. The Governors will not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so
- **Honesty** – will be truthful
- **Leadership** – will actively promote and support the above principles and will challenge poor behaviour wherever it happens.

3. Governors' responsibilities

The 3 functions of the Governing Board are to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school
- Hold leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of the school, and the performance management of staff
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure money is well spent.

In order to do this effectively, as individuals the Governors will:

- Understand and respect the distinction between the role and responsibilities of the Board and those of the school leaders
- Set and maintain an ethos of high expectations for everyone in the school community, including in the conduct and the professionalism of the Board itself
- Preserve and develop the character and religious character [if applicable] of the school
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Operate and make decisions in the best interests of pupils, informed by the views and needs of our key stakeholders (pupils, parents, staff, the local community and the local authority)

- Follow the school's/trust's policies and procedures, and the procedures of the Board as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the school's/trust's constitutional documents
- Take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our Board's performance, constitution and skillset
- Take part in any training or development required to fill any gaps in the skills they need for effective governance
- Understand that where responsibility has been delegated, the Board as a whole remains accountable and that important decisions relating to core functions will be made by the full Board
- Comply with relevant guidance and legislation and our funding agreement that sets out how the Governors must manage our school's/trust's money and procure goods and services
- Act with integrity and transparency when making financial decisions and understand that our financial management and decision-making will be scrutinised and audited
- Declare all gifts worth more than £25 and record them on the gifts and hospitality register. The Governors will not accept bribes
- The Governors will work to actively identify and manage risks to the school/Trust.

4. Working with others

The Governors will:

- Support and strengthen school leadership by providing constructive challenge to leaders, and holding them to account
- Respect the role of the executive team/school leaders and avoid routine involvement in operational matters
- Respect each other's views
- Work together as a Board to develop effective relationships with stakeholders
- Engage meaningfully with the communities they serve and understand that they are answerable to these stakeholders
- Follow the Equality Act 2010, and apply the principles of fairness and equality in everything they do.

5. Commitment to governance

The Governors:

- Will attend all meetings where possible. Where they cannot attend, they will explain their valid reason and give suitable notice
- Understand and accept the time and workload commitments of the role
- Understand that work should be shared among members and that all Governors are expected to take an active role
- Will prepare ahead of meetings to ensure they make informed contributions
- Will participate in regular pre-arranged school visits in accordance with school policy
- Will attend any training or development activity needed to ensure the Board has a wide range of skills and expertise.

6. Openness and transparency

Conflicts of interest

To make sure the Board takes impartial decisions without bias, they will:

- Publish an up-to-date register of business and pecuniary interests of all Governors including associate members

- Declare any potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of each meeting and withdraw from the meeting for the relevant item of business and not vote on the matter.

Publishing information

To ensure the Board is transparent and open to the community they serve, they will make certain information publicly available.

- The Governors accept that the following information will be published on the school's website to ensure transparency:
 - The structure and remit of the Members, Board of Trustees, Committees and Local Governing Bodies (where applicable), and the full name of the Chair of each one (where applicable)
 - For each Member, Trustee and Local Governor (where applicable) who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - Their full name
 - Their date of appointment
 - Their term of office (Trustees and Local Governors only)
 - The date they stepped down (where applicable)
 - The body that appointed them (Trustees and Local Governors only)
 - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
 - Their attendance record over the last academic year (only for Trustees at Board and Committee meetings and Local Governors at Local Governing Body meetings)
- The Governors accept that the information about Members, Trustees and Local Governors will be published on: *Get information about schools*
- The Governors accept that the information about Trustees will be published on Companies House
- The Governors accept that the approved Board and Committee minutes and any agenda and papers considered at a meeting will be made available to any interested person.

7. Confidentiality

In the nature of the role, the Governors are sometimes privy to sensitive information. They will observe confidentiality when discussing this information, and will not publicly disclose:

- Information about sensitive matters
- Information about named individuals (such as staff, pupils and their parents)
- Details of individual Governors' contributions in meetings or how they may have voted.

Confidential information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for.

The Governor's commitment to confidentiality does not overrule their duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate authority where they believe a child is at risk of harm.

The Governors will continue to observe confidentiality after they have left office.

Breaches of confidentiality

In the event of a breach of confidentiality, the Governors will inform the Chair as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further. If the breach of confidentiality relates to the Chair of Governors it must be reported to the Chief Executive of the Trust.

Governors understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended.

8. Data protection

The Governors will follow the school's/trust's information security processes and measures and data protection policy (if applicable) when using, storing, sharing and disposing of personal data.

The Governors' commitment to data protection does not overrule their duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate authority where they believe a child is at risk of harm.

Personal data breaches

The Governors will inform the school's data protection officer immediately if they believe that there has been a personal data breach.

9. Social media

The Governors will:

- Abide by any requirements set out in their school's social media policy.

The Governors will:

- Uphold the reputation of the school at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how they interact with the school community
- Review privacy settings regularly to make sure they are happy with the information about them that is publicly available
- Report any incidents of harassment they experience or see towards Governors to the Chair of Governors and the Head of School/Principal/Headteacher.

The Governors will **not**:

- Accept friend requests from pupils (The Trust will make exceptions to this in the case of immediate family members only), and not join any private parent groups associated with the school
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the Governing Board or school community
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring the Trust or the school into disrepute.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed and agreed annually, upon significant changes to the law, or as needed. It will be ratified by Trust Board.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links with the school's/academy's policies on:

- Safeguarding
- E-safety
- Data protection.

Appendix 1: breaches of the Code of Conduct

If the Trust or the Governors suspect a Governor has breached the Code of Conduct, they will follow this procedure:

- The Chair will investigate
- The Chair will hold a meeting with the Governor to discuss the issue. The Governor can bring a friend to the meeting. Another Governor will attend to corroborate any decisions or identified actions going forward
- If the situation remains the same, or there is another suspected breach, they will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
 - Further meetings with the Chair to reset expectations, based on this Code of Conduct
 - Support, mentoring or training for the Governor
 - Making sure the Governor withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in
- If there is no improvement in the Governors' behaviour, the Board will vote on a motion to suspend them for up to 6 months. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances.

If the Trust or the Governors suspect the Chair of Governors of an Academy/School has breached the Code of Conduct, they will follow this procedure:

- The Chief Executive will investigate
- The Chief Executive will hold a meeting with the Chair of Governors to discuss the issue. The Chair of Governors can be accompanied at the meeting. A Trustee will attend to corroborate any decisions or identified actions going forward
- If the situation remains the same, or there is another suspected breach, they will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
 - Further meetings with the Chair of Governors to reset expectations, based on this Code of Conduct
 - Support, mentoring or training for the Chair of Governors as identified during the above process
 - Monitoring of the performance and behaviour of the Chair of Governors for a directed period of time
 - Remove the Chair of Governors from the Board.

Governors may be suspended if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the Board of Governors (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the Board) and
- Have brought or are likely to bring the academy, Trust or the office of the Governor into disrepute.

'Bringing the Board into disrepute' may include, but is not limited to:

- Speaking out publicly against the school
- Being disrespectful to members of the school community
- Behaving inappropriately in a public forum, such as a PTA meeting or on social media.

The Trust may remove a Governor from office where:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension
- There has been serious misconduct. We will determine what counts as serious misconduct based on the facts of the case, but it will include any actions that compromise the 7 principles of public life, if sufficiently serious
- They display repeated and serious incompetence
- They have engaged in conduct aimed at undermining fundamental British Values

- Their actions are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the Board, or their actions interfere with the operational efficiency of the school.