Code of Conduct for School Governing Boards

Effective governing bodies create and maintain a code of conduct. Once this code has been adopted, all board members agree to faithfully abide by it.

This Code is grounded in the Seven Principles of Public Life and the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education. Governors will demonstrate these principles through their conduct, decision-making and interactions with stakeholders.

This code sets out the expectations and commitment required from school governors in order for the board to properly carry out its work within the school and the community. Governing boards are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the school, holding leaders to account for educational performance and ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of public funds.

Governors make a vital contribution to the lives of children. Schools should aim to recruit, induct and continuously develop high calibre individuals with the relevant skills/experience. Skills should be reviewed on an annual basis or when relevant and all those involved in governance should demonstrate the following competences:

- a strong commitment to the role and to improving outcomes for children;
- the inquisitiveness to question and analyse;
- the willingness to learn;
- collaborative and creative;
- good inter-personal skills;
- appropriate levels of literacy in English (unless a board is prepared to make special arrangements);
- sufficient numeracy skills to understand basic data.

The core functions of governing boards

The core functions of the governing body are to ensure:

- that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined
- that the headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school
- the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources

In addition to the core functions the governing body should ensure:

- that stakeholder views are considered and understood in strategic decision-making

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In carrying out these functions, the governing board will ensure robust accountability for the implementation of its vision, ethos and strategic priorities

As individuals on the board, we agree to the following:

Role & Responsibilities

- We understand the purpose of the board and its strategic role.
- We accept that our role is strategic rather than operational and will focus on governance, oversight and accountability rather than the day-to-day management of the school. We recognise that operational decisions are the responsibility of the headteacher and school leaders, except where the governing board has a specific statutory responsibility.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the board has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing board when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or its delegated agents. We will support and uphold decisions once they have been made, whilst recognising the right of individual governors to express differing views during debate and discussion before a decision is reached and we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing board meeting.
- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- We will encourage open governance and will act appropriately.
- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school/group of schools. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints we will follow the procedures established by the governing board.
- We will provide strategic support and constructive challenge to school leaders, holding them to account for educational performance, safeguarding, financial performance and the delivery of the board's strategic priorities.
- We will accept and respect the difference in roles between the board and staff, ensuring that we work collectively for the benefit of the organisation.
- We will respect the role of the executive leaders and their responsibility for the day to day management of the organisation and avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements.
- We agree to adhere to the school's rules and policies and the procedures of the governing board as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.

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- When formally speaking or writing in our governing role we will ensure our comments reflect current organisational policy even if they might be different to our personal views.
- We will have regard to our responsibilities under the Equality Act and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all.
- When communicating in our private capacity (including on social media) we will be mindful of and uphold the reputation of the organisation. We will not use social media or other public forums to undermine the decisions of the governing board, disclose confidential information or engage in conduct that may damage the reputation of the school or governing body.
- If used, the standards of conduct expected of governors apply equally to communications conducted through WhatsApp and other messaging platforms. Governors must communicate respectfully and professionally at all times and must not engage in conduct that could undermine the effective governance, reputation or interests of the organisation.
- We will avoid, as far as possible, becoming involved in any communication which may lead to a conflict of interest with the role of the governing board.
- We will actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion and seek assurance that decisions are made in the best interests of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.
- We recognise safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as the school's highest priority and will seek assurance that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and operating effectively.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor member involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
- We will get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will visit the school/s, with all visits arranged in advance with the headteacher and undertaken within the framework established by the governing board.
- When visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer), we will maintain our underlying responsibility as a governor.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and will undertake relevant training.

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- We will fully cooperate with individual requests that are necessary to ensure organisational compliance, such as disclosure and barring checks.
- We accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school's website.
- In the interests of transparency we accept that information relating to governors will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of governors; Get information about schools (GIAS).
- We accept that the board may collect diversity data to publish on the school's website, which could include information on any of the 9 protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010. We understand that providing this information is voluntary and that, if we have already provided this information, we are able to request it be removed from any reporting

Relationships

- We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other governors, the clerk/governance professional to the governing board and school staff both in and outside of meetings.
- We will respect and value the role of the governance professional and have due regard to their advice on governance, constitutional and procedural matters.
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- We will confront malpractice by speaking up against and bringing to the attention of the relevant authorities' any decisions and actions that conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life (see annex) or which may place pupils at risk.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other board members in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and we will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the executive leaders, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

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- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a governing board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
- We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
- We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.
- Our commitment to confidentiality does not overrule our duty to report safeguarding concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

Conflicts of interest

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people we are connected with) that we have in connection with the governing board's business, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting, we will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.
- We accept that a register of interests will be published on the school's website.
- We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
- We will act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the governing board.

Breach of this Code of Conduct

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; the governing board will only use suspension/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways. However, we understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions.
- Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, another governing board member, such as the vice chair will investigate.

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually by the governing board and adopted at the first appropriate meeting of each academic year.

Adopted by the board of: _____ **On:** _____

Annex - The seven principles of public life

Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord

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Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations)

- **Selflessness** - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- **Integrity** - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty** - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

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