

Governor: Code of Conduct

This code aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all governors to follow.

By creating this document, we aim to ensure that governors carry out their role with honesty and integrity, and help us to ensure our Trust schools are environments where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

The code is based on the Governance Handbook. It should be read alongside our constitutional documents, eg articles of association, scheme of delegation etc.

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

The governing board has the following strategic functions:

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting and ensuring clarity of vision, values, and objectives for the school(s)/trust
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Monitoring the educational performance of the school/s and progress towards agreed targets
- Support the Trust when appointing the school principal/head of school
- Support the Trust with performance managing the principal/head of school
- Engaging with stakeholders
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

Overseeing financial performance, by:

- Monitoring/challenge spending against the budget
- Ensuring money is well spent and value for money is obtained
- Ensuring school level risks to the organisation are managed

Ensure that other key players with a stake in the organisation get their voices heard by:

- Gathering the views of pupils, parents and staff and reporting on the results.
- Reaching out to the trust's/school's wider community and inviting them to play their part.
- Using the views of stakeholders to shape the school's culture and the underpinning strategy, policies and procedures.

As individuals on the board we agree to the following:

Role & Responsibilities

- We understand the purpose of the board and its strategic role.
- We understand how the role of the board differs from and works with others including the Headteacher and where appropriate, executive leaders, trust boards and academy committees.
- We will set and maintain an ethos of high expectations for everyone in the school community, including in the conduct and professionalism of the governing board itself.
- We will preserve and develop the character of the trust/school.
- We will ensure that fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs are not undermined.
- We will 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).
- 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. This means that 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 actively support and challenge the executive leaders
- 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
- We will comply with relevant guidance and legislation and our Funding Agreement that sets out how we must manage our school's money and procure goods and services.
- We will act with integrity and transparency when making financial decisions, and understand that all financial management and decision-making will be scrutinised and audited.
- We will declare all gifts in accordance with the Trust's Gifts and Hospitality policy, and will ensure they are recorded on the Gifts and Hospitality register. We will not accept bribes.
- We will work to actively identify and manage risks to the school/trust.

- 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;
- When communicating in our private capacity (including on social media – see section below) we will be mindful of and strive to uphold the reputation 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 take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our board’s performance, membership and skillset.
- We will ensure that we take part in any training or development required to fill any gaps in the skills we need for effective governance.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor 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 prepare ahead of meetings to ensure we make informed contributions.
- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will visit the school, with all visits arranged in advance with the principal/head of school 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.
- 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).
- We accept that the approved governing board and committee minutes and any agenda papers considered at a meeting will be made available to any interested person.

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, trustees, the clerk to the governing board and school staff both in and outside of meetings.
- 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 appendix 1) 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 trust, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

In the course of our role, we are sometimes privy to sensitive information.

- We 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'/trustees' contributions in meetings or how they may have voted
- We will ensure that 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
- We will ensure all confidential papers (both electronic and physical) are held and disposed of appropriately
- We will continue to observe confidentiality after we have left office

Our commitment to confidentiality does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

- 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/trust business arise outside a governing board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.

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 in the Register of Business Interests, 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 the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school/trust'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.

Data Protection

- We will follow the school's/trust's information security processes and measures and data protection policy when using, storing, sharing and disposing of personal data.

Our commitment to data protection does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

Social Media

- We will abide by any requirements set out in the Trust's Social Media Policy
- We will uphold the reputation of the trust/school at all times
- We will maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with the school community
- We will review privacy settings regularly to make sure we are happy with the information about us that is publicly available
- We will report any incidents of harassment we experience, or see towards governors/trustees to the Chair of governors/trustees and the principal/CEO.

We will not:

- Accept friend requests from pupils 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/trust community
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the school/trust into disrepute.

Ceasing to be a governor

- We understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after a governor leaves office

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.
- Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, a member of the trust board will investigate.

Monitoring Arrangements

This code of conduct will be reviewed and agreed annually, upon significant changes to the law, or as needed. The document will be ratified by the Trust Board, and then disseminated to local governing boards.

Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding
- Gifts & Hospitality
- E-Safety
- Data Protection

Adopted by the governing board of Litherland High School on 14 October 2020.

Governor: Code of Conduct (Appendix 1)

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

As governors, we will follow these principles set out by the government at all times. They apply to anyone who holds a public office:

Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty – Holders of public office should be truthful

Leadership – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Governor: Code of Conduct (Appendix 2)

The Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education

The Ethical Leadership Commission has developed the following Framework for Ethical Leadership to help school leaders take difficult decisions. As important as the language is, these aren't just fine words, they are meant to support a culture in which ethical decision making can flourish.

1. Selflessness School and college leaders should act solely in the interest of children and young people.
2. Integrity School and college leaders must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, they must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.
3. Objectivity School and college leaders must act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Leaders should be dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children and young people.
4. Accountability School and college leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. Openness School and college leaders should expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from scrutiny unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. Honesty School and college leaders should be truthful.
7. Leadership School and college leaders should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles, and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead schools and colleges and those who volunteer to govern them.

Schools and colleges serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do. Leaders should show leadership through the following personal characteristics or virtues:

- a. **Trust:** *leaders are trustworthy and reliable*
We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond approach. We are honest about our motivations.
- b. **Wisdom:** *leaders use experience, knowledge and insight*
We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our schools and colleges with propriety and good sense.
- c. **Kindness:** *leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper*
We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.
- d. **Justice:** *leaders are fair and work for the good of all children*
We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.
- e. **Service:** *leaders are conscientious and dutiful*
We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.
- f. **Courage:** *leaders work courageously in the best interests of children and young people*
We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.
- g. **Optimism:** *leaders are positive and encouraging*
Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.

Governor: Code of Conduct (Appendix 3)

Breaches of the Code of Conduct

If we suspect a governor has breached the Code of Conduct, we will follow this procedure:

- The Chair (or Chair of the Board if it is the Chair of Governors) will investigate
- The Chair will hold a meeting with the governor to discuss the issue. The governor can bring a friend to the meeting. The Trust Governance Manager will attend to corroborate any decisions.
- If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, further actions will be taken to improve the issue. These 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 that have been involved in
- If there is no improvement in the governor's behaviour, the Trust 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.

Governors may be suspended if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the governing board (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the board);
- Have brought, or is likely to bring the academy trust or the office of governor into disrepute
- Are a staff governor undergoing disciplinary proceedings at the school
- Are undergoing court or tribunal proceedings that would result in the governor being disqualified from holding office
- Breach confidentiality

Bringing the academy trust or office of governor into disrepute may include, but is not limited to:

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

We (or the Trust) may remove a governor from office where:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension
- There has been serious misconduct. The Chair of Governors (in conjunction with the Trust Board/CEO) 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 trust/school/governing board, or their actions interfere with the operational efficiency of the school/trust.