



A collaboration of schools which enhances the educational experiences and outcomes for children, maximising the benefits of working together, whilst maintaining the individual culture and ethos of each individual school

Trustee & Governor Code of Conduct

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1. Aims, scope and principles

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

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

The code is based on the academy trust governance guide and the Academy Trust Handbook. It should be read alongside our constitutional documents (e.g. our articles of association and scheme of delegation).

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

2. The 7 Nolan principles of public life

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

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

- **Leadership** – we will actively promote and support the above principles and will challenge poor behaviour wherever it happens

3. Trustee and governor responsibilities

In trusts, the purpose of governance is to provide:

- strategic leadership
- accountability and assurance
- strategic engagement

Trusts also have statutory responsibility for safeguarding and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) arrangements within (and across) the academy trust ensuring the promotion of pupil welfare and for keeping their estates safe and well-maintained

In order to do this effectively, as individuals we will:

- Understand and respect the distinction between the role and responsibilities of the Trust Board, the Local Governing Committee and those of the executive leadership within the trust and our schools
- Act within our powers
- Set and maintain an ethos of high expectations for everyone in our community, including in the conduct and the professionalism of the board itself and its local governing committees
- Promote equity and diversity throughout our organisation
- Preserve and develop the character and religious character of the trust and schools
- 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 the trust, our students/pupils and our staff, informed by the views and needs of our key stakeholders (students/pupils, parents/carers, staff, the Oxford Diocese, local communities and the local authorities)
- Promote the success of the trust and our schools within the trust
- Follow the trust's (and individual school's) policies and procedures, and the procedures of the board/local governing committee as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the trust's constitutional documents
- Take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our performance, constitution and skillset
- Take part in any training or development required to fill any gaps in the skills we need for effective governance, undertaking as a minimum annually safeguarding training, cyber security training and reading Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice (trustees only)
- 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
- Understand that no trustee or governor can act on her/his own without proper authority from either the trust board or local governing committee

- Comply with relevant guidance and legislation, and our funding agreement, which sets out how we must manage our 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 £25.00 and record them on the gifts and hospitality register. We will not accept bribes
- Work to actively identify and manage risks to the trust and our schools
- Fulfil the role and responsibilities as set out in the scheme of delegation
- When visiting a school in a personal capacity (for example as a parent) continue to honour the commitments made in this code

4. Working with others

We will:

- Support and strengthen trust leadership by providing constructive challenge to leaders and hold them to account
- Respect the role of the executive and school leadership teams and avoid routine involvement in operational matters
- Work together as a board/local governing committee to develop effective relationships with stakeholders
- Engage meaningfully with the communities we serve and understand that we are answerable to these stakeholders
- Adhere to the Equality Act 2010 and apply the principles of fairness and equity in everything we do
- Strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted
- Express views openly, courteously and respectfully in communications with trustees, governors, trust and school staff, parents, students/pupils and other relevant stakeholders
- Support the Chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times
- Exercise independent judgement, reasonable, care, skill and diligence

5. Commitment to governance

We will:

- Attend all meetings where possible. Where we cannot attend, we will explain our valid reason and give reasonable notice
- Understand and accept the time and workload commitments of the role
- Understand that work should be shared among members and that all trustees and governors are expected to take an active role
- Will prepare ahead of meetings to ensure we make informed contributions
- Will participate in regular pre-arranged school visits in line with agreed protocol

6. Openness and transparency

Conflicts of interest

To make sure our board/local governing committees takes impartial decisions without bias, we will:

- Publish an up-to-date register of business and pecuniary interests of all trustees and governors
- 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 our governance is transparent and open to the communities we serve, we accept that the following information will be published on the trust's and/or school's website:

- The structure and remit of the members, board of trustees, committees including local governing committees, and the full name of the chair of each one (where applicable)
- For each member who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - Their full name
 - Their date of appointment
 - The date when they stepped down, if applicable
 - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests (including governance roles in other educational institutions)
- For each trustee and governor who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - Their full name
 - Their date of appointment
 - Their term of office (trustees/local governors and local governors only)
 - The date they stepped down (where applicable)
 - The body that appointed them (trustees/local governors and local governors only)
 - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
 - Their attendance record over the last academic year
- We accept that the information about members, trustees and governors will be published on Get Information About Schools
- We accept that the board may collect diversity data to publish on the school 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
- We accept that information about trustees will be published by Companies House
- We 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
- We accept that it is a statutory requirement that some governance documents that may reference trustee/governor names or other data need to be kept for a longer period than one year or

indefinitely. This applies to, but is not limited to, minutes of meetings, agendas, reports referred to in the minutes, complaints and pupil/staff disciplinary documents.

- Personal data may be shared within the trust, including but not exclusively, with the Central Trust Team, Schools' Senior Leadership Team and Local Governing Committees/Trust Board.

7. Confidentiality

In the course of our role, we are sometimes privy to sensitive information. We will observe confidentiality at all times but will be particularly vigilant when the information relates to:

- Sensitive matters
- Named individuals (such as staff, students/pupils and their parents/carers)
- Individual trustees and/or governors' contributions in meetings and/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

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.

We will continue to observe confidentiality after we have left office.

We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.

We will not share passwords or allow anyone access to computer systems that contains governance information on.

Breaches of confidentiality

In the event of a breach of confidentiality, we will inform the chair as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further.

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

8. Data protection and AI

We will follow the trust's (and respective schools') information security processes 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 safeguarding concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

We will adhere to the trust's AI policy.

Personal data breaches

We will inform the trust's data protection officer immediately if we believe there has been a personal data breach.

9. Social media

We will:

- Uphold the reputation of the trust and our schools at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with our schools'/school's communities
- Review privacy settings regularly to make sure we are happy with the information about us that is publicly available
- Report any incidents of harassment we experience, or see towards trustees or governors, to the chair of trustees/the local governing committee and/or the executive leadership
- Carefully consider how appropriate it would be to accept any friend requests from parents/carers or to join any parent/carers groups associated with the trust or any of our schools

We will not:

- Accept friend requests from students/pupils (except where they are direct relations)
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the board of trustees/local governing committees or trust/school communities
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the trust or our schools into disrepute

10. Breach of the code of conduct

If we suspect a trustee has breached the code of conduct, we will follow this procedure:

- A member of the trust will investigate
- A member of the trust will hold a meeting with the trustee to discuss the issue. The trustee can bring a friend to the meeting. Another trustee will attend to corroborate any decisions
- If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, we will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
 - Further meetings with the member to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
 - Support, mentoring or training for the trustee
 - Making sure the trustee withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in

If there is no improvement in the trustee's behaviour, the board will vote on a motion to ask the members to remove them in accordance with sections 168 and 169 of the Companies Act 2006 and the trust's articles of association. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in serious breaches of this code.

Trustees may be removed if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the board of trustees (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the board)
- Have brought, or are likely to bring, the academy trust or the office of the trustee into disrepute
- Have acted to undermine fundamental British values or the board's commitment or ability to deliver on its Prevent duty
- Have been involved in 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
- Have displayed repeated and serious incompetence
- Have acted in a way that is significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the board, or their actions have interfered with the operational efficiency of the school

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

- Speaking out publicly against the trust or schools within the trust
- Being disrespectful to members of the trust or school community
- Behaving inappropriately in a public forum, such as a PTA meeting or on social media
- Persistently failing to undertake the training or development they need to contribute effectively to the board's operation

For governors please refer to the procedure for suspending or removing a member, trustee or governor.

11. Monitoring arrangements

This code of conduct will be reviewed and agreed triennially, upon significant changes to the law, or as needed. It will be ratified by the full board of trustees.

12. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Child protection & Safeguarding
- Prevent
- Gifts, hospitality & anti-bribery
- Governor and trustee expenses
- Data protection
- AI
- Anti-bullying & anti-harassment
- Privacy notice for members, trustees & governors
- Procedure for suspending or removing a member, trustee or governor