

Code of Conduct for School Governing Boards

This code sets out the expectations on, and commitment required from, school governors and trustees in order for the governing board to properly carry out its work within the school and the community. It can be amended to include specific reference to the ethos of the particular school or to reflect delegated responsibilities within a multi academy trust. The term 'school' as used in this document also refers to academies, and it applies to all levels of school governance.

The governing board has the following core strategic functions:

Establishing strategic direction, by:

- setting the vision, values, and objectives for the school;
- agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets;
- and meeting statutory duties.

Ensuring accountability, by:

- appointing the headteacher;
- monitoring progress towards targets;
- performance managing the headteacher;
- engaging with stakeholders;
- and contributing to school self-evaluation.

Ensuring financial probity, by:

- setting the budget;
- monitoring spending against the budget;
- ensuring value for money is obtained;
- and ensuring risks to the organisation are managed.

Commitment

Those accepting the office of governor or trustee will need to be mindful that the role does require a significant level of commitment. Governors and trustees will be expected to:

- regularly attend meetings of the full governing board, committees and working groups, for the full duration whenever possible. Regular non-attendance at full governing board meetings can lead to eventual disqualification;
- prepare for meetings by reading all papers beforehand;
- attend induction and other relevant training courses in order to aid their development;
- make every effort to get to know the school and involve themselves in school activities. This should include visits to the school, arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established by the governing board and agreed with the headteacher;
- actively involve themselves in the work of the governing board and be willing to carry out their fair share of responsibilities including serving on committees and working parties and taking on links with other areas of special responsibility.

Responsibilities

Governors and trustees should recognise that each member of the governing board has equal status irrespective of their appointing body. Governors and trustees should be aware that they:

- have no legal authority to act individually, except when the board has given delegated authority for them to do so;
- have collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or its delegated agents. This means that governors and trustees should not speak against majority decisions outside the governing board meeting;

- must operate as a corporate team, always in the best interests of the school;
- should develop effective working relationships with the headteacher, senior management team, teachers, support staff, parents, Local Authority and other relevant agencies where appropriate;
- should consider carefully how their decisions may affect the community and other schools;
- should always be mindful of their responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of their school;
- should respond to criticism or complaints affecting the school by following the procedures established by the governing board;
- and should actively support and challenge the headteacher.

Transparency of Governance Arrangements

A governing board should publish on its website up-to-date details of its governance arrangements. For each governor who has served at any point over the past 12 months this should include:

- their full names, date of appointment, term of office, date they stepped down (where applicable) and who appointed them (in accordance with the governing body's instrument of government or articles of association);
- relevant business and pecuniary interests (as recorded in the register of interests);
- their attendance record at governing board and committee meetings over the last academic year.

Information relating to governance arrangements will also be logged on Get Information About Schools, the DfE's national database.

Confidentiality

Decisions reached at governing board meetings are normally made public through minutes and reports, however, governors and trustees should ensure confidentiality, when required, in respect of the discussions on which the decisions were based. Individual governors and trustees should:

- observe complete confidentiality in all matters discussed at governing board meetings especially in relation to matters concerning staff or pupils and also any other matters agreed by the governing board. Failure to comply may lead to disciplinary action;
- exercise the highest degree of caution when involved in sensitive issues arising outside the governing board which may have an impact on the work of the governing board or the operation of the school.

Individual governors and trustees should not reveal the details of any governing board vote. On ceasing to be a governor or trustee individuals should ensure all information relating to the school is returned to either the school or to the Governance Support and Development Service for its effective disposal.

Conflicts of interest

Governors and trustees should record any pecuniary or other business interest that they have in connection with the governing board's business (including those related to people they are connected with) in the Register of Business Interests. If any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting they should offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time. Governors and trustees should also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise. They must 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 the governing board believe this code has been breached by one of its members, the matter will be raised with the chair and the chair will investigate. The governing board will only use suspension or removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways. Should it be the chair that the governing board believe has breached this code, another governor, such as the vice chair will investigate.

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).

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.