

# Governance Code of Conduct

## Jan 2022

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### Document Control

Date	Version	Comments
07/01/22	0.1	Preliminary code of conduct Please provide feedback to ALFish@learningpartners.org

# 1 Introduction

As a trust, we are committed to upholding high standards of conduct and commitment in our governance arrangements. This Code of Conduct provides a set of standards by which we expects anyone volunteering on our Board of Trustees, Local Area Committees and other bodies that we may convene to uphold and promote.

## 1.1 The Principles

As a holder of public office, all governors, trustees and members should conduct themselves according to the following principles:

1. **Selflessness** - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. **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.
3. **Objectivity** - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **Honesty** – Holders of public office should be truthful
7. **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.

## 1.2 The Standards

As individuals representing the trust, we accept the following:

### a) Role and Responsibilities

- We understand the purpose of the board of members, board of trustees, local academy committees and the role of the executive leaders.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the board or local academy committee has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of our appointed body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside meetings.
- 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 the trust and its academies. Our actions will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints we will follow the procedures established by the Board of Trustees.

- We will actively support and challenge the executive leaders.
- We will accept and respect the difference between strategic and operational leadership, 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 any rules, policies and procedures agreed within the Trust or as required by the law.
- When formally speaking or writing in our 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) we will be mindful of and strive to uphold the reputation of the organisation.

#### **b) Commitment**

- We acknowledge that accepting office involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the Trust, 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 Trust and its academies well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in Trust or academy activities.
- We will visit academies, and act in accordance with the agreed framework for carrying out visits.
- When visiting an academy in a personal capacity (e.g. as a parent, carer, or member of staff), we will maintain our underlying responsibility as a representative of the Trust and/or local academy committee.
- 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 Trust and/or academy websites.
- In the interests of transparency we accept that information relating to our roles will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of governors as appropriate ('Get information about schools').

#### **c) Relationships**

- We will work as a team and actively build constructive working relationships.
- We will express views openly (where permitted), courteously and respectfully.
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct at all times.
- 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 and its partners, the local authority and other relevant agencies, and the community.

#### **d) Confidentiality**

- 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 academy/Trust business arise outside of any Trust meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any vote.
- We will ensure all confidential papers are securely held and disposed of.
- We understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after we leave office.

**e) Conflicts of Interest**

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people we are connected with) in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.
- We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the Trust's and/or academy's website.
- We will declare any conflict of loyalty at the earliest opportunity should the situation arise.
- We will act in the best interests of the Trust and its academies as a whole and not as a representative of any group or partner organisation, even if elected to another governing board.

**f) Breaches of this code**

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue in accordance with the Trust's complaints policy.
- If we breach this code, we accept that the Trust can remove us from office, disband any of its bodies, or escalate matters where it is deemed appropriate.

### 1.3 The standards in practice

The following are examples of how these standards could work in practice:

Standard	What might this look like in practice?
Get to know the organisation and the people in it	Gain knowledge about a particular faculty. Become an expert about a particular issue. Visit and meet with teachers, pupils and staff. Attend events, briefings and parents' evenings.
Understand the contexts in which the Trust operates	Learn about the big issues affecting education. Get to know other local or similar schools. Learn about changes in policy and regulations. Understand how schools and trusts are assessed. Understand the Trust's development plan and develop relationships across the Trust.
Challenge and be open to being challenged	Understand the organisation and its context, so that you are confident in discussing and contributing to issues such as performance and progress data, marketing strategies, spending priorities, curriculum development and risk assessments.
Have an eye for detail, but keep a strategic head	Challenging and discussing the detail of an issue so that we can check strategies are working, not so that we can tell the staff 'how' to do their jobs.
Develop your skills so that you keep being useful	Learn how to interpret performance data. Get coached on how the school's budget works. Attend and speak at meetings or events. Attend courses or undertake online training.
You are part of a team that needs you contributing	Attend the meetings that you have committed to and be involved when you are in them. Read documents before meetings. Don't wait to be 'asked'; we are all volunteers, so work with others to ensure that you are being as useful as you can be

## 1.4 School visits

We encourage trustees and governors to visit its schools to observe how they operate, how the curriculum is delivered and to learn about the organisation and its ethos. We consider that strong strategic leaders have a good understanding of its school(s) and the organisation that they support, and that they actively contribute to improving the learning and outcomes for all children.

Visits can serve a number of purposes including:

- Improving knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and areas for development.
- Monitoring and assessing how the school's and GEP's priorities are being delivered.
- Helping the local governing body and GEP to fulfil their various statutory duties.
- Acquiring knowledge to enable individuals to act as critical friends. ▪ Monitoring and evaluating plans, budgets, and achievement.
- Observing the condition of the school's buildings, facilities, its grounds and its security arrangements.
- Observing children's behaviour and their engagement in the school's activities.

### g) General rules around school visits

- School visits are to be **arranged with a senior member of school staff**. This will typically be the headteacher/principal or their deputy, an assistant headteacher/principal, a head of department or year group, or the school business manager.
- Visits are to be arranged at **mutually convenient** times.
- The **purpose and aims** of the visit must be **agreed in advance** with the staff member facilitating it.
- Visitors must ensure that whilst attending a school, they **do not disrupt lessons** or distract staff or children.
- Visitors are expected to be **punctual**.
- Visitors **must not carry out unannounced visits** to schools.
- Visitors **must act and present themselves in a business-like manner and comply with staff requests** at all times.
- Visitors must be aware of, and **comply with each school's policies, in particular safeguarding**.
- Visits during **examination times should be avoided**.
- Visitors are encouraged to **acknowledge the time taken and effort made** to facilitate their visit.
- The frequency of visits must be **sympathetic to the school's resources and staff availability**.  
Visitors must be mindful of their strategic role; they are **not visiting a school to participate in operational matters**.
- Visitors should **avoid providing views or judgements**, particularly on areas of concern, during the course of their visit.

### h) When observing lessons

- Lesson observation is not a form of assessment. Visitors **must not use their visit as an opportunity to assess or judge the quality of teaching**.
- Visitors must **declare** to the staff member facilitating the visit **when they have children or relatives attending**. Efforts will be made to avoid the visitor observing their child/relative in a lesson.
- Visitors **may interact with lessons or assemblies when invited to do so** by the staff member facilitating their visit or the class teacher.

**i) After visits have been undertaken**

- Visitors are encouraged to **report on their visit** to their local governing body or board, taking care to observe the code of conduct and whilst remembering their role as a critical friend.
- Visitors are encouraged to **discuss their visit with the staff member who facilitated it.**
- Visitors must **discuss areas of concerns with the headteacher/principal in the first instance.**

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