

## **Code of Conduct for School Governors**

Northumberland Governor Support Team recommends that governing boards adopt a code of conduct which sets out the purpose of the governing board and describes appropriate relationships between individual governors, the governing board as a whole, and the leadership of the school. It also details the expectations on and commitment required from school governors, trustees and committee members in order for the governing board to properly carry out its work within the school and the community.

The Code of Conduct embraces the Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life, as detailed in appendix 1.

We recommend that all governors thoroughly discuss the code to ensure it is appropriate to their particular setting and reflects the ethos of the school. Once adopted governors should be asked to review and sign it on an annual basis, ideally in the autumn term.

This Code of Conduct is adapted from the National Governance Association model Code of Conduct 2020.

## **The purpose of the governing board**

The purpose of the governing board is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. All governing boards, have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure best value is achieved.

## **The governing board has the following core strategic functions:**

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting the vision, values, and objectives for the school
- How the school is working towards its vision
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the headteacher
- Monitoring the educational performance of the school and progress towards agreed targets
- Performance managing the headteacher
- Engaging with stakeholders
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

Ensuring financial probity, by:

- Setting the budget
- Monitoring spending against the budget
- Monitoring use of resources
- Ensuring value for money is obtained
- Benchmarking
- Ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

The following is also recognised as a fourth core function of governance:

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 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, its strategic role and the role of the headteacher.
- 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 insofar as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- We will encourage open government 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. 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 headteacher.
- We will accept and respect the difference in roles between the board and staff, ensuring we work collectively for the benefit of the organisation.
- we will respect the role of the headteacher 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.
- 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) 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.

### **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 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 headteacher and undertaken within the framework established by the governing board.
- When visiting the school in a personal capacity (ie 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 government, 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).

### **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 and the clerk to the governing body.
- 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) or which may place pupils at risk.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other 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 headteacher, staff and parents, the trust, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

### **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 school business arise outside a governing board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
- This confidentiality extends to any use of social media we undertake.
- We will ensure that all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.

### **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'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.
- **Ceasing to be a governor** - We understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply even after a governor member leaves office.

#### **Implementation 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, another governing board member, such as the vice chair will investigate.

#### **Undertaking:**

As a member of the governing board -I will always have the achievement and well-being of the pupils, and the reputation of the school at heart. I will strive to be an ambassador for the school, publicly supporting its aims, ethos and values. I will never say or do anything that would embarrass the school, the governing board, the headteacher or the staff. This includes through any use of social media.

Signed:

Print name:

Date:

## **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).*

**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.

*Governors should act in the interest of the pupils, parents, staff and community.*

**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.

*Governors should declare all interests annually and at meetings, and agree to have them published on the school website.*

**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.

*Governors should make informed decisions in the best interests of the school.*

**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.

*Governors should make themselves available to families and members of the community and be prepared to answer for decisions taken to the Local Authority, Diocese, Ofsted, as appropriate.*

**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.

*Governors should ensure that minutes are available to be read and that decisions are made following agreed delegated arrangements.*

**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.

*Governors should act honestly at all times and ensure minutes and documentation reflect this.*

**Leadership** - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

*Governors should act as role models for each other and for the school community.*