

1. Introduction

This Code of Conduct aims to set the standards of conduct that we expect all trustees, members, and committee members (including local governors) to follow. We aim to ensure that trustees and local governors carry out their role in line with the Nolan Principles of Public Life, to help us ensure our Trust is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

Effective boards create and maintain a code of conduct*

This code is based on the Academy Trust Handbook and the [Academy Trust Governance Guide](#). It should be read alongside our constitutional documents including our Articles of Association, Scheme of Delegation and Local Governing Board Standing Orders.

Our Trustees and Committee Members, including those on our Local Governing Boards, will be asked on an annual basis to confirm they will adhere to this code. Breaching the Code of Conduct could result in our Trust removing a trustee or individual on a committee.

2. The Nolan Principles of Public Life

All those involved in governance are expected to understand and follow the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), also known as the 'Nolan Principles':

- 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. The purpose of governance and our responsibilities

In trusts, the purpose of governance is to provide:

- Strategic leadership
- Accountability and assurance
- Strategic engagement.

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

- Understand and respect the distinction between the role and responsibility of the board and those of the executive leadership.

*1.1.4 Academy Trust Governance Guide

- Set and maintain an ethos of high expectations for everyone in our community, including in the conduct and the professionalism of the board itself
- Promote equity and diversity throughout our organisation, including the board's operation
- Preserve and develop the character including the religious character (where appropriate) of our 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 pupils, informed by the views and needs of our key stakeholders.
- Follow our Trust's policies and procedures, and the procedures of the board as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and our constitutional documents
- Take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our board's performance, constitution and skillset and undertaking any training and development required to fill any gaps in the skills we need for effective governance
- 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
- Comply with relevant guidance and legislation, and our funding agreement, which sets out how we must manage our 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
- Work to actively identify and manage risks to our Trust.

4. Working with others

Governors and trustees should recognise that each member of the board has equal status irrespective of their appointing body and have no authority to act individually, except when the board has given delegated authority for them to do so.

We will:

- Support and strengthen trust leadership by providing constructive challenge to leaders, and holding them to account
- Respect the role of the executive and school leadership teams, and avoid routine involvement in operational matters.
- Have collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Board or its delegated agents. This means we should not speak against majority decisions outside of a board meeting.
- Respect each other's views, operating as a corporate team always in the best interest of the school.
- Work together as a board to develop effective relationships with the Headteacher, school senior leadership team, central office team, teachers support staff, Members, Local Authority, the Diocese, and all other stakeholders and other relevant agencies as appropriate.
- Engage meaningfully with the communities we serve and understand that we are answerable to these stakeholders and carefully consider how our decisions may affect the community and other schools
- Follow the [Equality Act 2010](#), and apply the principles of fairness and equity in everything we do

5. Commitment to governance

Those accepting the office of governor, member, or trustee will need to be mindful that the role does require a significant level of commitment.

We:

- Will attend all meetings for the full duration where possible, giving each meeting our full attention. Where we cannot attend, we will explain our valid reason and give suitable notice. Regular non-attendance at meeting will be seen as a breach of this Code of Conduct.
- Will actively involve ourselves in the work of the board and be willing to carry out a fair share of responsibilities including serving on any working parties, committees, and taking on roles with areas of special responsibility.
- Will prepare ahead of meetings including reading all papers to ensure we make informed contributions
- Will make every effort to get to know our school and Trust. This should include visits to the school, arranged in advance with staff and undertaken within the framework established by the governing board and agreed with the Headteacher.
- Will attend induction, and regular safeguarding and data protection training, and any further training or development activity needed to ensure the board has a wide range of skills and expertise.

6. Openness and transparency

Conflicts of interest

To make sure our board takes impartial decisions without bias, we will:

- Record and publish an up-to-date register of business and pecuniary interests of all trustees and local governors.
- Declare any potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of each meeting, and follow our procedure our conflicts of interest procedures which may include withdrawing from the meeting for the relevant item of business and not voting on the matter, in line with our Articles of Association (Articles 97-98)

Publishing information

To ensure our board is transparent and open to the communities we serve, we will make certain information publicly available.

We accept that the following information will be published on the Trust and/or school websites to ensure transparency:

- The structure and remit of the members, board of trustees, committees and local governing bodies, and the full name of the chair of each one.
- 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 local governor** who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - Their full name
 - Their date of appointment
 - Their term of office
 - The date they stepped down (where applicable)

- The body that appointed them
- Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
- Their attendance record over the last academic year (only for trustees at board and committee meetings, and local governors at local governing body meetings)
- We accept that the information about members, trustees and local 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 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 the 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.

7. Confidentiality

Decisions reached at governing board meetings are usually available publicly through minutes and reports, however, governors and trustees should ensure confidentiality in respect of the discussions on which the decisions were based.

As individual governors and trustees we will:

- 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.
- 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.
- Not reveal the details of any governing board vote.

On ceasing to be a governor or trustee we will ensure all information relating to the school is returned to either the school or to the STAR MAT Trust for its effective disposal and we will continue to observe confidentiality after we have left office.

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

8. Data protection

We will follow the 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 safeguarding concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

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 abide by any requirements set out in our Trust's [Social Media Policy](#) and we will:

- Uphold the reputation of the trust and schools at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with our schools' 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/local governors, to the chair of trustees/the local governing body and the executive leadership
- Carefully consider how appropriate it would be to accept any friend requests from parents/carers or to join any parent/carer groups associated with the trust or any of our schools

We will **not**:

- Accept friend requests from pupils
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the board of trustees/local governors or trust/school communities
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the trust or school into disrepute

10. Potential Breaches of the Code of Conduct

If a LGB believes this code has been breached by one of its governors, 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 LGB believe has breached this code, a Trustee will investigate.

If it is suspected that a Trustee has breached the code, a Member of the Trust will investigate and aim to resolve any difficulties in a constructive manner. If there is no improvement in behaviour, the Board may vote on a motion to ask Members to remove them in accordance with sections 168 and 169 of the Companies Act 2006 and in line with our Articles of Association (Articles 65-80).

All such incidences must be reported to the Head of Governance, CEO and Chair of Trustees.

11. Monitoring and review

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed and agreed every three years by the Board of Trustees. It was last approved July 2024.