A Model Code of Conduct
for Governing Boards

Coventry City Council

People Directorate

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Introduction

The Governance of schools is now a function of considerable importance and the work of the Governing Board of a school matters more than ever before. Authority is vested almost entirely in people who are essentially volunteers, whether elected, co-opted or appointed and whose ranges of experience, expertise and interests are likely to be very diverse.

Various pieces of legislation define the duties, powers and responsibilities of Governing Boards and the procedures to be followed and this code should be read in conjunction with the relevant law and for academies, in line with their Articles of Association and Scheme of Delegation.

This model Code of Conduct is designed to assist members of Governing Boards and Headteachers in the normal conduct of their general responsibilities so that a balanced view of Governance is maintained, harmony is achieved and unnecessary conflict avoided. It is not a definitive statement of responsibilities but is concerned with the common understanding of broad principles by which Governors will operate and can be amended to include specific reference to the ethos of the school. ‘School’ includes academies, and it applies to all level of school Governance.

Once approved by the Governing Board, the Code of Conduct will apply to all Governors/ Trustees and Local Governing Board Members.
A MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

Name of School/ Trust ...........................................................................................................

Name of Governor/ Trustee ..................................................................................................

Date ...................................................................................................................................

The Governors of this school/ trust accept the following Code of Conduct:

General

- Governors have responsibility for:
  a. Setting and ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction values and objectives for the school/ Trust. (strategic direction)
  b. Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff ; and (accountability)
  c. Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent. (financial performance)

the Headteacher/ Executive Leader is responsible for:

a. The internal organisation, day to day management and control of the school/ trust
b. The educational performance of the school/ trust
c. Presenting aims and objectives, policies and targets for consideration by the Governing Board;
d. Reporting to the Governing Board on progress on meeting these aims and objectives.

Governors/ Trustees and Executive Leaders will each recognise and respect the roles of the other and avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements.

- The authority with which the Governing Board operates is held corporately and Governors/ Trustees accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Governing Board.

- All Governors/Trustees have equal status and their central concern should be the welfare of the school/ trust as a whole. Each Governor is a Governor in their own right, but each brings an individual perspective to the Governing Board, whether as parent, member of staff or from outside the school itself.
• Governors/Trustees are required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check within 21 days of appointment.

• Governors/Trustees have a general duty to act with integrity, objectivity and honesty in the best interests of the school at all times.

• Governors/Trustees and the Headteacher/Executive Leader will seek to work together as a team and to develop effective working relationships with staff and parents, the local authority, other relevant agencies and the community.

• Governors/Trustees will actively support and challenge the Headteacher/Executive Leader.

• Governors/Trustees have or share the responsibility for the employment of staff and will fulfil all reasonable expectations of a good employer.

• Governors/Trustees will consider carefully how their decisions might affect the community and other schools.

• Governors/Trustees will be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and be prepared to explain their actions and decisions as far as reasonable confidentiality allows.

• Governors/Trustees 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.

• Governors will be mindful of and strive to uphold the reputation of the organisation when communicating in a private capacity (including on social media).

**Commitment**

• Accepting a role as a School Governance requires significant amounts of time and energy from every Governor/trustee.

• All Governors/trustees will involve themselves actively in the work of the Governing Board and accept a fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees and working groups. It is recommended that each Governor serves on at least one committee.

• Governors/Trustees know the school/trust well and take all possible opportunities for involvement in school/trust activities.

• Regular attendance at meetings of the Full Governing Board, committees and working groups is essential. Apologies are given to the Clerk to Governors in advance of a meeting if they are unable to attend.
Governors/ Trustees will visit the school and visits will be arranged in advance with a Headteacher/ Executive leader and in line with the Governing Board protocol for visits.

Governors/ Trustees will consider their individual and collective needs for induction, training and development and will undertake relevant training.

When visiting the/ a school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent) Governors/ Trustees will maintain their underlying responsibility as a Governor/ Trustee.

Confidentiality

Governors will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school.

Governors will exercise the highest degree of prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside of a Governing Board meeting. Governors will encourage issues to be brought to the attention of the Headteacher or Governing Board (depending on the nature of the issue) through the proper channels.

Governors will not speak against majority decisions of the Governing Board, even if they have not themselves agreed with them.

Governors will not reveal the details of any Governing Board vote including committee.

Requirements relating to confidentiality continue to apply after a Governor/ Trustee leaves office.

Conflicts of interest

Publication of Governor’s Details and Register of Interests on the school website is required. The detail to be published for each Governor and Associate Member as a minimum includes:

- their full name
- their category of governor
- which body appoints them
- date of appointment
- their term of office
- the names of any committees the Governor serves on; and
- details of any positions of responsibility such as chair or vice-chair of the Governing Board or a committee of the Governing Board
- relevant business interests and details of any other educational establishments
governed. The register should also set out any relationships between Governors
and members of the school staff including spouses, partners and relatives
- Attendance at Governing Board Meetings and Committee meetings in the
previous year

- Information relating to Governors/Trustees is collated by School Leaders and
logged on the DfE’s national Database of Governors (Get Information About
Schools - GIAS).

- Governors and Associate Members are required to complete a declaration of
business interest form on an annual basis

- Individual Governors will declare any potential conflict of interest and withdraw from
the meeting before the particular item is discussed.

- Governors will resist the temptation of outside pressure to use the position of
Governor to benefit him or herself or other outside parties.

- Governors 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.

**Conduct**

- Governors will express their views openly, courteously and respectfully within
meetings but accept collective responsibility for all decisions.

- Governors will support the Chair to ensure appropriate conduct at all times.

- Governors/ Trustees will follow the appropriate procedures established by the
Governing Board when responding to complaints.

- Governors/ Trustees have no authority to act individually except when given
delegated authority to do so by the Governing Board and should therefore only
speak on behalf of the Governing Board when specifically authorised to do so.

- Governors have a responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of
the school and their actions within the school community should reflect this.

**Breach of the Code**

- If there is a belief that the code is breached the issue should be raised with the
Chair of Governors/ Trustees and they will investigate. Suspension/ removal would
only be used as a last resort if the issue is not resolved in a more constructive way.
Should the Chair be the subject of the breach, ideally the Vice Chair (or another
Governor) should 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).

Governors should accept the Seven Principles of Public Life as follows:

**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.

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**GSS Publications**

The Governor Support Service has issued guidance on many topics of interest to Governors. They are free of charge to Governing Boards subscribing to our services and are available from:
Governor Support Service, Civic Centre 2, Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RS
Tel: 024 7663 1561  e-mail: Angela.Carr@coventry.gov.uk or Kelly.Goddard@coventry.gov.uk

A list of publications are available on request.