

Governor Guidance Notes

for school governors and clerks in Cambridgeshire Maintained Schools

Please note that legislation in this Governor Guidance Note applies to Cambridgeshire Maintained Schools but the principles may be useful for Academies and Free Schools

Guidance Note 17

A MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GOVERNING BODIES

This code of conduct sets out the expectations on and commitment required from school governors in order for the governing body to properly carry out its work within the school and the community. It may be adopted as it stands or adapted to reflect different governing bodies' ways of working or include specific reference to the ethos of the school. In either case, it should be thoroughly discussed and supported by every governor before being formally agreed.

This Code of conduct embraces The Nolan Principles of Public Life:

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

(as set out in The Committee on Standards in Public Life chaired by Lord Nolan)

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 this.

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.

THE GOVERNING BODY HAS THE FOLLOWING CORE STRATEGIC FUNCTIONS:

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting the vision, values and objectives for the school
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the headteacher
- Monitoring progress towards 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
- Ensuring value for money is obtained
- Ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

AS INDIVIDUALS ON THE GOVERNING BODY WE AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:

Roles & Responsibilities

- We understand the purpose of the governing body and the role of the headteacher.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing body has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing body meeting.
- 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 government and will act appropriately.
- We will publish on the school website the structure and remit of the governing body and any committees, and the full names of the chair of each.
- 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.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing body, 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 policy established by the governing body.
- We will regularly review our individual and collective training needs and attend induction and other relevant training to address them.

- We will confirm our eligibility to be a governor in writing and inform the clerk immediately if there is a change.
- We accept that as governors we need to have an enhanced DBS check and Section 128 check on appointment.
- We accept that in the interests of open government, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing body, 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.
- We will ensure the same information will be published for associate members, making clear whether they have voting rights on any of the committees to which they have been appointed.
- 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.

Relationships

- We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- We will express our views openly within meetings but should ensure they relate to matter relevant matters. Discussion will be conducted in a respectful manner with opposing views being expressed in a constructive way.
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other governors 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, parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.
- We will ensure that an appropriate balance is reached between providing challenge and support to the headteacher.
- We will disclose any relationships with other governors or staff at the school, and allow this information to be published on the school website.

Confidentiality

- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff, pupils or parents (both inside and outside school).
- We will not reveal the details of any governing body discussion or how governors vote, unless agreed.
- We will exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussions regarding school business arise outside a governing body meeting.
- We understand that the requirements of confidentiality will continue to apply after we leave office and will ensure that any information relating to the school is returned to the school.
- We will only use secure emails and ensure that confidential and sensitive data is kept securely, both paper and electronic versions.

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 body'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 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 body.
- We will not use the governing body to enhance or influence the education of our own children or those personally known to us or pursue personal agendas.

