For Schools & Trusts

Model code of conduct

For maintained school governing bodies

August 2023

The following model code of conduct is anchored in the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life. It aligns with the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education which outlines principles that support ethical decision-making and challenge unethical behaviour.

This model code has been updated for 2023 – new and amended statements are highlighted and marked (*).

How to use this code of conduct

- Adapt this code of conduct to meet the needs of your governing body and context.
- Review and approve the code of conduct annually (normally at the first meeting of the autumn term).
- New governors should agree to the board's code of conduct on being appointed as part of their induction programme.
- Chairs may also use their code of conduct to support annual governor evaluation conversations.
- NGA recommends that governing bodies publish their code of conduct on their school website.

Guidance

NGA model code of conduct

Once this code has been adopted, all governors agree to faithfully abide by it.

We will abide by the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life:

Selflessness

We will act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

We will avoid placing ourselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence us in our work. We will not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

We will act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

We are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions and will submit ourselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

We will act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information will not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

We will be truthful.

Leadership

We will exhibit these principles in our own behaviour. We will actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

We will focus on our core governance functions:

1. ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of staff
3. overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent

   NGA recognises the following as the fourth core function of governance:

4. ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard

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As individual board members, we agree to:

Fulfil our role & responsibilities

1. We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management.
2. We will develop, share and live the ethos and values of our school.
3. We agree to adhere to school policies and procedures as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
4. *We shall fully cooperate with individual requests that are necessary to ensure organisational compliance, such as disclosure and barring or right to work checks.
5. We will work collectively for the benefit of the school.
6. We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
7. We will consider how our decisions may affect the school and local community.
8. We will stand by the decisions that we make as a collective.
9. Where decisions and actions conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life or may place pupils at risk, we will speak up and bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities.
10. We will only speak or act on behalf of the board if we have the authority to do so.
11. We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice.
12. When making or responding to complaints we will follow the established procedures.
13. We will strive to uphold the school's reputation in our private communications (including on social media).
14. We will have regard to our responsibilities under The Equality Act and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all.

Demonstrate our commitment to the role

1. We will involve ourselves actively in the work of the board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, serving on committees or working groups where required.
2. We will make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
3. We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
4. We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
5. We will visit the school and when doing so will make arrangements with relevant staff in advance and observe school and board protocol.
6. When visiting the school in a personal capacity (for example, as a parent or carer), we will continue to honour the commitments made in this code.
7. *We will participate in induction training, prioritise training in required areas (such as safeguarding) and commit to developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.

Build and maintain relationships

1. We will develop effective working relationships with school leaders, staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders from our local community.

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2. *We will respect the remit of, and engage constructively with, relevant authorities and other schools.
3. We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings.
4. We will work to create an inclusive environment where each board member's contributions are valued equally.
5. We will support the chair in their role of leading the board and ensuring appropriate conduct.

Respect confidentiality

1. We will observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of school when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils or families.
2. We will not reveal the details of any governing body vote.
3. We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
4. We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.

Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent

1. We will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the board's business, and these will be recorded in the register of business interests.
2. We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the need arise.
3. If a conflicted matter arises in a meeting, we will offer to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and any subsequent vote.
4. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school's website.
5. We will act as a governor; not as a representative of any group.
6. We accept that in the interests of open governance, 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 website.
7. We accept that information relating to board members will be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database (Get Information about Schools), some of which will be publicly available.

**Statement added or updated in 2023*

We understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions.

Adopted by: [Governing body] on [date] Signed: [chair of board]

We agree that this code of conduct will be reviewed annually endorsed by the full governing body.

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