

## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

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1. This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from governors in order for the governing body to perform its work properly within the school and the community.

### **The purpose of the governing body**

2. The governing body is the school's accountable body. It is responsible for the conduct of the school and for promoting high standards. The governing body aims to ensure that children are attending a successful school that provides them with a good education and supports their well-being. Over the past decade, the responsibilities of governing bodies have grown; and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda has meant that schools are now accountable for children's health and well-being in the community and for a wide range of extended services provision out of school hours.

3. The governing body:

- Sets the strategic direction of the school by setting the values, aims and objectives for the school, agreeing the policy framework for achieving those aims and objectives, setting targets, agreeing the school improvement priorities, approving the budget and agreeing the staffing structure
- Challenges and supports the school by monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the policy framework, progress towards targets, the attainment of the school improvement priorities, the budget and the staffing structure
- Ensures accountability by approving the self-evaluation assessment, responding to reports from the school improvement partner and Ofsted reports, holding the headteacher to account for the performance of the school, ensuring that parents and pupils are involved, consulted and informed as appropriate and making available information to the community
- Appoints and manages the performance of the headteacher who will deliver the aims through the day-to-day management of the school, implementation of the agreed policy framework and school improvement plan, and delivery of the curriculum and report appropriately to the governing body.

4. In law, the governing body is a corporate body, which means that no governor can act on his or her own without proper authority from the full governing body. All governors carry equal responsibility for decisions made and, although appointed through different routes (i.e. parents, staff, local authority and community), the overriding concern of all governors must be the welfare of the school as a whole.

## **The role of a governor**

5. If governing bodies are to carry out their role effectively, governors must be prepared to take their responsibilities seriously, and be willing to monitor and review their own performance. They can expect to be acknowledged as the accountable body by the lead professionals and supported in that task by the appropriate authorities.
6. As a member of the governing body, governors must always have the well-being of the children and the reputation of the school at heart.
7. Governors must:
  - understand the purpose of the governing body and the role of the headteacher as set out above
  - accept the seven principles of public life (see appendix)
  - accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents, which means that governors will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing body meeting
  - accept that governors have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing body has given delegated authority to do so
  - do all they can to be ambassadors for the school, publicly supporting its aims, values and ethos
  - maintain the reputation of the school, and acknowledge that actions within the school and the local community will reflect this
  - only speak on behalf of the governing body when specific authority has been given to do so
  - act fairly and without prejudice
  - fulfil all that is expected of a good employer
  - encourage open government and act appropriately
  - consider carefully how decisions may affect the community and other schools
  - acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy
  - be actively involved in the work of the governing body, and accept a fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups
  - consider governors' individual and collective needs for training and development, and undertake relevant training
  - strive to work as a team and promote constructive working relationships.
8. In relation to meetings, governors (and others attending) should:
  - make every effort to attend meetings, and understand that they have a statutory obligation to do so

- where meetings cannot be attended, explain fully in advance the reason for absence
  - behave appropriately in meetings, respect the chair and other speakers and avoid chatting among themselves when business is being discussed
  - express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all exchanges with other governors
  - be prepared to answer queries from other governors in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed
  - acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to a delegated function by those involved.
9. In their relationship with the school, governors should:
- actively support and challenge the headteacher
  - seek to develop effective working relationships with the headteacher, staff and parents, the local authority, other relevant agencies and the community
  - get to know the school well by visiting the school and responding to opportunities to become involved in school activities
  - arrange visits to school in advance with the staff and undertake them within the framework established by the governing body and agreed with the headteacher
  - follow the procedures established by the governing body in making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school.

### **Confidentiality**

10. Governors must observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school. Governors must exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a governing body meeting.

### **Conflicts of interest**

11. Governors must declare and record any pecuniary or other business interest in connection with the governing body's business

12. Governors must declare any pecuniary interest, or a personal interest, which could be perceived as a conflict of interest, in a matter under discussion at a meeting and offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.

### **Breach of this code of practice**

13. If a governor believes that this code has been breached, the matter should be raised with the chair and the chair will investigate.

14. The governing body should only use suspension as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in ways that are more constructive.

15. Any allegation of a material breach of this code of practice by any governor shall be raised at a meeting of the governing body, and, if agreed to be substantiated by a majority of governors, shall be minuted and can lead to consideration of suspension from the governing body.

16. Governors must be aware of the regulations relating to the suspension and disqualification of a school governor.

### **Annual review**

17. Governors will review the code of practice at the first meeting of the governing body in each academic year and will be invited to sign a register, to be retained by the clerk, to indicate that they have received a copy of the code and agree to abide by it.

## **Appendix: The Seven Principles of Public Life**

*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.

### ***Integrity***

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations 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.