



## Advantage Schools (“Trust”)

# Governor’s Code of Conduct

A copy of this Code of Conduct is to be signed by all Governors at the first meeting of the relevant committee at the start of each academic year. Any new Governors appointed during the year must also sign a copy. It sets out our commitment as a Trust to complying with our Values and Principles and acting at all levels and at all times in a manner that is appropriate.

## 1. Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all governors to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that governors carry out their role with honesty and integrity, and help us to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

The code is based on the Governance Handbook. It should be read alongside our constitutional documents (e.g. our articles of association, standing orders and any scheme of delegation).

Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in the appendix.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, governors will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

## 2. The 7 Nolan principles of public life

As governors, we will follow these principles set out by the government at all times. They apply to anyone who holds a public office:

- **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.

I am aware of and accept the Nolan seven principles of public life.

- I accept that I have no legal authority to act individually and therefore I will only speak on behalf of the Governors when I have been specifically authorised to do so.
- I have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice.

- I will encourage open government and will act appropriately.
- I accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Governors or its delegated agents. This means that I will not speak against majority decisions outside the Governors meetings.
- I will not enter into dialogue or express our views on social media even if not acting in the capacity of a Governor.
- I will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools and our Trust.
- I will always be mindful of my responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our Trust and the schools within it.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the Trust or a school within it I will follow the procedures established by the school or the Trust.

### 3. Governors' responsibilities

The 3 functions of our governing board are to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school.
- Hold executive leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of the school, and the performance management of staff.
- Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure money is well spent.

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

- Understand and respect the distinction between the role and responsibilities of the board and those of the executive/school leaders.
- Set and maintain an ethos of high expectations for everyone in the school community, including in the conduct and the professionalism of the board itself.
- Preserve and develop the character of the school.
- 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 (pupils, parents, staff, the local community and the local authority).
- Follow the school's policies and procedures, and the procedures of the board as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the school's constitutional documents.
- Take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our board's performance, constitution and skillset.
- Take part in any training or 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 that sets out how we must manage our school's 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.
- I will work to actively identify and manage risks to the school.

## 4. Working with others

I will:

- Support the chair of the LGB in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- Be prepared to answer queries from other Governors in relation to delegated functions and consider any concerns expressed, and I will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
- Recognise that the roles of Governors, staff member and volunteers in a school are different.
- Seek to develop effective working relationships with the Trust's staff and parents, the Trust's local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.
- Strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- Support and strengthen school leadership by providing constructive challenge to leaders, and holding them to account.
- Express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other Governors.
- Follow the Equality Act 2010, and apply the principles of fairness and equality in everything we do.

## 5. Commitment to governance

- I acknowledge that accepting office as a Governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- I will involve myself actively in the work of the Trust and accept my fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- If acting as a Governor I will not go beyond my duties or act outside of the powers of authority conveyed on me, and acknowledge that were I to do so I could be held liable to the Trust and/or third parties.
- I will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where I cannot attend explain in advance in full why I am unable to do so.
- I understand that I will cease to hold office if I am absent without permission from all meetings held within a 6-month period, and where governors resolve that the office be vacated.
- I will get to know the Trust and the schools within it and respond to opportunities to involve myself in activities at the Trust and the schools within it.
- My visits to the school will be arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established by the local governing body and agreed with the Principal.
- I will consider seriously my individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training.
- I am committed to actively supporting and challenging the leadership of the Trust and leadership of the schools within the Trust.
- I am committed to working with the Trust to support schools within it.

## 6. Openness and transparency

### Conflicts of interest

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

- Publish an up-to-date register of business and pecuniary interests of all governors/trustees including associate members.

- I will record any pecuniary or other business interest that I have in connection with the Governors in the Register of Business Interests.
- I will 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.
- I will act in the best interests of the Trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected as a Governor.

## Publishing information

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

- I accept that the following information will be published on the school's website 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, 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
    - The body that appointed them
    - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
    - Their attendance record over the last academic year.
- I accept that the information about local governors will be published on Get Information About Schools.
- 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

In the course of our role, we are sometimes privy to sensitive information. We will observe confidentiality when discussing this information, and will not publicly disclose:

- Information about sensitive matters.
- Information about named individuals (such as staff, pupils and their parents).
- Details of individual governors' contributions in meetings or how they may have voted.

Confidential information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority.
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others.
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for.

Our commitment to confidentiality does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

We will continue to observe confidentiality after we have left office.

## Breaches of confidentiality

- If I believe this code has been breached, I will raise this issue with the relevant chair and that chair will investigate; the Governors should seek to resolve any difficulties or disputes constructively;
- Should it be a chair that I believe has breached this code, another member or trustee such as the vice chair will investigate;
- I understand that any allegation of a material breach of this code of conduct by any Governor shall be raised at a meeting of the LGB and, if agreed to be substantiated by a majority of Governors shall be minuted and can lead to consideration of suspension or in some circumstance's removal as a Governor.

## 8. GDPR

I will follow the school'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 child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

### Personal data breaches

I will inform the Chief Operating Officer immediately if I believe that there has been a personal data breach.

## 9. Social media

I will:

- Uphold the reputation of the school at all times.
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with the school community.
- Review privacy settings regularly to make sure I am happy with the information about us that is publicly available.
- Report any incidents of harassment we experience, or see towards governors to the chair of governors and the headteacher.

I will **not**:

- Accept friend requests from pupils and not join any private parent groups associated with the school.
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles.
- Make comments online about any members of the governing board or school community.
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the school into disrepute.

## 10. Monitoring arrangements

This code of conduct will be reviewed and agreed annually, upon significant changes to the law, or as needed. It will be ratified by the Trust Board.

### Appendix 1: Breaches of the code of conduct

If we suspect a governor has breached the code of conduct, we will follow this procedure:

- The chair will investigate.

- The chair will hold a meeting with the governor to discuss the issue. The governor can bring a friend to the meeting. Another governor will attend to corroborate any decisions.
- If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, we will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
  - Further meetings with the chair to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct.
  - Support, mentoring or training for the governor.
  - Making sure the governor withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in.
- If there is no improvement in the governors' behaviour, the board will vote on a motion to suspend them for up to 6 months. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances.

Governors may be suspended if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the board of trustees (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the board) and
- Have brought, or is likely to bring the academy trust or the office of the trustee into disrepute.

'Bringing the board into disrepute' may include, but is not limited to:

- Speaking out publicly against the school.
- Being disrespectful to members of the school community.
- Behaving inappropriately in a public forum, such as a PTA meeting or on social media.

We may remove a governor from office where:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension.
- There has been serious misconduct. We will determine what counts as serious misconduct based on the facts of the case, but it will include any actions that compromise the 7 principles of public life, if sufficiently serious.
- They display repeated and serious incompetence.
- They have engaged in conduct aimed at undermining fundamental British values.
- Their actions are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the board, or their actions interfere with the operational efficiency of the school.



The Governor of the LGB adopted this code of conduct on the date below:

**DATE:**

(It is recommended that all Governors sign and adopt the Code of Conduct at the first relevant meeting of each academic year).

Undertaking:

As a Governor of the Trust I will always have the well-being of the children and the reputation of the Trust and the schools within it at heart; I will do all I can to be an ambassador for the Trust, publicly supporting its aims, values and ethos; I will never say or do anything publicly that would embarrass the Trust the schools within it the local governing boards, the headteachers /principal or staff.

Name .....

Signed .....