



Trustee/Local Governor Code of Conduct

Policy created:	September 2023
Policy reviewed and updated:	10 October 2023 by Trust Board
Date of next review:	
This policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation where appropriate.	

Contents

1. Aims, scope and principles
 2. The 7 Nolan principles of public life
 3. The DOT Safeguarding Principles
 4. Trustees/local governors' responsibilities
 5. Working with others
 6. Commitment to governance
 7. Openness and transparency
 8. Confidentiality
 9. Data protection
 10. Social media
 11. Monitoring arrangements
 12. Links with other policies
- Appendix 1: Breaches of the code of conduct and process for removal of Trustees/Governors

1. Aims, scope and principles

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

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that trustees/local 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](#) and the [Academy Trust 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, trustees/local governors will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the trust and its pupils.

2. The DOT Safeguarding Principles

We have established a set of guiding principles for safeguarding, which all staff, trustees and governors should know and use to inform their practice. Safeguarding is important and it can be hard to get right. Everyone who works for us and with us has to behave in ways that keep children safe and that promote safeguarding. Safeguarding has lots of rules, but there can't be a rule for every situation that might arise. This is true in every school; it's doubly true in our schools because they are always trying to create new and exciting opportunities - which no list of rules can anticipate - and because opportunities in the creative industries can come with extra risks.

We've created guiding principles that all staff, governors and trustees can use to guide their behaviour, their decisions and their actions. This will enable them to make good decisions in every situation they encounter.

1. We are all responsible for the safety of those in the school's care. We take action to keep children and young adults safe and we check the actions of others; we don't make assumptions.
2. Our schools are unique and being here feels different to other schools and workplaces. We protect and nurture children before everything else.
3. Our students are diverse and talented but this can make them vulnerable. They may have managers, agents, careers or many followers already. They are still children and they need support and guidance like all children.
4. We are school professionals first and foremost. This guides our actions wherever we go, whenever it is and whoever we are with.
5. We seek opportunities but they should never be at the cost of safety, our purpose and our values. Nothing trumps our duty to safeguard children.
6. When faced with a decision we always STOP, THINK and are CURIOUS. Then we take action and get support if we need it.
7. Whenever we feel unsure or something does not feel right, we trust our professional instincts and share our concerns.

8. We don't agree to any plans or requests we feel uncomfortable about - whether they're famous, important or just pushy or hurried. We are confident to say no and will always be supported in this.

3. The 7 Nolan principles of public life

As trustees/local 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

4. Trustees/local governors' responsibilities

The 3 functions of our boards are collectively to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the trust
- Hold executive leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of the trust, and the performance management of staff
- Oversee the financial performance of the trust 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 leadership

- Set and maintain an ethos of high expectations for everyone in the community of every school, including in the conduct and the professionalism of the board itself
- Promote equality and diversity throughout our organisation, including the board's operation
- Preserve and develop the character of the trust
- 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, local communities and the local authority/authorities)
- Follow the trust's policies and procedures, and the procedures of the board as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the trust'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 trust'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
- Declare all gifts worth more than £30 and record them on the gifts and hospitality register. We will not accept bribes
- We will work to actively identify and manage risks to the trust

5. Working with others

We will:

- *Support and strengthen trust leadership by providing constructive challenge to leaders and holding them to account*
- *Respect the role of the executive and school leadership teams and avoid routine involvement in operational matters*
- *Respect each other's views*
- *Work together as a board to develop effective relationships with stakeholders*
- *Engage meaningfully with the communities we serve and understand that we are answerable to these stakeholders*
- *Follow the Equality Act 2010, and apply the principles of fairness and equality in everything we do*

6. Commitment to governance

We:

- *Will attend all meetings where possible and in person when required to. All meetings can be attended by Zoom if necessary. Where we cannot attend, we will explain our valid reason and give suitable notice.*
- *Understand and accept the time and workload commitments of the role*
- *Understand that work should be shared among Members and that all trustees/local governors are expected to take an active role*
- *Will prepare ahead of meetings and visits to ensure we make informed contributions*
- *Will participate in regular pre-arranged school visits in accordance with our trust policies, reporting back findings to colleagues. When visiting DOT premises we will abide by all safeguarding and H&S guidance - in particular, we will always wear our identification passes and expect to be challenged if we don't*
- *Will attend any training or development activity needed to ensure the board has a wide range of skills and expertise*

7. 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 trustees/local governors*
- *Declare any potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of each meeting, and withdraw from the meeting for the relevant item of business and not vote on the matter*

Publishing information

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

- We 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 (where applicable), and the full name of the chair of each one (where applicable)
- For each **Member** who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - Their full name
 - Their date of appointment
 - The date when they stepped down, if applicable
 - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests (including governance roles in other educational institutions)
- For each **trustee and local governor** (where applicable) who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - Their full name
 - Their date of appointment
 - Their term of office (trustees/local governors and local governors only)
 - The date they stepped down (where applicable)

- o The body that appointed them (trustees/local governors and local governors only)
- o Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
- o Their attendance record over the last academic year (only for trustees/local governors at board and committee meetings and local governors at local governing body meetings)
- We accept that the information about Members, trustees and local governors will be published on [Get information about schools](#)
- We accept that the information about trustees and local governors will be published on [Companies House](#)
- 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](#)

8. 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 trustees/local 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

In the event of a breach of confidentiality, we will inform the chair as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further.

Trustees/local governors understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended or removed.

9. Data protection

We will follow the trust'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

We will inform the trust's data protection officer immediately if we believe that there has been a personal data breach.

10. Social media

For the purposes of this policy, Social Media is any type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr.

DOT recognises the benefits of social media and the opportunities for communication this provides, especially in our unique contexts. Our students will use social media to share their work, develop their brands and expand their networks. This makes it even more important that we protect trustees, governors, staff and students by having clear expectations that everyone adheres to. The social media policy sets out the principles which trustees and governors are expected to follow when using social media to ensure the school upholds the highest possible standards of confidentiality and accountability and to ensure that its reputation and that of its students are safeguarded at all times.

All staff and volunteers working within the school are in a position of trust, they are therefore required to familiarise themselves with this Policy and raise any concerns where they may arise to safeguard children and protect staff.

Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to connect or be 'friends' in personal social networking sites; Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal

lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the workplace.

Staff, Trustees and Governors must not use Social Media to connect with, follow or contact students or former students, except in the limited ways permitted by the social media policy. The policy specifically states that this applies until the former student is aged 21 or over, and it is at least two years after they have left the school.

We will:

- Abide by any requirements set out in our trust's social media policy

We will:

- Uphold the reputation of the trust at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with our schools' communities
- Review privacy settings regularly to make sure we are happy with the information about us that is publicly available
- Report any incidents of harassment we experience, or see towards trustees/local governors to the chair of trustees/the local governing body and the executive leadership

We will **not**:

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

11. 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 full board of trustees/local governors.

12. Links with other policies

This code of conduct links with our policies on:

- Safeguarding
- Gifts and hospitality
- Social media
- Data protection

Appendix 1: breaches of the code of conduct

For our Trust Board:

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

- The Chairman of the DOT Board will lead a discussion with the individual concerned.
- He/she will hold a meeting with the trustee/local governor to discuss the issue. The trustee can bring a friend to the meeting. Another trustee or the Clerk to the Trustees may attend.
- If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, we will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
 - o Further meetings with the trustee/ to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
 - o Support, mentoring or training for the trustee
 - o Making sure the trustee withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in

If there is no improvement in the trustee's behaviour, the Chair of the Trust Board will inform the Nominations Committee who will vote on a motion to ask the Members to remove them in accordance with sections 168 and 169 of the [Companies Act 2006](#) and the trust's articles of association. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances.

Trustees may be removed if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the board of trustees/local governors (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the board)
- Have brought, or is likely to bring the academy trust or the office of the trustee into disrepute
- Have acted to undermine the DOT Safeguarding Principles, the fundamental British values or the board's commitment or ability to deliver on its Prevent Duty
- Have been involved in 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
- Have displayed repeated and serious incompetence
- Have acted in a way that is significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the board, or their actions have interfered with the operational efficiency of the school

For our Local Governing Bodies:

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

- The Chair of the LGB will investigate and will hold a meeting with the local governor to discuss the issue. The local governor can bring a friend to the meeting. Another local governor or trustee or the Clerk to the Governors may attend.
- If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, we will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
 - o Further meetings with the trustee to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
 - o Support, mentoring or training for the local governor
 - o Making sure the local governor withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in

If there is no improvement in the local governor's behaviour, the Chair of the LGB will inform the Chair of the Trust Board who will ask Nominations Committee to vote on a motion to ask the Members to remove them in accordance with the trust's articles of

association. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances

Local governors may be suspended if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the board of trustees/local governors (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, or
- Acted to undermine fundamental British values or the board's commitment or ability to deliver on its Prevent Duty

Local governors may be removed where:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension
- Have acted to undermine the DOT Safeguarding Principles
- 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
- Their actions are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the board, or their actions interfere with the operational efficiency of the school

'Bringing the Trustee Board or Local Governing 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
- Persistently failing to undertake the training or development they need to contribute effectively to the board's operation