School Governor Code of Conduct

Approved by:	**Domoni Supple**	**Date: 07/07/2025**
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d1. Aims, scope and principles

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

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that school 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.

We are committed to ensuring our board is diverse, inclusive and accessible to all governors, regardless of their protected characteristics or personal circumstances.

The code is based on the academy trust governance guide 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, this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, school governors will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the trust and its pupils.

Accessibility of this code

This code of conduct is available in alternative formats upon request, including:

- Large print
- Audio format
- Easy-read version
- Translated versions
- Screen-reader compatible digital format

Please contact the clerk to governors if you require this code in an alternative format.

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2. The 7 Nolan principles of public life

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

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3. Equality, diversity and inclusion

3.1 Our commitment

We are committed to ensuring our board is diverse, inclusive and accessible to all. We recognise and value the diverse identities, backgrounds, perspectives and experiences that governors bring to our board.

We will:

- Actively promote diversity in governor recruitment to reflect our school community
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled governors to participate fully
- Provide all materials in accessible formats upon request
- Schedule meetings to avoid major religious festivals and offer flexible attendance options
- Support governors during pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave
- Respect and celebrate the diverse identities, backgrounds and perspectives of all governors
- Challenge discrimination, harassment or bias in any form
- Provide regular equality and diversity training for all governors
- Monitor our practices to ensure they don't disadvantage any group
- Ensure our breach procedures are applied fairly and without discrimination

- Use inclusive language in all our communications and documentation

We recognise that governors may hold multiple protected characteristics and may face compounded disadvantage. We commit to supporting all governors to participate fully in governance.

3.2 Reasonable adjustments for disabled governors

Under the Equality Act 2010, we will make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled governors to participate fully in governance. This may include:

- **Meeting accessibility**: Hybrid or remote attendance options, accessible venues, appropriate seating, regular breaks, adjustments to meeting length
- **Communication**: Documents in alternative formats (large print, audio, easy-read, screen-reader compatible), use of assistive technology, communication support (e.g., BSL interpreters)
- **School visits**: Accessible routes and facilities, alternative ways to engage with the school community if physical visits are not possible, flexible scheduling
- **Workload**: Adjusted expectations where appropriate, flexible deadlines, sharing of responsibilities
- **Training**: Multiple delivery formats, one-to-one support, additional time

Governors who require reasonable adjustments should discuss their needs with the chair of governors or clerk at the earliest opportunity. All discussions will be treated confidentially, and adjustments will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain appropriate.

Important: Disability or health conditions will never be confused with underperformance or breach of this code. Where a governor is subject to breach procedures, we will carefully consider whether reasonable adjustments have been made and whether any concerns are related to disability.

3.3 Pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption

We recognise that governors may become pregnant, take maternity leave, or become parents through adoption during their term of office.

Governors are entitled to take a leave of absence during:

- Pregnancy (if needed for health reasons or antenatal appointments)
- Maternity leave (typically up to one year)
- Paternity leave
- Adoption leave

- Shared parental leave

During this time:

- The governor's term of office will not be affected
- Absence will not be considered a breach of attendance requirements
- The governor will continue to receive all board communications unless they request otherwise
- Reasonable adjustments will be made for pregnant governors (e.g., appropriate seating, breaks, risk assessments for school visits)
- Meeting venues will provide private facilities for breastfeeding

Governors should inform the chair of governors of their pregnancy or planned parental leave as early as they feel comfortable doing so, to enable appropriate planning.

3.4 Religious observance and belief

We respect the diverse religious beliefs and practices of our governors. We will:

- Schedule board and committee meetings to avoid major religious festivals wherever possible
- Provide prayer or quiet reflection space at meeting venues
- Accommodate religious dress requirements
- Respect dietary requirements at any governor events
- Allow flexibility for governors to observe religious practices (e.g., prayer times)
- Ensure school visits can be scheduled around religious commitments

Governors should inform the chair of governors or clerk of any religious observances that may affect their availability, and we will work to accommodate these needs.

3.5 Flexible participation

We recognise that governors have diverse personal circumstances, including:

- Caring responsibilities (for children, elderly relatives, or disabled family members)
- Work commitments
- Health conditions
- Geographic location

To enable all governors to participate fully, we will:

- Offer flexible meeting times, including daytime and evening options
- Provide hybrid meeting options (in-person and remote attendance)
- Consider providing childcare support or expenses for meetings where possible
- Ensure meeting venues are accessible by public transport and have adequate parking
- Consider safety when scheduling evening meetings (e.g., well-lit venues, safe transport links)
- Allow governors to contribute in different ways (e.g., written contributions if verbal participation is difficult)
- Share meeting materials in advance to enable preparation

3.6 Supporting LGBTQ+ governors

We are committed to creating an inclusive environment where LGBTQ+ governors feel welcomed, valued and respected. We will:

- Use inclusive language in all communications (e.g., "partner" rather than assuming marital status or gender)
- Respect governors' gender identity and use their affirmed name and pronouns
- Protect confidentiality around gender identity information
- Allow governors to use their affirmed name in all documentation
- Ensure facilities are appropriate and inclusive
- Challenge homophobic, biphobic or transphobic language or behaviour
- Provide LGBTQ+ awareness training for all governors

Governors should not feel they need to hide their identity to maintain a "professional presence." Being open about one's sexual orientation or gender identity is not unprofessional.

3.7 Promoting racial equality

We are committed to anti-racism and promoting racial equality on our board. We will:

- Actively work to ensure our board composition reflects the diversity of our school community
- Provide unconscious bias and anti-racism training for all governors
- Celebrate diverse perspectives and cultural backgrounds

- Challenge racist language, microaggressions or behaviour
- Ensure our interpretation of "fundamental British values" includes respect for diversity and multiculturalism
- Monitor our practices to identify and address any racial disparities
- Ensure breach investigation procedures are culturally sensitive and fair

3.8 Age diversity

We value governors of all ages and recognise that both younger and older governors bring important perspectives to our board. We will:

- Provide technology training and support for governors less familiar with digital platforms
- Offer training in multiple formats (in-person, online, one-to-one support)
- Ensure social media guidance applies only to those who choose to use social media
- Challenge age-related stereotypes or assumptions
- Recognise that time commitments may affect governors differently at different life stages

3.9 Intersectionality

We recognise that governors may experience multiple forms of disadvantage or discrimination based on combinations of protected characteristics. We commit to understanding and addressing the compounded barriers that governors with multiple protected characteristics may face.

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4. School governors' responsibilities

In trusts, the purpose of governance is to provide:

- Strategic leadership
- Accountability and assurance
- Strategic engagement

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 the school, including in the conduct and the professionalism of the board itself
- Promote equity and diversity throughout our organisation, including the board's operation
- 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

We recognise that "fundamental British values" include respect for diversity, multiculturalism, and the celebration of different faiths, beliefs and identities.

- Operate and make decisions in the best interests of pupils, informed by the views and needs of our key stakeholders (pupils, parents/carers, staff, local communities and the local 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, which 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
- We will work to actively identify and manage risks to the school

Additional responsibilities:

- Undertake equality and diversity training to ensure we can fulfil our responsibilities fairly and without bias

- Challenge discrimination, bias or inequitable practices wherever we encounter them
- Communicate any needs for reasonable adjustments or flexible arrangements as early as possible
- Respect the confidentiality of other governors' personal information, including information about protected characteristics

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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 equity in everything we do

Additional commitments:

- Treat all governors, staff, pupils, parents and community members with dignity and respect, regardless of their protected characteristics
- Challenge discriminatory language, microaggressions or behaviour in a constructive manner
- Recognise and value diverse communication styles and cultural approaches
- Create an inclusive environment where all governors feel safe to contribute their perspectives
- Be mindful of unconscious bias in our interactions and decision-making
- Use inclusive language in all our communications

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6. Commitment to governance

We:

- Will attend all meetings where possible. 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 school governors are expected to take an active role
- Will prepare ahead of meetings to ensure we make informed contributions
- Will participate in regular pre-arranged school visits in accordance with our trust policies
- Will attend any training or development activity needed to ensure the board has a wide range of skills and expertise

Flexibility and reasonable adjustments:

We recognise that governors may need flexibility in how they fulfil these commitments due to:

- Disability or health conditions
- Caring responsibilities
- Religious observances
- Pregnancy or parental leave
- Work commitments
- Other personal circumstances

Where a governor requires flexibility or reasonable adjustments, we will:

- Offer hybrid or remote meeting attendance
- Provide meeting materials in accessible formats and in advance
- Schedule meetings flexibly where possible
- Allow alternative ways to contribute (e.g., written submissions)
- Adjust workload expectations where appropriate
- Provide alternative ways to engage with the school community if physical visits are not possible

Governors should discuss any needs with the chair of governors or clerk, and we will work together to find solutions that enable full participation whilst meeting governance requirements.

Important: Absence due to disability, pregnancy, parental leave, religious observance, or other protected characteristics will not be considered a breach of this code.

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7. Openness and transparency

7.1 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 school 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

7.2 Publishing information

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

For each **school 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 (where applicable)
- Their relevant business and pecuniary interests in relation to Physis

We accept that the information about members, trustees and local governors will be published on Get Information About Schools

We accept that the board may collect diversity data to publish on the school website, which could include information on any of the 9 protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010

- We understand that providing this information is voluntary and that, if we have already provided this information, we are able to request it be removed from any reporting

We accept that the information about trustees and local governors will be published by 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

7.3 Protecting governor identity

For governors who are transgender, we will:

- Use their affirmed name in all public documentation
- Protect confidentiality around their gender identity
- Ensure published information does not inadvertently reveal their trans status

Governors should inform the clerk if they have any concerns about published information revealing protected characteristics they wish to keep private.

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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/carers)
- Details of individual school 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 safeguarding 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.

Additional confidentiality commitments:

We will treat the following information with sensitivity and confidentiality:

- Information about governors' disabilities or health conditions

- Information about governors' gender identity or sexual orientation
- Information about governors' religious beliefs or practices
- Information about governors' pregnancy or family circumstances
- Any other personal information relating to protected characteristics

This information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and with the governor's explicit consent, except where disclosure is required by law or necessary for safeguarding.

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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 safeguarding concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

9.1 Personal data breaches

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

9.2 Diversity data

When we collect diversity data about governors:

- Participation is entirely voluntary
- Data will be stored securely and confidentially
- Data will be used only for monitoring board diversity and identifying barriers to participation
- Governors can request their data be removed at any time
- Aggregated data may be published, but individual governors will not be identifiable

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10. Social media

We will:

- Abide by any requirements set out in our school's Acceptable use policy

We will:

- Uphold the reputation of the school at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with our school's 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 school governors, to the Headteacher

We will not:

- Accept friend requests from pupils and or parents
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the school governing body or the school
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the school into disrepute

Additional guidance:

- Governors are not required to use social media as part of their role
- Being open about one's identity (including sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs, etc.) on social media is not unprofessional
- "Professional presence" means respectful and appropriate conduct, not hiding one's identity
- We will challenge any discriminatory, harassing or offensive content directed at governors on social media
- Governors who experience online harassment related to their protected characteristics should report this to the chair of governors and headteacher

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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 school governors.

Equality monitoring

As part of our commitment to equality and inclusion, we will:

- **Collect and analyse diversity data** about board composition and monitor against the diversity of our school community
- **Monitor governor experiences** through regular surveys and exit interviews, specifically asking about:
    - Whether governors felt supported regardless of protected characteristics
    - Whether reasonable adjustments were made where needed
    - Whether they experienced or witnessed discrimination
    - Barriers to participation they encountered
- **Review equality impact** explicitly as part of each annual policy review
- **Monitor breach procedures** by protected characteristics to identify any patterns of discriminatory application
- **Take action** to address any identified disparities or barriers
- **Report findings** to the full board annually

Continuous improvement

We will:

- Seek feedback from governors about how we can improve inclusivity
- Consult with local equality organisations or the local authority's equality team
- Keep up to date with best practice in inclusive governance
- Provide regular equality and diversity training for all governors
- Review our recruitment practices to ensure we attract diverse candidates

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12. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Safeguarding
- E-safety
- Data protection
- Equality and diversity policy (if separate)
- Recruitment and selection
- Complaints procedure

Appendix 1: Breaches of the code of conduct

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

- A trustee will investigate
- A trustee 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 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 trustee to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
    - Support, mentoring or training for the local governor
    - 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 board will vote on a motion to ask the members to suspend or 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.

Equality safeguards in breach procedures

When investigating potential breaches of this code, we will:

- **Consider protected characteristics**: Ensure that the investigation considers whether the governor's protected characteristics or need for reasonable adjustments influenced the situation
- **Check for bias**: Ensure the investigation is conducted fairly and without discrimination or unconscious bias
- **Distinguish disability from underperformance**: Ensure that disability, health conditions, or circumstances related to protected characteristics are not confused with breach of conduct
- **Review adjustments**: Check whether appropriate reasonable adjustments were in place before concluding that a breach occurred
- **Provide support**: Offer appropriate support (e.g., mentoring, training, adjustments) before moving to formal sanctions

- **Ensure fairness**: Apply breach procedures consistently and fairly, regardless of protected characteristics
- **Allow representation**: Ensure the governor can bring a representative or support person to any meetings
- **Document decisions**: Keep clear records of the investigation process and decision-making
- **Right to appeal**: Provide a clear appeals process if the governor believes they have been treated unfairly or discriminated against

Discrimination as a breach

Discrimination, harassment or victimisation of another governor, staff member, pupil or community member based on protected characteristics will be treated as a serious breach of this code and may result in immediate suspension or removal, depending on the severity.

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 are 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
- 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 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

Additional grounds for serious misconduct:

- Discrimination, harassment or victimisation based on protected characteristics
- Refusing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled governors
- Breaching confidentiality about another governor's protected characteristics
- Persistent use of discriminatory language or behaviour despite being challenged

Absence and breach procedures

The following absences will **not** be considered breaches of this code:

- Absence due to disability or health conditions (where reasonable adjustments have been requested)
- Absence due to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave
- Absence due to religious observance
- Absence due to caring responsibilities (where notice has been given)
- Absence due to circumstances related to other protected characteristics