

# LOCAL GOVERNOR CODE OF CONDUCT

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Adopted by the local governor board of all South York MAT academies:

Last Review Date: September 2024

Next Review Date: September 2025

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This code sets out the expectations of and commitment required from local governors in order for the local governing body to properly carry out its work within the school, the South York Multi-Academy Trust ('the Trust') and the community. It applies to all local governors in the Trust's schools.

## **2 STRATEGIC FUNCTIONS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNING BODY**

- 2.1 The Trust's Scheme of Delegation outlines the local governing body's strategic functions. Specific responsibilities may be altered or removed by the trustees in line with the Scheme of Delegation.

## **3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.1 Governors must always have the achievement and well-being of the children at heart.
- 3.2 Governors have no legal authority to act individually, except when the local governing body has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore will only speak on behalf of the local governing body when specifically authorised to do so.
- 3.3 Governors accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the local governing body or its delegated agents. Governors will not speak against majority decisions outside the local governing body meeting.
- 3.4 Governors recognise that the local governing body works as a collective body whose business must be clearly recorded, and therefore will always seek to conduct local governing body business or discussions in properly constituted meetings, except where matters have been specifically delegated.
- 3.5 Governors must act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as they have responsibility for staff, will fulfil the obligations of a good employer.
- 3.6 Governors will encourage open governance and will act appropriately.
- 3.7 Governors will consider carefully how decisions may affect the community and other schools.
- 3.8 Governors have a responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the school and the Trust. Their actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.

- 3.9 In making or responding to criticism or complaints, governors will follow the relevant procedures.
- 3.10 Governors will actively support and challenge the headteacher.
- 3.11 Governors will respect the difference in roles between the local governing body and staff, ensuring that both bodies work collectively for the benefit of the organisation.
- 3.12 Governors will respect the role of the headteacher and senior leaders, and their responsibility for the day to day management of the organisation, and will avoid any actions that tend to undermine such responsibility.
- 3.13 Governors will adhere to the school's rules and policies and the procedures of the local governing body and the Trust as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
- 3.14 When formally speaking or writing in governing role, governors will ensure their comments reflect current organisational policy even if this may be different from their personal views.
- 3.15 Local governors are representatives of the school and the Trust. When communicating in either official or private capacity (including on social media), governors will be mindful of and strive to uphold the aims, values, ethos and reputation of the Trust. Governors must disclose or seek direction on any issues which may potentially conflict with their responsibilities to the Trust and its schools. In all cases, Governors have a responsibility to assess the potential conflict. Actual or perceived conflicts of interest **must** be disclosed.

#### **4 COMMITMENT**

- 4.1 Accepting office as a local governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- 4.2 Governors will each involve themselves actively in the work of the local governing body, and accept a fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- 4.3 Governors will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where they cannot attend will explain in advance why they are unable to.
- 4.4 Governors will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve themselves in school activities.
- 4.5 Governors will visit the school, with all visits arranged in advance and undertaken within the framework established by the local governing body.
- 4.6 When visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer), governors will maintain our underlying responsibility as a local governor.
- 4.7 Governors will consider seriously their individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and will undertake relevant training.
- 4.8 Governors accept that in the interests of open governance, their full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the local governing body, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of local governor and the body responsible for appointing them will be published on the school's website.
- 4.9 Governors accept that information relating to them will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of governors.

## **5 RELATIONSHIPS**

- 5.1. Governors will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- 5.2. Governors will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all communications with other local governors and trustees, the clerk to the governing board and school staff both in and outside of meetings.
- 5.3. Governors will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at other times.
- 5.4. Governors will endeavour to answer queries from other local governors in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
- 5.5. Governors will seek to develop effective working relationships with the executive leaders, staff and parents, the trust, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 6.1. Governors will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school.
- 6.2. Governors will exercise prudence at all times when discussions regarding school/trust business arise outside a local governing board meeting.
- 6.3. Governors will not reveal the details of any local governing board vote.
- 6.4. Governors will ensure all confidential documents and information are held and disposed of appropriately, and will take reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality and integrity of any IT systems they use in connection with governors' business.
- 6.5. The requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after a local governor/trustee/academy committee member leaves office

## **7 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

- 7.1. Each governor will record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people they are connected with) that they have in connection with the local governing board's business in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting they will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.
- 7.2. Governors accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school/trust's website.
- 7.3. Governors will also declare any conflict of interest at the start of any meeting where relevant.
- 7.4. Governors will act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the local governing board.

## **8 BREACH OF THIS CODE OF CONDUCT**

- 8.1. If a governor believes this code has been breached, they should raise this issue with the chair who will investigate following the procedure set out in Appendix 2.

8.2 If the chair is believed to have breached this code, governors should refer the matter to the chair of trustees.

8.3 The process for addressing breaches of this code of conduct is set out in Appendix 2.

## **9 DATE AGREED**

Governors advised that they fully understand and agreed to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Date:

## **APPENDIX 1 – THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE**

**Selflessness** - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

**Integrity** - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

**Objectivity** - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

**Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

**Openness** - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

**Honesty** – Holders of public office should be truthful

**Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## **APPENDIX 2 – BREACHES OF THIS CODE OF CONDUCT**

- 1.1 If a local governor breaches the Code of Conduct during a meeting, the chair of governors should inform that local governor either immediately, or at the end of the meeting, as appropriate. The clerk is responsible for alerting the chair of governors to any breach of the Code of Conduct that may have occurred.
- 1.2 If any local governor believes that a local governor may have breached the Code of Conduct, they should alert the chair. The chair should investigate.
- 1.3 If the chair has reason to believe that a local governor has breached the Code of Conduct, they should in the first instance arrange to meet with that local governor to explain the breach and ensure that the local governor understands their duties and responsibilities. The chair may recommend further training. If the local governor does not make themselves available within 20 working days of the request for a meeting, or if they do not undertake the training within an agreed period of time, this will be deemed a further breach of the Code of Conduct and the matter will be escalated as per 1.4 below.
- 1.4 If a local governor persistently breaches the Code of Conduct, or repeats a breach after it has been discussed informally, or the chair of governors (in consultation with the Clerk/Governance Adviser) deems the breach to be particularly serious, the chair should write to that local governor formally warning them that they are in breach of the Code of Conduct. The letter should clearly state which sections(s) of the Code of Conduct the local governor has breached, and the consequences of any further breaches. The chair should offer to meet with the local governor to explain the contents of the letter further, and may recommend training or other personal development.
- 1.5 If a local governor breaches the Code of Conduct after receiving a written warning, or does not undertake any recommended training within an agreed period of time, the chair of governors should refer the issue to the chair of trustees. This should be in writing and clearly state which sections(s) of the Code of Conduct has been breached, what actions the chair has taken to address the breaches, and what the impact of the local governor's behaviour has been on the school, the local governing body or the Trust. The chair of governors should submit all relevant evidence.
- 1.6 The chair of trustees will convene a panel of at least three trustees within 15 days to consider the evidence, the severity of the breach(es) and the impact of the breach(es) on the school or the Trust. If the chair of trustees has had prior involvement with the complaint at any stage, he should not sit on the panel. The chair of governors and the local governor in question should both attend the panel to explain their actions. The panel may suspend the local governor for a period of up to six months; they may require that the local governor undertake a specified program of training or personal development; or they may recommend that the Trust Board removes the local governor (or any combination of these actions).
- 1.7 Any decision to remove a local governor can only be taken by the Trust Board at a properly convened meeting.

- 1.8 Where a local governor is concerned that the chair may have breached the Code of Conduct, they should report this in confidence to the chair of trustees. The chair of trustees should investigate the report. If the chair of trustees finds evidence that a breach has occurred, he should then follow this process as above, taking the role of the chair of governors in the process.
- 1.9 Exceptional misconduct is misconduct of such a serious and fundamental nature that it breaches the relationship between the local governor and the Trust. In the event that a local governor commits an act of exceptional misconduct, the matter should be referred immediately to the Trustees, who may summarily suspend or remove the local governor.
- 1.10 This process does not affect or limit the power of trustees to remove any local governor at any time under the Scheme of Delegation (Annex 1, 5.1c), if they reasonably believe that that local governor's conduct or presence is not in the best interests of the academy or the Trust.