

Model Code of Conduct for Governing Boards (Updated: September 2017)

1) Introduction

The following Code of Conduct applies to governors and trustees at all levels of school governance and promotes effective working practices that are mutually supportive, respectful of roles and responsibilities.

Birmingham City Council (BCC) commends this model code of conduct for adoption by maintained school and academy Governing Boards.

2) General

School governors make an invaluable contribution to the lives of our children. Being a governor involves significant amounts of time and energy. All those elected or appointed to Governing Boards should fulfil their duties in line with the law, the Governance Handbook and the seven principles of public life (see 3.1). In addition governors and trustees should comply with the DfE Competency Framework for Governance, which expects all those involved in governance to be:

- Committed;
- Confident;
- Curious;
- Challenging;
- Collaborative;
- Critical, and
- Creative.

Where a prospective governor has been or is already a governor of another school, the Chair should speak to the Chair of the other Governing Board to discuss both the skills of the individual and, where appropriate, their capacity to commit sufficient time to serve effectively on another Governing Board.

BCC expects Governing Boards and academy trusts to monitor and account for the circumstances within which it is genuinely appropriate for any individual to be a governor of more than one school, and give careful consideration as to whether it is in the interests of their school(s) to re-appoint governors and office holders for successive terms. The advice of the National Governance Association (NGA) is that all governors should be restricted to two terms of office (eight years) at the same school and that the Chair should hold office for no more than six years at the same school.

3) Standards of conduct, behaviour and practice

As individual governors of (Name of School Governing Board) will play our part in setting an ethos of professionalism and high expectations of the governor role. We will:

3.1) Abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are included as an appendix to this Code of Conduct.

3.2) Support the elimination of discrimination and advance equality of opportunity

We recognise that Birmingham is, outside of London, the UK's most diverse city, made up of a wide range of cultural, faith and other communities. The City benefits from positive community cohesion within this diversity. We share the equality objectives of BCC and are mindful of our responsibilities under equality legislation, including recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion.

3.3) Ensure that the school or academy follows all relevant policies and procedures to ensure that young people in need of protection are effectively safeguarded

3.4) Remain focused on our three core strategic functions of:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the Headteacher or Executive Leader (as appropriate) to account for the educational performance of the school, and
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

3.5) Attend meetings and take a full part in the Governing Board

Accepting the office of governor at (Name of School Governing Board) involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy. We will make full efforts to attend all meetings, get to know the school or academy well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.

3.6) Demonstrate a professional attitude

By attending regularly, being punctual, reading all relevant paperwork before meetings, arriving prepared to make an informed and positive contribution and by observing meeting protocols.

3.7) Work as members of a team and promote effective working relationships

We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher (and or Executive Leader as appropriate), staff, parents, BCC other relevant agencies and the community. We will always be mindful of our responsibilities to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the School/Academy. Our actions within the School/Academy and the local community will reflect this. In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the School/Academy, we will follow the procedures established by the Governing Board or Trustees.

3.8) Express views courteously and be respectful in all communication

3.9) Respect lines of demarcation and the role of the Headteacher and or Executive Leader (as appropriate) to manage the school/academy

As governors we accept that our role is strategic and focused on the three core functions referred to in 3.4 of this code. We will not involve ourselves in the day-to-day management of the school/academy or attempt to micromanage senior leaders. Any visits that we undertake at the school/academy will be arranged in advance with relevant staff, be agreed by the Headteacher (and or Executive Leader as appropriate) and be within the framework established by the Governing Board.

3.10) Acknowledge majority decisions, except those that conflict with the Nolan principles of public office, the core functions of the Governing Board or may fail to ensure the safety of pupils

We will confront malpractice by speaking up against and bringing to the attention of the relevant authorities' any decisions and actions that conflict with the Nolan principles of public office or which may place pupils at risk.

3.11) Respect the duty of confidentiality to the School, Academy, any member of staff or pupil at the school

When asked to do so by the Governing Board especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents.

3.12) Undertake induction training as a minimum and any other training that is required to be effective in the role

We will request, and attend induction training as soon as is reasonably practicable following appointment as new governors. We will continually evaluate our performance as individual governors and undertake any training that is required to be effective in our role.

3.13) Declare conflicts of interest

We recognise that a conflict of interest can arise when an individual's personal or family interests conflict with those of the school. We will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the Governing Board, the School or Academy in general for recording in the register of business interests including the following:

- links with individuals, businesses, contractors etc;
- directorships, shareholdings or other appointments where the school may purchase goods or services from or who are directly employed by the school, and
- interests of related persons such as parent, spouse, co-habitee, child or business partners where influence could be exerted by that person over a governor or a member of staff.

We will withdraw for an appropriate length of time from any meeting or discussion of the Governing Board when our governor colleagues agree that there is a conflict of interest.

3.14) Be transparent

As the Governing Board our first line of accountability is to parents, the wider school or academy and local community. We will demonstrate transparency by publishing on the school website up to date details of the structure of the Governing Board and any committees, together with the names of the School's/Academy's governors and their particular roles and responsibilities within that structure. We will also publish on the school/academy website the register containing the relevant business interests of governors and details of any other educational establishments they govern.

We will comply with the requirement to provide details about people involved in governance at our School or Academy, via Edubase and keep the information up to date.

We are committed to publishing an annual statement setting out the key issues that have been faced and addressed by the Governing Board over the last year, including an assessment of the impact of the Governing Board on the school/academy.

4) Breach of this Code of Conduct

If following investigation it is deemed that this Code of Conduct has been breached by a member of our Governing Board and the matter cannot be resolved in a constructive way, then the Governing Board will consider their suspension or, in some circumstances, removal from the Governing Board.

Adopted by (Name of School Governing Board) on (date)

Signed (Chair of Governors)

For clarification or any queries please contact: governors@birmingham.gov.uk

Appendix: The Seven Principles of Public Life

Originally published by the Nolan Committee: 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 organisations 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.