



*Approval Date: 6th December 2017
Approved by: Resources Committee
Review Period: Three Years
Delegated Committee*

GOVERNANCE CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY 2017 - 2020

Introduction

This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from the Board of Directors and Local Governing Body to properly carry out its work within the Academy Trust and the community.

The Board of Directors has the following core strategic functions:

- Establishing the strategic direction, by:
 - Setting the vision, values, and objectives for the Academy Trust
 - Agreeing the Academy Improvement strategy with priorities and targets
 - Meeting statutory duties
- Ensuring accountability, by:
 - Appointing the Headteacher
 - Monitoring progress towards targets
 - Performance managing the Headteacher
 - Engaging with stakeholders
 - Contributing to school self-evaluation
- Ensuring financial probity, by:
 - Approving the budget
 - Monitoring spending against the budget
 - Ensuring value for money is obtained
 - Ensuring risks to the organisation are managed
 - Ensure independent audit is undertaken

The Local Governing Body and its sub committees will carry out core functions in line with the Terms of Reference which are approved on an annual cycle by the Board of Directors.

As individual Directors and Governors, we agree to the following:

- Role & Responsibilities
 - We understand the purpose of the Board of Directors and the role of the Headteacher.

- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the Board of Directors has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the Board of Directors when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
 - We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Board of Directors or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the board meeting.
 - We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
 - We will encourage open government and will act appropriately.
 - We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools and academies.
 - We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our Academy. Our actions within the Academy and the local community will reflect this.
 - In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the Academy we will follow the procedures established by the Local Governing Body.
 - We will actively support and challenge the Headteacher.
- Commitment
 - We acknowledge that accepting office as a Director and/or Governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
 - We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the Board of Directors and/or Local Governing Body, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
 - We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
 - We will get to know the Academy well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in activities.
 - We will visit the Academy, with all visits arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established by the Local Governing Body and agreed with the Headteacher.
 - We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training
 - Relationships
 - We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
 - We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other Directors, Governors, school staff and the school community.
 - We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
 - We are prepared to answer queries from other Directors and Governors in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and we will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.

- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher, staff and parents, the Local Authority and other relevant agencies and the community.
- Conduct outside of school
 - Governors must not engage in conduct outside work which could seriously damage the reputation and standing of the school or the employee's own reputation or the reputation of other members of the school community.
 - In particular, criminal offences that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct are likely to be regarded as unacceptable.
- Confidentiality
 - We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school
 - We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding Academy business arise outside governance meetings.
 - We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
- Conflicts of Interest
 - We will record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people we are connected with) that we have in connection with the governance business in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting we will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.
 - We will declare any receipt of gifts and hospitality at the start of any meeting.
 - We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
 - We 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 Board of Directors.
- Breach of this Code of Conduct
 - If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; the Board of Directors will only use suspension/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.
 - Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, another governor, such as the vice chair will investigate.
- Online Participation

Online participation presents an opportunity for school governors to communicate and collaborate more effectively. However, it is one that comes with risks and governors must be aware of the implications of participating online in their official capacity.

Participating online offers a number of opportunities for school governors. For example:

- **Communicating between governors:** using trusted online spaces, governors can have discussion online and share information with one another between face to face meetings, increasing efficiency. Governors can also communicate with other governors locally and nationally.
- **Listening to what people are saying:** like it or not, people will be talking about your school online, and they may be being critical. Unless you are active digitally yourself, you won't know what people are saying, nor will you be able to respond
- **Promoting the work of the governors:** by using digital channels to talk about the work governors are doing, more people will get to hear about and understand it
- **Encouraging new people to become governors:** the visibility provided by participating online means that more people will be aware of the role and inspire them to get involved themselves

By not being active online, governors cannot make the most of these opportunities.

As well as an incredible opportunity, digital participation is not without risk. Some of the risks include:

- **A governor publishes something regrettable:** the ease of publishing online means it is easy to write something that brings the school into disrepute. The governor might be writing in his/her capacity as a governor or as an individual. Even as an individual, his/her actions could be criticised as bringing a school into disrepute, especially if other users know of his/her governor status. Sometimes people write comments which they would never dare say to another person's face. Also problems have often arisen from trails of emails being copied/forwarded inappropriately, containing sensitive information, or written in an unprofessional manner
- **Confidential information is released to the public:** again, the fact that it is so easy to put information on the web means data security policy can be easily breached
- **An online discussion between some but not all members of a governing body undermines collective knowledge and responsibility:** there is a danger of a two-tier governing body resulting from online discussions that exclude those governors not online or engaged

None of these risks are a reason for governors not to be active online. However, they are risks that need to be managed, and this guidance forms a key part of that mitigation.

- Disclose your position as a representative of your school unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as a potential threat to personal security. Of course, individual governors may not intentionally communicate as an "accredited" representative but must always be aware that what they say and write as an individual could reflect negatively on them as a governor, their fellow governors or their school. Never give out personal details like home address and phone numbers.

- Always remember that participation online results in your comments being permanently available and open to being republished in other media. Stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply. This means that you should not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the school unless you are authorised to do so. This authority may already be delegated or may be explicitly granted depending on your organisation.
- Also be aware that this may attract media interest in you as an individual, so proceed with care whether you are participating in an official or a personal capacity. If you have any doubts, take advice from the Chair of Board of Directors, Chair of Local Governing Body or the Headteacher.

Be credible - be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.

Be consistent - encourage constructive criticism and deliberation. Be cordial, honest and professional at all times.

Be responsive - when you gain insight, share it where appropriate.

Be integrated - wherever possible, align online participation with other offline communications.

Be a governor - remember that you are an ambassador for your organisation. Wherever possible, disclose your position as a representative of your school.

The guiding principles for online participation really are no different to communicating in any other medium. The seven principles of public life are a very good starting point:

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.

Safeguarding

All governors will comply with the safeguarding procedures at Ralph Sadleir School and they will familiarise themselves with all relevant policies and guidance as directed by the Local Governing Body and Board of Directors.

Acknowledgement

All directors/governors will sign to acknowledge they have read and understand the Governance Code of Conduct Policy and agree to work in line with the policy at all times during the term as a Director and/or Governor of the Trust/School. The acknowledgement will be held on file in the office of the Business Manager.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually and/or in light of any changes in legalisation or advice received from Hertfordshire / Essex Governance Services or the Department of Education (DFE) by the Resources Committee (a subcommittee of the Local Governing Body). The Board of Directors have delegated the ratification of the policy to the Resources Committee.

Governance	Chair / Vice Chair Person / Headteacher	Signature	Date
Resources Committee	Mrs J Tye		6 th December 2017

Reviewable every three year December 2020.

APPENDIX 1

GOVERNANCE CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY 2017 - 2020

Acknowledgement

As a Director and/or Governor of Ralph Sadleir Multi Academy Trust and Ralph Sadlier School, I can confirm that I have read and understood the Governance Code of Conduct Policy 2017 – 2020.

I agree to work in line with the policy at all times during my term as a Director and/or Governor of the Trust/School. This acknowledgement will be held on file in the office of the Business Manager.

Signed: _____

Director and/or Governor Name: _____

Dated: _____