

# Model Code of Conduct for Governing Boards September 2021

## 1) Introduction

The term *governor* in this document refers to all those who govern in maintained schools and academies.

The following Code of Conduct applies to governors at all levels of school/academy governance and promotes effective working practices that are mutually supportive and respectful of roles & 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 Appendix). In addition, governors 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 Walmley Junior School we 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 one of the UK's super-diverse cities, 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/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/executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

#### **3.5) Conduct the Governing Board's business with adherence to governance legislation**

#### **3.6) Attend meetings and fully participate in the work of the Governing Board**

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

#### **3.7) Demonstrate a professional attitude**

By attending meetings regularly, being punctual and reading all relevant paperwork. Arriving at meetings and visits prepared to make an informed and positive contribution. We will observe visit/meeting protocols, including those agreed by the Governing Board where meetings are held virtually.

#### **3.8) 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/carers, 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.

We will ensure that we will only speak or act on behalf of the whole Governing Board if we have been given authority to do so.

### **3.9) Express views courteously and be respectful in all communication**

This includes being mindful of upholding the school/academy's reputation when communicating in a private capacity and avoiding, as far as possible, becoming involved in any communication which may lead to a conflict of interest with the role as a governor.

We will ensure we use social media responsibly and will not submit postings on networking sites which clearly bring the school/academy or Governing Board into disrepute.

### **3.10) 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 micro-manage 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.

### **3.11) Acknowledge majority decisions, except those that conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life, 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 Seven Principles of Public Life or which may place pupils at risk.

### **3.12) Respect the duty of confidentiality to the school/academy**

We will ensure complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils and families.

We will ensure that the Governing Board complies with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Should we leave the Governing Board we will continue to uphold the Board's confidentiality and ensure that paperwork relating to the school/academy or Governing Board is returned or disposed of appropriately.

### **3.13) 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 a Governing Board and as individual governors and undertake any training that is required to be effective in our role.

### **3.14) 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, and/or the school/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.

### **3.15) Be transparent**

As the Governing Board, our first line of accountability is to parents/carers, the wider school/academy and local community. The Governing Board will comply with the [Constitution of GBs of maintained schools](#) statutory guidance or the [Academy Trust Handbook \(previously known as the Academies Financial Handbook\)](#), and in doing so will demonstrate transparency by publishing on the school/academy website, up-to-date details of the overall governance arrangements in place and the declared business interests register.

We will comply with the requirement to provide details about people involved in governance at our school/academy, via the Department for Education's website "*Get information about schools*" 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** Walmley Junior School on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**Signed** ..... **Andy Land** (Chair of Governors)

**For clarification or any queries please contact:** [governors@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto: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.