



Governing Board of the Vineyard School

Code of Conduct

reviewed September 2019

Introduction

This code is based on guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), National Governance Association (NGA), Achieving for Children (AfC) and applicable legislation.

This document sets out the expectations and commitments required from governors in order for the governing board to properly carry out its work within the school and local community. It should be reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose and that all governors are familiar with its content.

Newly appointed governors will be expected to sign the code within 14 days of their appointment. All governors should sign whenever there has been a material update. The clerk will maintain a register of signatures for all governors.

Core Strategic Functions of the Governing Board

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- setting and ensuring clarity of the vision, values, and objectives for the school
- agreeing the school improvement strategy, including setting of priorities and targets
- meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- appointing the head teacher
- monitoring the educational performance of the school against its targets
- performance managing the head teacher
- engaging with stakeholders
- contributing to the school's self-evaluation

Overseeing financial performance, by:

- setting the budget
- monitoring spending against the budget
- ensuring money is well spent and value for money is obtained
- ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

Requirements for Individual Governors

Role and responsibilities

- Understand the purpose of the board and the role of the head teacher
- Respect the role of the head teacher in managing the day-to-day running of the school and avoid any actions that might undermine that authority.
- Recognise and respect the difference in roles between the board and staff and work collectively for the benefit of the organisation.
- Actively support and constructively challenge the head teacher and senior leadership
- Encourage open governance and act appropriately.
- Consider carefully how decisions may affect the community and other schools.
- Uphold the ethos and reputation of the school and reflect this in actions and behaviour within the school and the local community.
- Agree to adhere to the school's rules and policies and the procedures of the governing board as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
- Accept that a governor has no legal authority to act individually, except when the board has delegated the authority to do so. A governor shall only speak on behalf of the governing board when specifically authorised to do so.
- Accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or its delegated agents. A governor shall not speak against majority decisions outside the governing board meeting.
- When formally speaking or writing in the capacity as a governor, ensure comments reflect current organisational policy even if they might be different to personal views.
- When communicating in a private capacity (including on social media), be mindful of and strive to uphold the reputation of the organisation.
- Follow the procedures established by the governing board in making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school

Commitments

- Acknowledge that accepting the role of a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- Actively participate in the work of the governing board, accepting a fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- Commit to attend all meetings and inform the clerk and chair in advance when unable to attend.
- Work collectively to embed a culture of effective succession planning. Identify successors, nurturing and mentoring talent to ensure a smooth transition of leadership roles i.e. Chair, vice Chair, chairs of committees and link governor positions.
- Participate in an annual audit to identify strengths or areas for improvement in the functioning of the board
- Get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to get involved in school activities.
- Visit the school at least annually, arranging all visits in advance with applicable staff, and undertake any such visit within the framework established by the governing board and agreed with the head teacher.

- Routinely review personal training and development opportunities. Within the first three to six months of initial appointment, attend the 'Getting to Grips with Governance' (or equivalent) induction training
- **Read and become familiar with at least Part 1 of the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance (updated Sept 2019) The safeguarding link governor (and deputy) must be familiar with the *whole* guidance document and commit to Level 1 safeguarding training (a pre-course e-learning safeguarding awareness programme, followed by the face-to-face AfC "Role of the Safeguarding Governor" training session). Ideally, all governors should strive to achieve the same level of knowledge and training.**
- Acknowledge that failure to meet training expectations could lead to possible suspension from the board.
- Refresh relevant training at least every three years to keep abreast of current changes in governance legislation.
- Accept that information including full name, date of appointment, term of office, roles on the board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor and the Board responsible for appointing us, and date of resignation will be published on the school's website.
- Accept that an individual governor's information will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of governors – Get Information about Schools (formally Edubase).
- Accept that in accordance with government legislation, a governor shall be subject to enhanced criminal records check within 21 days of appointment to the board.
- Agree to note the application form number and register immediately with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Update Service (free to volunteers) at www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service .
- Acknowledge that by registering for the Update Service an annual DBS check will be electronically renewed, free of charge.
- Become familiar with and adhere to the Nolan Principles (see Appendix I).

Relationships

- Governors function as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- Express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all communications with other governors, the clerk to the governing board and school staff, both inside and outside of meetings.
- Support the chair's role of ensuring appropriate conduct in meetings and governance business.
- Be prepared to answer other governors' questions in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed. Acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
- Develop effective working relationships with the head teacher, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant stakeholders within the community.
- Acknowledge that a governor is a representative of a category of governorship, as opposed to being a representative for parents or staff; and a governor is appointed primarily due to the skills that the individual brings to the board.

Proceedings of the governing Board

- As a corporate Board, we will agree alternative arrangements for governors to participate or vote at meetings including, but not limited to, telephone or video conference.

Confidentiality

- Observe complete confidentiality, both inside or outside school, when matters are deemed confidential or if they concern specific members of staff or pupils.
- Exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a governing board meeting.
- Do not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
- Ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately (where applicable).

Conflicts of interest

- Record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people with whom a governor has a connection) that we have in connection with the governing board's business in the Register of Business Interests; and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting, a governor shall offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.
- Accept that the Register of Business and governor's details (including associate members) will be published on the school's website. Any governor failing to provide information to enable the governing Board to fulfil their responsibilities may be in breach of the code of conduct and as a result be bringing the governing Board into disrepute.
- Declare any potential conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting.
- Act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the governing Board, e.g. an elected parent governor.

Ceasing to be a governor

- Accept that confidentiality will continue to apply after a governor leaves office.

Breach of this code of conduct

- If a governor is believed to have breached this code, the issue will be raised with the Chair and the Chair may undertake an investigation into the allegation.
- If the Chair is believed to have breached this code, the vice-Chair may undertake an investigation into the allegation.
- Suspension or removal of a governor will be considered if steps to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways are considered to have been exhausted.
- Any governor can allege that another governor has breached this code of conduct. This must be done by calling upon the clerk to include the allegation as an item of business on the agenda of a subsequent full Governing Board meeting, (requiring at least one week's notice).

- Before a vote is taken on a resolution to suspend or remove a governor, the governor proposing the resolution must at the meeting state the reasons for doing so and the governor who is the subject of the resolution must be given the opportunity to make a statement in response before withdrawing from the meeting.
- A governor can only be removed if the decision is ratified by a majority vote of the Governing Board and again at second meeting of the Governing Board held no more than 14 days later
- Staff governors cannot be removed by a vote of the Governing Board
- A governor under suspension will continue to receive notices of, agendas and reports or other papers, for meetings of the Governing Board.
- Governor suspensions can apply to one or more meetings of the governing Board, or other school committees, for a fixed term of up to 6 months.
- Individual governors must satisfy themselves that the provisions of appropriate regulation have been fulfilled before approving a governor suspension or removal, (see Appendix II). In particular that one or more of the following conditions apply:
 - the governor, if paid to work at the school, is the subject of disciplinary proceedings in relation to his or her employment.
 - the governor is the subject of proceedings in any court or tribunal, the outcome of which may be that the governor is disqualified from continuing to hold office as governor
 - the governor has acted in a way that is inconsistent with the ethos of the school and has brought or is likely to bring the school or the Governing Board or the office of governor into disrepute
 - the governor is in breach of the duty of confidentiality to the school or to any member of staff or pupil at the school.

Appendix I

The Seven Principles of Public Life

These principles were originally published by the “Nolan Committee” and have become widely accepted as describing best practice. 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.

Appendix II

Regulatory provisions relating to the suspension and/or disqualification of school governors:

The School Governance, (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1624/contents/made>

Statutory Guidance on the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012:

<http://dfe.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213385/school-governance-constitution-regulations-2012>