

GOVERNING BODY CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction

This code sets out the expectations of and commitment required from school governors and trustees in order for the Governing Body to properly carry out its work within the school and the community. It can be amended to include specific reference to the ethos of the particular school. 'School' includes academies, and it applies to all level of school governance.

The Governing Body has the following core strategic functions:

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting the vision, values, and objectives for the school
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the headteacher
- Monitoring progress towards targets
- Managing the performance of the headteacher
- Engaging with stakeholders
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

Ensuring financial probity, by:

- Setting the budget
- Monitoring spending against the budget
- Ensuring value for money is obtained
- Ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

The following is not a definitive statement of responsibilities but is concerned with the common understanding of broad principles by which the Governing Body and individual governors will operate. We would also refer governors to the Seven Principles of Public Life, which are:-

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.

The Governing Body, its Associate Members and Observers accept the following principles and procedures:-

Roles and Responsibilities

1. We understand the purpose of the Governing Body and the role of the Headteacher. We recognise that the Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of policy, day-to-day management of the school and the implementation and operation of the curriculum.
2. We have responsibility for determining, monitoring and keeping under review the broad policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates.
3. We accept that we have no legal authority to act as individuals, except when the governing body has given delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak or act on behalf of the governing body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
4. We will encourage the open expression of views at meetings, but accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents. This means we will not speak out against decisions, in public or private, outside the governing body.
5. We accept that all governors have equal status, and although appointed by different groups (i.e. parents, staff, the LA, community, North Tyneside Learning Trust, Diocese) our overriding concern will be the welfare of the school as a whole.
6. 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.
7. We will encourage open government and will act appropriately.
8. We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools.
9. We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
10. In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the governing body. We will not bring the school into disrepute or compromise our own integrity as ambassadors for the school in communications, either personal or professional: this includes comments made on social networking sites.

Conflict of Interest

11. 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 Governing Body's 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.
12. We accept that this information should be recorded on to the school's website which would set out the relevant business interests of governors including details of any other educational establishments they govern; any relationships between governors and members of the school staff including spouses, partners and close relatives; and information on Associate members, making clear whether they have voting rights on any of the committees they serve on. Any governor failing to reveal information to enable the governing body to fulfil their responsibilities may be in breach of this code of conduct and as a result be bringing the governing body into disrepute. In such cases the governing body should consider suspending the governor.
13. We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
14. 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 Governing Body.
15. We will actively support and challenge the Headteacher.

Commitment

16. We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
17. We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing body, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
18. We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to do so.
19. We will get to know our school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
20. We will visit the school, with all visits to school arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established by the governing body and agreed with the Headteacher.
21. We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development and will undertake relevant training.
22. We accept that in the interests of open government, our names, terms of office, roles on the governing body, category of governor and the body responsible for appointing us would be published on the school's website.

Relationships

23. We will work together with the school, the Local Authority, the Diocese and other bodies to establish a safeguarding culture in our school.
24. We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
25. We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other governors.
26. We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
27. We are prepared to answer queries from other 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.
28. We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the headteacher, staff, parents, the Local Authority, other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

29. We will observe confidentiality regarding proceedings of the governing body in meetings and from our visits to school as governors.
30. We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside and outside of school.
31. We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a governing body meeting.
32. We will not reveal the details of any governing body vote.

Breach of this code of conduct

33. If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; the governing body will only use suspension/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.
34. Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, another governor, such as the vice chair will investigate.

Suspension and Removal

35. If the need arises to use the sanction of suspending a governor, we will do so by following the Procedures Regulations so as to ensure a fair and objective process. Grounds for suspension include acting in a way inconsistent with ethos of the school, breach of the duty of confidentiality to the School or any member of staff or pupil at the school.
36. We recognise that removing a governor from office is a last resort, and that it is the appointing bodies who have the power to remove those they appoint.
37. If the need arises to use the sanction of removing a governor, we will do so by following the Constitution Regulations so as to ensure a fair and objective process.

Adopted by the governing body of George Stephenson High School on 10 May 2016.