



Code of Conduct for Members of Aquinas Advisory Council (AAC)

Aquinas Church of England Education Trust (the Trust)

Striving towards life in all its fullness, Aquinas comprises a distinctive and diverse community of academies with a shared purpose and ethos. We are committed to mutual support and respect in pursuit of educational excellence for children and young people, educating the whole person regardless of their starting point.

Whilst we are one Trust with one mission, each academy maintains its own unique characteristics and individual identity within the community it serves.

Our mission is to ensure that the life chances and educational achievements of all children and young people in our academies are positively transformed because they are part of our Trust.

This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from Trustees and members of the AACs in order for the Trust and the community of academies to properly carry out its work.

The Board of Trustees

The Trustees are accountable for the operation of the Trust, both financially and educationally, to the Secretary of State for Education and its stakeholders. It is responsible for setting the strategic objectives, ensuring standards of education and achievement and for the use of public funds. The Trustees has delegated to the AACs specific responsibilities together with the task of advising and supporting the Headteacher at the respective academies as detailed in the respective AAC protocol and delegation document. The operation of each academy is directly delegated to the Headteacher of the academy by the Trustees.

The Trustees retain the responsibility for:

- Setting the strategic objectives
- Agreeing the Budget for Aquinas
- Educational Outcomes
- Complying with legislative financial requirements
- Agreeing central policies
- Providing central services
- Monitoring educational and financial data

The AAC

The AAC's primary function is to advise and support the Headteacher of the academy. It is delegated with specific responsibility in relation to admissions, appointment of staff, complaints, performance management of the Headteacher, permanent exclusions, SIAMS (for our Church of England designated academies) and staff grievance and disciplinary. The AAC shall also promote relationships with the school community, stakeholders and the wider school community

For members of the AAC to carry out their role effectively, they must be:

- Prepared and equipped to take their responsibilities seriously;
- In the case of the Trustees, acknowledged as the accountable body by the lead professionals and in the case of the AAC acknowledged as being able to provide effective advice to the lead professionals;
- Supported by the appropriate authorities in that task; and
- Willing and able to monitor and review their own performance.

Role of a Member of the AAC

The AAC is an advisory body set up by the Trustees to primarily provide support and expert advice to the lead professionals within the academy with certain specific delegated powers:

- No member can act on her/his own without proper authority from the AAC in relation to the delegated functions;
- All members carry equal responsibility for decisions made in relation to the delegated functions;
- Although appointed through different routes the overriding concern of all members is the welfare of the academy;
- No member must use their position as a member of the AAC to further their personal interest or exert undue influence on the leadership and management of the academy to affect their personal interests; and
- No member must use their position as a member of the AAC to gain preferential treatment as result of the operations of the academy.

General

- We understand the purpose of the Board of Trustees and AAC as set out above.
- We are aware of and accept the Nolan seven principles of public life: see appendix A.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when either the Board of Trustees or AAC has given us delegated authority to do so.
- 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 in relation to the delegated power.
- We will encourage open government and will act appropriately.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the AAC in relation to the delegated authority.
- We will consider carefully how our advice may affect the community and other schools.
- We will always be mindful to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the Trust or our respective academy.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the academy we will follow the procedures established by the Trust and the academy.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting such office involves the commitment of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the academy and where necessary the Trust and accept our fair share of the workload.
- We will not go beyond our duties or act outside of the powers of authority delegated to us and acknowledge that were we to do so we could be held liable to Aquinas, the academy and/or third parties.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance in full why we are unable to.
- We will get to know the Trust and the relevant academy well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in appropriate activities of Aquinas and/or the relevant academy.
- Our visits to an academy will be arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established and agreed with the Headteacher.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training
- We are committed to actively advising, supporting and challenging the Headteacher.

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
- We will support the chair in the role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other directors/ members 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 recognise that the roles of the Trustee, members of the AAC, staff and volunteers are different. Where I am also a staff member and/or volunteer I will maintain the separation of my roles.
- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or students, both inside or outside an academy.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding the business of the Trust or an academy arise outside a meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any vote in relation to a delegated function.
- We acknowledge that we are personally responsible for the day to day security of any personal data shared with us by the Trust or one of the academies within the Trust.
- We will take all reasonable steps to ensure to physical and digital security of personal data provided to us and shall comply with the Trust Data Protection Policy and the Trust's ICT policy, where the latter is appropriate.

Conflicts of interest

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest that we have in connection with the business of the Trust and/or academy in the Register of Business Interests.
- We will declare any pecuniary interest - or a personal interest which could be perceived as a conflict of interest - in a matter under discussion at a meeting and offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.

- We will act in the best interests of the Trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group.

Breach of this code of practice

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; any difficulties or disputes should be resolved constructively;
- Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, another member will investigate;
- We understand that any allegation of a material breach of this code of practice by any member shall be raised at a meeting of the AAC, and, if agreed to be substantiated by a majority, shall be minuted and can lead to consideration of suspension or in some circumstances removal.

Undertaking:

As a member of the AAC, I will always have the well-being of the children and the reputation of the Trust and the academy at heart; I will do all I can to be an ambassador for the Trust and/or academy, publicly supporting its vision, values and ethos; I will never say or do anything publicly that would embarrass the Trust and/or academy.

Adopted by Rye College AAC, 5th October 2022

Appendix A

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.