



Code of Conduct for Governors

Applicable to:	✓	Astley Community High School
	✓	Seaton Sluice Middle School
	✓	Whytrig Middle School
Approval body:	Full Governing Body	

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Approval by	Governing Body to determine

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Business Manager (BW)	1 September 2020	5.0	Final approved version for publication

1 Scope

- 1.1 This code sets out the expectations of and commitment required from governors in order for the governing body to properly carry out its work within the three schools within the Seaton Valley Federation and the community.

2 Core strategic functions

- 2.1 The governing body has the following core strategic functions:

- Establishing the strategic direction, by:
 - setting the vision, values, and objectives for the federation
 - monitoring how the federation is working towards its vision
 - agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
 - meeting statutory duties
- Ensuring accountability, by:
 - appointing the Executive Headteacher
 - monitoring progress towards targets
 - performance managing the Executive Headteacher
 - engaging with stakeholders
 - contributing to school self-evaluation
 - following all relevant policies and procedures to ensure that young people in need of protection are effectively safeguarded
- Ensuring financial probity, by:
 - setting the budget
 - monitoring spending against the budget
 - monitoring use of resources
 - ensuring value for money is obtained
 - benchmarking
 - ensuring risks to the federation are managed

3 Individual functions

- 3.1 As individuals on the governing body we agree to the following:

Roles and Responsibilities

- We understand the purpose of the governing body and the role of the Executive Headteacher.
- We accept that we do not represent an individual school within the federation and we are required to consider the interests of all schools when making decisions.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing body has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing body 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.

- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our schools and to keep our pupils safe. Our actions within the federation and the local community will reflect this.
- We will ensure that safeguarding allegations against members of staff, volunteers or governors are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the governing body.
- We will actively support and challenge the Executive Headteacher.
- We will accept and respect the difference in roles between the governing body and staff, ensuring that we work collectively for the benefit of the federation.
- We will respect the role of the executive leaders and their responsibility for the day to day management of the federation and avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements.
- We agree to adhere to the federation's rules and the policies and procedures of the governing body as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
- When formally speaking or writing in our governing role we will ensure our comments reflect current federation policy, even if they are different to our personal views.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- 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.
- 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 federation well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will visit the schools, with all visits to school arranged in advance with the appropriate staff and undertaken within the framework established by the governing body and agreed with the Executive Headteacher.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training.
- We accept that in the interests of open government, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing body, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor, and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the federation's website.
- As required by statutory regulation, we will each provide an enhanced criminal records certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the details of which will be held in the schools' single central record of recruitment and vetting checks.
- In line with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' we agree to a 'section 128 check' in the same way as academy trustees are required to prove they are not prohibited or restricted from taking part in the management of an independent school, academy or free school.
- In the interests of transparency we accept that information relating to governor committee members will be collected and logged on the Department for Education's national database of governors (GIAS).

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 governors, the Clerk to the Governing Body and school staff in and outside of meetings.
- 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 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 Executive Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team, staff, parents/carers, the local authority and other relevant agencies, and the community.
- We will work with the Clerk to the Governing Body in relation to requests for information and availability and ensure that these are dealt with in a timely manner.

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 school business arise outside a governing body meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any governing body vote.
- We will use either the individual email account created by the IT & Technical Support Manager (or, where already available, a @northumberland.gov.uk account) for all governor business to ensure this remains confidential.
- Ceasing to be a governor, we understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after leaving/termination of office.
- This confidentiality extends to any use of social media we undertake.

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 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. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the federation's website.
- 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 federation as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the governing body.

Implementation 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 governing body will only use suspension or 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.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

- We agree to work in accordance with the above principles which were originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life 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.

Undertaking

- As a member of the governing body I will always have the achievement and well-being of the pupils and the reputation of the federation at heart. I will strive to be an ambassador for the federation, publicly supporting its aims, ethos and values. I will never say or do anything that would embarrass the federation, governing body, Executive Headteacher or staff, including through any use of social media.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix: Governor Behaviour Protocol

- In trying to encourage compliance with the federation's Code of Conduct, it is good practice to consider how adherence to the expectations in the code of conduct might be supported. Individuals rarely intend to act in inappropriate or unhelpful ways and failure to tackle issues at an early stage can result in behaviours becoming embedded when a "quiet word" might have prevented circumstances building up into a more serious situation.
- This protocol will try to help governors manage both expectations and behaviours by highlighting trigger points for action and determining the right set of steps to tackle particular concerns. A graduated approach to dealing with issues and infractions will be appropriate with minor issues being dealt with in a swift and supportive manner and more serious infractions with appropriate rigour.

Level One

- This first level of concern might include:
 - o misunderstanding of role and/or acting without mandate in a particular issue
 - o failure to maintain confidentiality
 - o pursuit of personal agenda through the governing body
- The appropriate steps to address such issues would be:
 - o **Conversation with the Chair (or Vice Chair if the Chair is the subject):** If actions are being taken that are inappropriate but that might be due to a misunderstanding of the role of governor and how issues should be brought forward then it might be appropriate for the Chair, Vice Chair or other long standing governor to have a "quiet word" with the subject. The Chair (or Vice Chair) should decide or agree an approach and notes kept of the conversation. Training should be offered if this is deemed relevant.
 - o **Informal Mediation / Facilitated Discussion:** It can be difficult to initiate discussions and if the Chair (or Vice) does not feel confident of achieving an appropriate outcome without support then the Clerk could be commissioned to facilitate the initial discussion and act as a moderator for the conversation.

Level Two

- This second level of concern would include:
 - o behaviours being continued even after having been drawn to the attention of the individual
 - o a serious breach of confidentiality (including data protection breaches)
 - o conduct in public or via social media likely to bring the federation's reputation into question
- This elevated level of concern would require more serious sanctions, including:
 - o **Letter of censure from the Chair (or Vice Chair):** Should inappropriate actions continue or become more serious, a formal letter of censure might be appropriate - it is likely that this would refer to the inappropriate behaviour and act in the same way as a "drawing the line" letter in staff management. The subject should be warned that further action and sanctions could follow should the inappropriate behaviour continue.
 - o **Record in the Minutes:** If the behaviour were to continue the behaviour should be mentioned without reference to an individual in the minutes to

ensure an understanding of required norms. This may reference code of conduct and general expectations. This may be instigated by the Chair or Vice Chair but also by any other governor who is witness to inappropriate behaviour and who has tried to address this through the Chair or Vice Chair without success. The individual would not be identified in the record at this stage.

- o **Mandatory Training:** Should behaviour still not be moderated and concerns continue, then an agreement from the governing body to require that the individual (or the governing body as a whole) attend training that they themselves should deem mandatory - e.g. "Governors identified the need for all/individual governors to undertake training in respect of a specific issue. It was agreed that this would be within two/four/six months".

Level Three

- This third level of concern, leading to the more formal consideration of behaviour might include:
 - o serious misuse of position to either bully or intimidate individuals
 - o aggressively pursuing a personal agenda or viewpoint
 - o becoming party to or leading a campaign against the federation or a member of staff
 - o repeated concerns at Level One and/or Level Two having to be addressed
- This, higher, level of concern would lead to more serious and more formal actions being taken, for example:
 - o **Investigation:** If the behaviour being exhibited is particularly egregious then an investigation should be instigated. The Chair might ask the Vice Chair to investigate and draw up a report for consideration by the governing body - the subject and other witnesses should be interviewed, statements drawn up and signed and a report with conclusions and recommendations should be prepared. This report may be considered by the Chair (or Vice Chair) and an outcome letter drawn up. One possible recommendation is that a meeting of full Governors should consider the appropriate sanction, if any, that should be imposed on the subject. The subject must have the opportunity to address the allegations.
 - o **Formal Mediation:** Governors may wish to consider offering a formal mediation stage following the investigation and outcome letter to see if an agreement can be reached before the need to call a full governing body meeting to consider any formal sanction. It would be appropriate to commission a mediator without a current connection to the federation.
 - o **Suspension:** Suspension for a period of time from the governing body could be an appropriate sanction. The decision would need to be made by the full governing body, who would need to consider the appropriate length of time that any suspension might be applied for.
 - o **Dismissal from the governing body:** This is likely to be appropriate in extreme and rare cases only. A full governing body meeting would need to be called to determine this sanction and a second meeting to confirm the decision.