

Conduct for Governing Bodies

A MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GOVERNING BODIES

The following code is suggested as a model. It provides a statement of the broad principles by which the governors of the school could operate. It may be adopted as it stands or adapted to reflect different governing bodies' ways of working. In either case it should be thoroughly discussed and supported by every governor before being formally agreed.

GENERAL

The headteacher is responsible for the day to day management of the school, the implementation of policy and the operation of the curriculum. Governors have a responsibility for determining, monitoring and keeping under review, the policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates.

- The main aim of the school is to raise the educational achievement of all its pupils.
- The governing body will contribute most effectively to this aim by focusing on its three roles:
 - To provide a strategic view of where the school is heading
 - To act as a critical friend by providing support and advice to the school
 - To hold the school to account for the educational standards it achieves and the quality of the education it provides
- All governors have equal status. Although governors are appointed and elected by different groups, their central concern is the welfare of the school as a whole.
- Governors have a general duty to act fairly and without prejudice at all times.
- In so far as they have, or share, responsibility for the employment of staff, governors should fulfil all reasonable expectations of a good employer.
- Governors should consider carefully how their own decision might affect other schools.
- Governors should encourage open government and should be seen to do so.
- Governors do not act alone but as members of a corporate team. Individual governors have power only when it is designated specifically to them by the whole governing body.

COMMITMENT

- Being a governor involves significant amounts of time and energy. Careful regard should be paid to this when agreeing to serve or to continue to serve on the governing body of a school.
- All governors should involve themselves actively in the work of the governing body and accept a fair share of the responsibilities, including service on committees.
- Regular attendance at meetings of both the full governing body and committees is essential.
- Governors should know the school well and take opportunities to visit it and become involved in school activities.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Governors should strive to operate as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- Governors should develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher, staff, parents, the LEA and their local community.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents.
- Although decisions reached at governors' meetings are normally made public through the minutes, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential.
- Governors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the governing body.

CONDUCT

- Governors should express their views openly within meetings but accept collective responsibility for all decisions.
- Governors should only speak or act on behalf of the governing body when they have been specifically asked to do so.
- All visits to school should be undertaken within a framework which has been established by the governing body and agreed with the Headteacher.
- In responding to criticism or complaints relating to the school, governors should refer to the school's 'Complaints Procedure' for the correct procedure to be followed and advise the complainant accordingly.
- Governors have a responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the school. Their actions within the school community should reflect this.
- Any pecuniary interest that a governor may have in connection with the governing body's business must be recorded in the register of pecuniary interests.
- Where an interest is declared, the governor must leave the meeting while the item is under discussion.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Governor training and development is important. It benefits the school and individual governors, and can help to develop effective teamwork. Governors are encouraged to undertake training to further their individual interests within the governing body and the work of the governing body as a whole.

MENTORING

An experienced governor who acts as a mentor to new governors can provide support and a listening ear for all aspects of the work of the governing body. Governors should be prepared to act as mentors, as required.

MEETINGS

Individual governors do not have any authority in school. It is the collective decisions of all the governors together that carry authority. The activities that governors undertake outside meetings can be seen as preparation for the times when the governing body 'goes live' - in a meeting.

It follows that if a governing body is to carry out its functions well, its meetings are crucial. Below is a suggested 'Meetings Charter'. If the Chair, the Head, the Clerk and all the governors subscribe to, and implement, a charter such as this, the governing body will be giving itself the best chance of coming to informed, collective decisions.

MEETINGS CHARTER

As a governor I expect:

- *people to attend regularly and be punctual;*
- *an agenda and relevant documents to reach me at least seven days before the meeting;*
- *an agenda that makes clear the purpose of each item;*
- *a Chair who keeps to the agenda, paces the meeting so that time is given to each matter in proportion to its importance, draws on all members for contributions and keeps discussions to the point;*
- *my contribution to be heard and others to contribute to the discussion;*
- *the decision making process to be quite clear;*
- *governors to work together and not to be stubbornly partisan;*
- *governors to take collective responsibility for decisions;*
- *minutes that summarise views succinctly, record decisions accurately and are made available, in draft form, soon after each meeting.*

Others can expect me to:

- *attend regularly and be punctual;*
- *read the agenda, minutes and other papers before the meeting and note items I want to say something about;*
- *bring my papers to the meeting;*
- *make relevant and positive contributions;*
- *listen to and consider what other people want to say;*
- *accept my share of collective responsibility, even for those decisions that I do not personally agree with.*

VISITING THE SCHOOL

- Governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school. However, they do need to have the opportunity to arrange visits to the school in order to see governors' policies in action and to understand how the school works.
- In order to avoid misunderstandings arising, it is advisable for every governing body to draw up its own policy on governor visits. The details of such policies will vary from school to school, but common principles worth observing are:
- All governors should visit the school.
- The total number of visits per term should be agreed in advance with the headteacher. Too many visits can be disruptive to pupils' learning.
- The date and timing of a visit should be arranged in advance with the headteacher and other staff involved.
- Visits should have a clear focus, linked to a school policy, a curriculum area or an aspect of the school development plan.
- If a governor is going to spend time in a classroom, this should be discussed with the class teacher so that both are clear how long the governor is coming for, what they are going to look at and what they are going to do.

- Governors should understand that their visits do not replace professional inspections or the monitoring role of the headteacher. Governors should not make judgements about the effectiveness of the teaching that they see.
- If governors are concerned about any aspects of what they have seen this should be passed to the headteacher.
- After the visit, the governor should report back, either orally or in writing to the governing body. How this is to be done should be made clear in the policy. If a written report is to be produced, it is sensible to discuss it with the headteacher before publication.