

Yorkshire Causeway Schools Trust

Governance Code of Conduct

September 2024

1. Aims, scope and principles

This Code of Conduct is in place to ensure that all those involved in the governance of Yorkshire Causeway Schools Trust understand expectations in relation to the behaviour and professional standards of governors and trustees. This code of conduct reflects the Trust vision, “Where everyone is **valued and respected**, where we share commitment to education that is ambitious, setting the **highest expectations** and where **integrity** is the foundation”.

The code is based on the [Academy Trust Governance Guide](#) and the [Academy Trust Handbook](#). It should be read alongside our constitutional documents (e.g. our articles of association, and scheme of delegation). Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in the [Governor Disciplinary Policy](#).

In addition to the points listed below, all those in governance agree to follow the [Academy Trust Governance Code](#), a voluntary, sector-led code and the [Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education](#). The Framework, developed by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) builds on the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life, adding seven virtues.

This code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, governors and trustees will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the Trust and its pupils.

2. The seven Nolan Principles of Public Life

As trustees and local governors, we will follow these principles set out by the government, at all times. They apply to anyone who holds public office:

- Selflessness – we will act in the public interest
- Integrity – we will not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare any conflict of interests
- Objectivity – we will act and take decisions impartially, fairly, and on merit. We will use the best evidence and avoid discrimination or bias
- Accountability – we understand that we are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions. To make sure of this, we will be scrutinised where necessary
- Openness – we will act and take decisions openly and transparently. We will not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so
- Honesty – we will be truthful
- Leadership – we will actively promote and support the above principles and will challenge poor behaviour wherever it happens

3. Governance responsibilities

In trusts, the purpose of governance is to provide:

- strategic leadership
- accountability and assurance
- strategic engagement

In order to do this effectively, as individuals we will:

- Understand and respect the distinction between the role and responsibilities of the Trust Board, Local Governance Committees (LGCs) and those of the executive leadership
- Set and maintain an ethos of high expectations for everyone in the community of every school, including in the conduct and the professionalism of the Trust Board and LGCs
- Promote equity and diversity throughout our organisation
- Where applicable, preserve and develop the character and religious character of the trust/school
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Operate and make decisions in the best interests of pupils, informed by the views and needs of our key stakeholders (pupils, parents/carers, staff and local communities)
- Follow the Trust's policies and procedures, and the procedures of the Trust Board/LGC as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the Trust's constitutional documents including the Scheme of Delegation
- Undertake compulsory governance training as directed by the Trust and complete annual compliance statements on GovernorHub.
- Take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing governance performance, constitution and skillset
- In addition to compulsory governance training, take part in any training or development required to fill any gaps in the skills we need for effective governance
- Understand that where responsibility has been delegated, the Trust Board as a whole remains accountable and that important decisions relating to core functions will be made by the full board
- Comply with relevant guidance and legislation, and our funding agreement, which sets out how we must manage our trust's money, and procure goods and services
- Act with integrity and transparency when making financial decisions, and understand that our financial management and decision making will be scrutinised and audited
- Declare all gifts and record them on the gifts and hospitality register. We will not accept bribes
- We will work to actively identify and manage risks to the trust/school

4. Working with others

As governors and trustees, we will:

- Support and strengthen trust leadership by providing constructive challenge to leaders, and holding them to account
- Respect the role of the executive and school leadership teams, and avoid routine involvement in operational matters
- Respect each other's views
- Work together as a Trust board/LGC to develop effective relationships with stakeholders
- Engage meaningfully with the communities we serve and understand that we are answerable to these stakeholders
- Act with kindness, compassion and sensitivity in our dealings with others
- Listen and seek to understand the views of others, taking them into account in our decision making
- Seek to make our meetings a place where those attending feel safe, where high levels of invitation allow high levels of effective challenge.
- Follow the Equality Act 2010, and apply the principles of fairness and equity in everything we do

5. Commitment to governance

As governors and trustees, we will:

- Attend all meetings where possible. Where we cannot attend, we will explain our valid reason and give suitable notice
- Understand and accept the time and workload commitments of the role
- Understand that work should be shared among members and that all trustees/local governors are expected to take an active role
- Prepare ahead of meetings to ensure we make informed contributions
- Participate in regular pre-arranged school visits in accordance with our trust policies
- Attend any training or development activity needed to ensure the Trust Board/LGC has a wide range of skills and expertise

6. Openness and transparency

Conflicts of interest

To make sure our board takes impartial decisions without bias, we will:

- Publish an up-to-date register of business and pecuniary interests of all trustees/local governors
- Declare any potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of each meeting, and withdraw from the meeting for any relevant item of business and not vote on the matter

Publishing information

To ensure our Trust Board/LGC is transparent and open to the communities we serve, we will make certain information publicly available.

- We accept that the following information will be published on the Trust's/School's website to ensure transparency:
 - The structure and remit of the members, board of trustees, committees and local governing bodies and the full name of the chair of each one
- For each member who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - Their full name
 - Their date of appointment
 - The date when they stepped down, if applicable
 - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests (including governance roles in other educational institutions)
- For each trustee and local governor who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - Their full name
 - Their date of appointment
 - Their term of office
 - The date they stepped down (where applicable)
 - The body that appointed them
 - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
 - Their attendance record over the last academic year
- We accept that the information about members, trustees and local governors will be published on the DfE website, 'Get Information About Schools'
- We accept that the board may collect diversity data to publish on the school website, which could include information on any of the 9 protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010
 - We understand that providing this information is voluntary and that, if we have already provided this information, we are able to request it be removed from any reporting
- We accept that the information about trustees will be published by Companies House
- We accept that the approved board and committee minutes and any agenda and papers considered at a meeting will be made available to any interested person

7. Confidentiality

In the course of our role, we are sometimes privy to sensitive information. We will observe confidentiality when discussing this information, and will not publicly disclose:

- Information about sensitive matters
- Information about named individuals (such as staff, pupils and their parents/carers)
- Details of individual trustees/local governors' contributions in meetings or how they may have voted

Confidential information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

Our commitment to confidentiality does not overrule our duty to report safeguarding concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

We will continue to observe confidentiality after we have left office.

Breaches of confidentiality

In the event of a breach of confidentiality, we will inform the chair as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further.

Trustees understand that if they breach confidentiality rules, they may be removed from office (in line with the Companies Act 2006, trustees cannot be suspended from office).

Governors understand that if they breach confidentiality rules, they may be suspended or removed from office.

8. Data protection

We will follow the Trust's information security processes and measures and data protection policy when using, storing, sharing and disposing of personal data.

Our commitment to data protection does not overrule our duty to report safeguarding concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

Personal data breaches

We will inform the Trust's [Data Protection Officer](#) immediately if we believe there has been a personal data breach.

9. Social media

We will:

- Uphold the reputation of the Trust and School at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with our school communities
- Review privacy settings regularly to make sure we are happy with the information about us that is publicly available
- Report any incidents of harassment we experience, or see towards trustees or local governors, to the Chair of Trustees or Chair of the LGC as appropriate, and to the executive leadership

- Carefully consider how appropriate it would be to accept any friend requests from parents/carers or to join any parent/carer groups associated with the Trust or any of our schools

We will not:

- Accept friend requests from pupils
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the Trust Board/LGC or school communities
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the Trust or School into disrepute

10. Monitoring arrangements

This code of conduct will be reviewed and agreed annually, upon significant changes to the law, or as needed. It will be ratified by the Trust Board.

Approved by Trust Board 18.07.2024