



**Severn
Federation**
Academy Trust

*'Learning together, with minds that
think and hearts that care'*

Trust, Friendship, Respect, Forgiveness, Courage,
Truthfulness

GOVERNANCE CODE OF CONDUCT

Policy Lead Board of Trustees
Committee:

In consultation with: Trust Central Team

**Approved
by:**

Date: 12th September 2023

Policy Date: Autumn 2023

Review Date: Autumn 2024

Review Frequency: Annually



1. Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all trustees/local governors to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that trustees/local governors carry out their role with honesty and integrity, and help us to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

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

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

2. The 7 Nolan principles of public life

As trustees/local governors, we will follow these [principles](#) set out by the government at all times. They apply to anyone who holds a 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. Trustees / Local Governors responsibilities

The responsibilities of both Trustees and Local Academy Committees are outlined within the Articles of Association, Scheme of Delegation and the Terms of Reference for Local Academy Committee's.



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In order to ensure effective governance, we, as individuals, will:

- Understand and respect the distinction between the role and responsibilities of the board 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 board itself
- Promote equality and diversity throughout our organisation, including the board's operation
- Preserve and develop the character and religious character [if applicable] of the schools
- 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, staff, local communities and the local authority/authorities)
- Follow the trust's policies and procedures, and the procedures of the board as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the trust's constitutional documents
- Take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our board's performance, constitution and skillset
- 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 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 that 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 worth more than £50 and record them on the gifts and hospitality register. Cross reference the above amount with your gifts and hospitality policy, if you have one. We will not accept bribes
- We will work to actively identify and manage risks to the trust



4. Working with others

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 board to develop effective relationships with stakeholders
- Engage meaningfully with the communities we serve and understand that we are answerable to these stakeholders
- Follow the Equality Act 2010, and apply the principles of fairness and equality in everything we do

5. Commitment to governance

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
- Will prepare ahead of meetings to ensure we make informed contributions
- Will participate in regular pre-arranged school visits in accordance with our trust policies
- Will attend any training or development activity needed to ensure the board 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 the relevant item of business and not vote on the matter



Publishing information

To ensure our board is transparent and open to the communities we serve, we will make certain information publicly available, as laid out in the Academy Trust Handbook Section 1.44 [Academy Trust Handbook 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

We accept that the following to ensure transparency:

- The structure and remit of the Members, board of trustees, committees and local governing bodies (where applicable), and the full name of the chair of each one (where applicable)

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** (where applicable) who has served at any point over the past 12 months:

- Their full name
- Their date of appointment
- Their term of office (trustees/local governors and local governors only)
- The date they stepped down (where applicable)
- The body that appointed them (trustees/local governors and local governors only)
- Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
- Their attendance record over the last academic year (only for trustees/local governors at board and committee meetings and local governors at local governing body meetings)

We accept that the information about Members, trustees and local governors will be published on Get Information About Schools (GIAS).

We accept that the information about trustees and local governors will be published on [Companies House](#)

We accept that the approved board and committee minutes and any agenda and papers considered at a meeting will be made available on request for public inspection in compliance with Section 1.45 of the Academy Trust Handbook [Academy Trust Handbook 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)



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)
- 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 child protection 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/local governors understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended or removed.

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 child protection 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 that there has been a personal data breach.

9. Social media

We will:

- Uphold the reputation of the trust at all times



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- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with our schools' 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/local governors to the chair of trustees/the local governing body and the executive leadership

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 board of trustees/local governors or school communities
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the trust into disrepute
- Use our governance email information to create any social media profile, or use this email to participate in any social media interface.

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 Board of Trustees.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding
- Gifts and hospitality
- Online Safety
- Data protection
- Conflict of Interest

This Code of Conduct is available on the Trust website: [Key Information | Severn Federation Academy Trust \(sfat.uk\)](#)

