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# Model Code of Conduct for School Governing Boards

## 2019-2020

Approved and adopted by The Federation of  
The Downs and Northbourne, member of DEALT:

Date...10<sup>th</sup> October 2019.....

Review Date.....9th October 2020.....

# Code of Conduct for School Governing Boards 2019-2020

This Code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from school governors, trustees, local governing boards and academy committee members in order for the governing board to properly carry out its work within the school/s and the community. It can be amended to include specific reference to the ethos of the particular school. Unless otherwise stated, 'school' includes maintained schools, academies, free schools and it applies to all levels of school governance.

***This Code of Conduct can also be tailored to reflect your specific governing board and school structure, whether that is as a maintained school or academy, either as a single school or group of schools. It should be adapted as appropriate depending on the governance setting and level of delegation. Where multiple options are given in red, i.e. lead executive/headteacher and governor/trustee/local governor/academy committee member, please amend to leave the option relevant to your governing board.***

***All members of the governing board must sign and retain their own individual master copy to state they have read and understood the Code of Conduct by which they will abide. The Board agreed document can also be signed by all governors. All new governors/ trustees/ local governors/ academy committee members will receive a copy to read and sign as part of their induction process. This Code of Conduct should be an agenda discussion item prior to approval***

This Code should be read in conjunction with the governance handbook, relevant law and for academies their articles of association, master funding agreement, agreed scheme of delegation and academies financial handbook.

Once approved by the governing board, the Code will apply to all governors at maintained school level and for Trust Boards for all trustees, local governors, academy committee members.

**SCHOOL NAME: The Federation of The Downs & Northbourne**

**VISION / ETHOS STATEMENT: "...if you have faith as small as a mustard seed...nothing will be impossible." (Matthew: 17 v20)**

**The governing board has adopted the following Code of Conduct**

## **Purpose of the governing board**

The purpose of governance is to provide confident and strong strategic leadership which leads to robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. The governing board is the key strategic decision-making body in the school,

setting the strategic framework and ensuring it meets all its statutory duties. High quality effective and ethical governance is key to success in our school and for the future of our pupils. Ensuring the best possible outcomes is at the heart of a governing body's strategic role; every child has the right to reach their potential.

**The governing board has the following core strategic functions:**

**Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction by:**

- Setting the vision, values, and objectives for the schools
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Being the strategic key decision maker with decisions made in the best interest of pupils and our purpose
- Delegating operational matters to executive leaders and governance functions to committees as appropriate
- Being connected with, and answerable to, the communities we serve, particularly parents/carers.
- Meeting statutory duties

**Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff by:**

- Appointing the headteachers
- Performance managing the headteachers
- Robust holding to account for improving pupil and staff performance by asking the right questions.
- Workload consideration
- Rigorous analysis of data
- Monitoring and evaluating progress towards targets
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

**Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent by:**

- Ensuring financial probity
- Setting the budget
- Monitoring spending against the budget
- Ensuring value for money is obtained, with the money well spent
- Ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

**Collectively as a board we agree the following:**

- **Organisational purpose.** Our board is clear about the purpose of the school and ensures these are being delivered effectively and sustainably.
- **Leadership.** Our schools LGB is headed by an effective board that provides strategic leadership in line with the school strategic aims, values and culture including the values and virtues to preserve the religious character of the school

and a commitment to fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs. Our board bases our effectiveness on the six key features of effective governance: Strategic leadership; Accountability; People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity; Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities; Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements; Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

- **Integrity.** Our board acts with integrity, adopting values and creating a culture which helps achieve the schools purpose. Our board is aware of the importance of the public and stakeholder confidence in our schools and governors undertake their duties accordingly, abiding by the Nolan Principles of public office (see Appendix 1) including avoiding placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, governors must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.
- **Decision making, risk and control.** Our board makes sure that its decision making processes which follow our required statutory procedures, which act solely in the interest of pupils, are informed, timely, impartial and fair, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias, and that effective delegation, control and risk assessment, and appropriate management systems are set up and monitored. Further, our board assesses the risks attached to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare by abiding and role modelling the schools' culture to encourage pupils to respect other people with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- **Board Effectiveness.** Our board works as an effective team, using the appropriate balance of skills, experience, backgrounds and knowledge to make informed decisions as informed by the governance competency framework.
- **Diversity.** Our board's approach to diversity supports its effectiveness, leadership and provides sufficient diversity of perspectives to enable robust decision making.
- **Openness and accountability.** Our board leads the schools in being transparent and accountable. Our board and school is open in its working- particularly to ensure transparency of decision-making.

## **As individuals on the board we agree the following:**

### **Role & Responsibilities**

- We understand the purpose of the board, the skillset required to perform our core, and any individual delegated, functions and the role of the headteachers.
- We accept and abide by the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life (see Appendix 1).
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the board has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing board when we have been specifically authorised to do so and will report back accordingly to the governing board.

- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing board meeting.
- When making decisions we will act objectively, impartially and fairly. We will use the best evidence, and without discrimination or bias, be dispassionate when exercising judgement and analysis solely for the good of the pupils.
- Upon communicating formally within our governing role we will ensure any comments reflect the school/organisation policy even if they differ from our personal views
- 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 transparent 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. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
- We will promote tolerance of and respect for those of different faiths and beliefs, races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientation in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- We will demonstrate a professional attitude in all our undertakings as a governor.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints we will follow the policies and procedures established by the governing board and acting without discrimination or bias.
- We will actively support the headteachers and senior leadership team but challenge their expectations and hold them to account for school performance.
- We understand, accept and respect the differences between the strategic board role and the staff day to day operational and management role, avoiding actions that may undermine these arrangements.
- We understand, accept and respect the differences between the strategic governor role and any other which we may undertake within the school as a parent, professional or volunteer.
- We agree to adhere to the schools' rules and the policies and procedures we approve as a board as set out by the relevant governing documents and law, including complying within the required timeframe to apply for an enhanced criminal records certificate from the DBS and any subsequent DBS.
- We agree to abide by the school/ organisation e- safety protocols for social media and when communicating in a private capacity will strive to uphold the reputation of the schools. We will always use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither our personal or professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- We agree to abide by the requirements of any Service Level Agreement contracts procured by the governing board. This includes the use of school email accounts for governors.

## **Commitment**

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor/trustee/local governor/academy committee member involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will **each** involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees, panels 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 school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will visit the school/s with all visits arranged in advance with the headteachers, undertaken in accordance and abiding with the monitoring visit policy and schedule as established annually by the governing board.
- We will demonstrate commitment to our individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and will undertake relevant training to develop the knowledge and skills required to effectively perform our core and individual delegated functions and keep them up to date. We agree to complete two training courses in the academic year.
- We accept that in the interests of open government, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school's website until 12 months after our service has ended.
- In the interests of transparency we will commit to updating our pecuniary and business interests as soon as possible.
- In the interests of transparency, we accept that information relating to governors will be collected and logged, until 12 months after our service, has ended on the DfE's national database of governors (Get Information About Schools) with updates to any changes made as soon as possible. (For Academies, we accept that information relating to /trustees/local governors/academy committee members and any changes will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of governors within 14 days of said change or appointment.)

## **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/trustees/academy committee members, the clerk to the governing board and all school staff.
- 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 board 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 will seek to develop effective working relationships with the headteachers, staff and parents, the trust, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the wider community.

### **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/trust business arise outside a governing board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
- We will ensure all confidential documentation is securely stored and disposed of appropriately in accordance with our data protection policy and procedure, mindful of the GDPR legislation requirements.
- We will use school email accounts for all email communication in our governor role, both within and outside of the governing board.

### **Conflicts of interest**

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those pertaining to people we are related to and connected with) that we have in connection with the governing board'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 and accept the decision. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the schools websites.
- 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 school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the governing board.

### **Breach 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 board will only use suspension/removal, ensuring statutory guidance, procedures and regulations are followed, as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.
- We understand, in maintained schools, we are expected only to exercise the power to remove an elected governor, with a five year disqualification term, in exceptional circumstances where the actions or behaviour of the elected governor warrants removal rather than suspension.
- Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, another governing board member, such as the vice chair, will investigate.

## ANNUAL GOVERNOR DECLARATION 2019

For Academies please substitute below with the information on disqualification from your Articles of Association

I declare that I am not disqualified from serving as a school governor (or associate member) in that I do not breach any of the circumstances in which a governor (or associate member) is disqualified from standing for election, being appointed or continuing in office:

### **Qualifications and disqualifications (regulation 17 and Schedule 4 to the Regulations)**

**Grounds for disqualification fall into three broad categories:**

- general grounds;
- grounds that apply to particular categories of governor; and
- grounds that arise because of particular failings or actions on the part of the governor.

All the grounds for disqualification apply also to associate members except that associate members can be registered pupils at the school and can be under 18.

### **General grounds**

Registered pupils cannot be governors.

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of election or appointment.

A person cannot hold more than one governor post at the same school at the same time.

### **Grounds that apply to particular categories of governor**

A person is disqualified from being a parent governor if they are an elected member of the LA or paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours (i.e. for more than one-third of the hours of a full-time equivalent) in any consecutive twelve month period at the time of election or appointment.

A person is disqualified from being a local authority governor if they are eligible to be a staff governor at the school.

A person is disqualified from being a partnership governor if they are:

- a parent of a registered pupil at the school;
- eligible to be a staff governor at the school;
- an elected member of the local authority; or
- employed by the local authority in connection with its education functions.

### **Grounds that arise because of particular failings or actions on the part of the governor**

A person is disqualified from being a governor of a particular school if they have failed to attend the meetings of the governing body of that school for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting they failed to attend, without the consent of the governing body. This does not apply to the headteacher or to foundation governors appointed by virtue of their office.

A foundation, local authority, co-opted or partnership governor at the school who is disqualified for failing to attend meetings is only disqualified from being a governor of any category at the school during the twelve-month period starting on the date on which they were disqualified.

A person is disqualified from holding or continuing to hold office as a governor of a school if, in summary, that person:

- is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order; an interim bankruptcy restrictions order; debt relief restrictions order; an interim debt relief restrictions order; or their estate has been sequestrated and the sequestration has not been discharged, annulled or reduced;
- is subject to a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986; a disqualification order under the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 2002; a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002; or an order made under section 429(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order)
- has been removed from the office of trustee for a charity by an order made by the Charity Commission or Commissioners or High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement in

the administration of the charity, or under section 34 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 from being concerned in the management or control of any body.

- has been removed from office as an elected governor within the last five years.
- is included in the list of people considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children or young people
- is barred from any regulated activity relating to children
- is subject to a direction of the Secretary of State under section 142 of the Education Act 2002 or section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008
- is disqualified from working with children or from registering for child-minding or providing day care
- is disqualified from being an independent school proprietor, teacher or employee by the Secretary of State
- subject to certain exceptions for overseas offences that do not correlate with a UK offence, has been sentenced to three months or more in prison (without the option of a fine) in the five years ending with the date preceding the date of appointment/election as a governor or since becoming a governor
- subject to certain exceptions for overseas offences that do not correlate with a UK offence, has received a prison sentence of two and a half years or more in the 20 years ending with the date preceding the date of appointment/election as a governor
- subject to certain exceptions for overseas offences that do not correlate with a UK offence, has at any time received a prison sentence of five years or more
- has been convicted and fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school or educational premises during the five years ending with the date immediately preceding appointment/election or since appointment or election as a governor
- refuses a request by the clerk to make an application to the Disclosure And Barring Service for a criminal records certificate.

Anyone proposed or serving as a governor who is disqualified for one of these reasons must notify the clerk to the governing board.

#### **Criminal record certificates**

Governing boards must apply for an enhanced criminal records certificate for any governor who does not already hold one. They must do this by 1 September 2016 where a governor was elected before 1 April 2016 and (within 21 days of appointment maintained or 14 days academies) or election if a governor is elected or appointed after 1 April 2016.

I agree to an application being made for an enhanced criminal record certificate as required.

**I agree to abide by the above Code of Conduct and know of no reason from the above disqualification criteria for not continuing to hold the office of governor.**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A failure to sign the Code of Conduct we be counted as a breach of the Code

## APPENDIX 1. THE NOLAN PRINCIPLES

### 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.