

## **Model Code of Conduct for Governing Boards**

### **September 2023**

#### **Foreword**

**This Code of Conduct supports our Waverley Education Foundation Trust mission of ‘Learning Through Diversity’ and our vision, values and ethos.**

Our Governors, Trustees and Members are required to actively support and promote our values of Humanity, Equality, Aspiration and Respect (HEAR), which upholds The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Pupil. In turn, this supports us in providing an environment that allows all learners to flourish because mutual respect is encouraged alongside a strong desire to learn. We regularly review our policies and the work of the school so that our pupils can receive the best possible advantages and opportunities we create for them.

#### **Vision**

Our policies support our vision ensuring they support the school in creating a rights-respecting environment that allows all learners to flourish by encouraging mutual respect.

#### **Our policies support our school values of:**

**Humanity:** Enabling all pupils to succeed in a global and British Society, through fostering an understanding of human values and attitudes, past and present.

**Equality:** We value the diversity of the school community and respect the individuality of each person to ensure that there is an equality of opportunity for everyone.

**Aspiration:** We all have the right to achieve and share the achievements (excellence) from all our backgrounds.

**Respect:** We value diversity and respect the individuality of each person by creating an environment which allows all to flourish through mutual respect.

Through our delivery we believe we are effective in supporting the Waverley Education Foundation Trust core aims for our schools of:

1. Laying the foundations for success
2. Creating opportunities, broadening horizons
3. Being creative and innovative
4. Having a stimulating, pleasant and collaborative learning environment
5. Putting pupils first (at the heart of everything we do)
6. Learning through diversity
7. To be healthy, safe and secure
8. All individuals enjoy and achieve success
9. Making a positive contribution to the school, community and society
10. Developing economic, social and emotional well-being

The following Code of Conduct applies to governors at all levels of school/academy governance and promotes effective working practices that are mutually supportive and respectful of roles & responsibilities.

The term *governor* in this document refers to all those who govern in maintained schools and academies.

**Birmingham City Council (BCC) commends this model code of conduct for adoption by maintained school and academy Governing/ Trust Boards.**

## **Standards of Conduct, Behaviour and Practice**

Governors make an invaluable contribution to the lives of our children. Being a governor involves significant amounts of time and energy. Therefore, as individual governors of Waverley Education Foundation Trust, Waverley School and Waverley Studio College) we will play our part in setting an ethos of professionalism and high expectations of the governor/trustee role.

### **We will:**

#### **1) Conduct the Governing/Trust Board's business in compliance with governance legislation:**

We will fulfil our duties in line with the [Governance Handbook/Academy Trust Handbook](#), other relevant Department for Education (DfE) guidance and have due regard for best practice.

In addition, governors should comply with the DfE [Competency Framework for Governance](#), which expects all those involved in governance to be committed, confident, curious, challenging, collaborative, critical, and creative.

#### **2) Abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life:**

[The Seven Principles of Public Life](#) outline the ethical standards those working in the public sector are expected to adhere to:

##### **i) Selflessness**

*Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.*

##### **ii) Integrity**

*Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.*

### **iii) Objectivity**

*Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.*

### **iv) Accountability**

*Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.*

### **v) Openness**

*Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.*

### **vi) Honesty**

*Holders of public office should be truthful.*

### **vi) Leadership**

*Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.*

## **3) Remain focused on our three core strategic functions of:**

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the Headteacher/executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

## **4) Support the elimination of discrimination and advance equality of opportunity:**

We recognise that Birmingham is one of the UK's super-diverse cities, made up of a wide range of cultural, faith and other communities. The City benefits from positive community cohesion within this diversity.

We share the [equality objectives of BCC](#) and are mindful of our responsibilities under equality legislation, including recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion.

**5) Ensure that the school/academy has in place and follows relevant policies and procedures to ensure that children and young people in our setting are effectively safeguarded:**

We will carry out our functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, have regard to statutory guidance, ensure that we read and follow [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), undertake training and ensure this is regularly updated.

**6) Attend meetings and fully participate in the work of the Governing/Trust Board:**

We will make every effort to attend all meetings and send apologies for our absence if we cannot attend.

We will get to know the school/academy well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.

**7) Demonstrate a professional attitude:**

We will attend meetings regularly, being punctual and reading all relevant paperwork in advance.

We will arrive at meetings and visits prepared to make an informed and positive contribution.

We will observe visit/meeting protocols, including those agreed by the Governing/Trust Board where meetings are held virtually.

**8) Work as members of a team and promote effective working relationships:**

We will seek to develop effective working relationships and engage with our governor colleagues, the Headteacher (and/or Executive Leader as appropriate), staff, parents/carers, BCC, other relevant agencies and the community.

We will always be mindful of our responsibilities to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the school/academy. Our actions within the school/academy and the local community will reflect this.

In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school/academy, we will follow the procedures established by the Governing Board or Trustees.

We will ensure that we will only speak or act on behalf of the whole Governing/Trust Board if we have been given authority to do so.

Where we hold alternative roles within the school/academy (ie, parent, carer, other voluntary role, staff member), we will ensure a delineation of roles and continue uphold our commitment to the Board's Code of Conduct.

**9) Express views courteously and be respectful in all communications, both verbal and written:**

This includes being mindful of upholding the school/academy's reputation when communicating in a private capacity and avoiding, as far as possible, becoming involved in any communication which may lead to a conflict of interest with the role as a governor.

We will ensure we use social media responsibly and will not submit postings on networking sites which may bring the school/academy or Governing/Trust Board into disrepute. We will abide by the school/academy's Acceptable Use Policy (if applicable).

**10) Respect lines of demarcation and the role of the Headteacher and/or Executive Leader (as appropriate) to manage the school/academy:**

As governors we accept that our role is strategic and focused on the three core functions referred to in point 3) of this code.

We will not involve ourselves in the day-to-day operational management of the school/academy or attempt to micro-manage senior leaders.

Any visits that we undertake at the school/academy will be arranged in advance with relevant staff, be agreed by the Headteacher (and/ or Executive Leader as appropriate) and be within the framework established by the Governing/Trustee Board.

**11) Acknowledge majority decisions, except those that conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life, the Governing/ Trustee Board core functions or may fail to ensure the safety of pupils:**

We will confront malpractice by speaking up against and bringing to the attention of the relevant authorities any decisions and actions that conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life or which may place pupils at risk.

**12) Respect the duty of confidentiality to the school/academy:**

We will maintain complete confidentiality particularly when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils and families.

We understand that approved minutes are the formal record of meetings.

We will ensure that the Governing/Trustee Board complies with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Should we leave the Governing/Trustee Board we will continue to uphold the Board's confidentiality and ensure that paperwork relating to the school/academy or Governing Board is returned or disposed of appropriately.

### **13) Abide by legislation (where applicable) and best practice in respect of governor recruitment and the appointment of governors to key roles:**

Where a prospective governor has been or is already a governor of another school, the Chair should speak to the Chair of the other Governing/Trustee Board to discuss both the skills of the individual and, where appropriate, their capacity to commit sufficient time to serve effectively on another Governing Board.

BCC expects Governing/Trustee Board to monitor and account for the circumstances within which it is genuinely appropriate for any individual to be a governor of more than one school, and give careful consideration as to whether it is in the interests of their school(s) to re-appoint governors and office holders for successive terms.

The advice of the National Governance Association (NGA) is that all governors should be restricted to two terms of office (eight years) at the same school and that the Chair should hold office for no more than six years at the same school.

### **14) Commit to undertake induction training as a minimum and any other training that is required to be effective in the role:**

We will request, and attend, induction training as soon as is reasonably practicable following appointment as new governors.

We will continually evaluate our performance as a Governing/Trustee Board and as individual governors and undertake any training that is required to enable us to fulfil our statutory duties and be effective in our role.

### **15) Declare conflicts of interest**

We recognise that a conflict of interest can arise when an individual's personal or family interests conflict with those of the school.

In line with DfE statutory guidance we will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the Governing/Trustee Board, and/or the school/academy in general for recording in the register of business interests

We will withdraw, for an appropriate length of time, from any meeting, discussion or vote of the Governing/Trustee Board when our governor colleagues agree that there is a conflict of interest.

### **16) Be transparent**

As the Governing/Trustee Board, our first line of accountability is to parents/carers, the wider school/academy and local community.

The Governing/Trustee Board will comply with the [Constitution of GBs of maintained schools](#) statutory guidance or the [Academy Trust Handbook](#), and in doing so will demonstrate transparency by publishing on the school/academy website, up-to-date details of the overall governance arrangements in place and the declared business interests register.

We will comply with the requirement to provide details about people involved in governance at our school/academy, via the DfE website “*Get information about schools*” and ensure the information is kept up to date.

We therefore understand our details as governors will be published.

We will keep the Local Authority informed of the membership of our Board including those in key roles such as Chair, Vice Chair, SEND Governor and Safeguarding Governor.

We are committed to publishing an Annual Statement setting out the key issues that have been faced and addressed by the Governing/Trustee Board over the last year, including an assessment of the impact of the Governing/Trustee Board on the school/academy.

## **17) Breach of this Code of Conduct:**

If following investigation, it is deemed that this Code of Conduct has been breached by a member of our Governing/Trustee Board and the matter cannot be resolved in a constructive way, then the Governing Board will consider their suspension or, in some circumstances, removal from the Governing/Trustee Board.

**Adopted by the Waverley Education Foundation Trust Board of Members, Board of Trustees and the Waverley Joint Local Governing Body for Waverley School and Waverley Studio College on the following dates:**

**Signed ..... (Chair of Waverley Joint LGB)                      Date: .....**

**Signed ..... (Chair of WEF Board of Trustees)                      Date: .....**

**Signed ..... (Chair of WEF Board of Members)                      Date: .....**

For clarification or any queries please contact: [governors@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:governors@birmingham.gov.uk) or [governanceoversight@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:governanceoversight@birmingham.gov.uk)