

**Model Code of Conduct for
Governors in
Church of England Primary
Schools and Academies in
Carlisle Diocese**



‘Life in all its fullness’

The Church of England Vision for Education ‘is deeply Christian, with the promise by Jesus of ‘life in all its fullness’ at its heart.’ It is for the common good of the whole human community and invites ‘collaboration, alliances and negotiation of differences.’ (CEEEO, 2016, p2)

All of the above are likely to be experienced by individuals within governing bodies as they work together to fulfil their legal responsibilities. The Christian vision and ethos of a Church of England school infuses all aspects of school life, including the governing body.

This model Code of Conduct sets out the expectations and commitment required from school governors and trustees in an academy in order for the board to carry out its work within the school and community. It is recommended all individuals serving on such boards agree to uphold this code as part of their role.

The Church of England Vision for Education is worked out theologically through four aspects.

- Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills
- Hope and Aspiration
- Dignity and Respect
- Community and Living Well

It is useful to consider how each aspect relates to the role of governor.

Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

At the heart of the Bible is the pursuit of wisdom, a vital component of all governing bodies. ‘It is a matter of affirming what is of worth in the past and present, rejecting courageously things that we judge unwise, and working to transform those that are valuable but need improvement.’(CEEEO 2016, p9) Governing bodies will therefore strive for wisdom in using knowledge and skills to combine continuity and innovation appropriately. Decisions will involve ‘radical questioning, imaginative and daring exploration and.... a desire for wisdom.’ (Ibid) The Christian values of wisdom and service will be demonstrated by all as they seek ‘the common good.’

This will involve agreement to:

- develop an understanding of the purpose of the board.
- encourage open governance and act appropriately.
- adhere to the school’s rules and policies and the procedures of the governing board as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
- consider seriously our individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and undertake relevant training and ensure the effectiveness of our own governance through self-evaluation.
- accept and respect the difference in roles between the board and staff, ensuring that we work collectively for the benefit of the organisation.
- ensure, when speaking or writing in our governing role, any individual comments reflect current organisational policy, even if they might be different to our personal views.
- have regard for the significant amounts of time and energy being a governor requires.
- involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees and working groups.
- get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- visit the school/s, ensuring all visits are arranged in advance with the senior leader / headteacher and undertaken within the framework established by the governing board.
- be 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.
- understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality continue to apply after a governor leaves office.
- accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school/trust’s website.

Hope and Aspiration

'Hope in God's future for the world, in God's ongoing love and compassion for all people, and for the whole of creation, and in God's promise of life in all its fullness are at the dedication to educating for hope and aspiration.' (CEEO 2016, p10) Each individual is to be encouraged to stretch themselves to be the best version of themselves that they can be. Looking to the life of Jesus we recognise how fallible and flawed humans are alongside the knowledge that through Him transformation for the better is possible. Trusting in Him inspires us to 'perseverance, patience, gratitude, openness to surprises and celebration.' (Ibid) In all decisions governors will strive to explicitly promote hope and aspiration for all members of the school and community without prejudice. Embodying the Christian values of endurance, hope and creativity will enable this to be achieved.

This will involve agreement to:

- Seek to develop effective working relationships with the senior leaders, staff and parents, the Diocese, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.
- Actively support, as well as challenge, the school leaders.
- Have a duty of care to all staff and to each other.
- Be mindful of and strive to uphold the reputation of the organisation when communicating in our private capacity (including on social media.)

Community and Living Well

The conviction that we are created and sustained by God for living together in families and communities is at the heart of our dedication for educating for life together.' (CEEO 2016, p11) In Church of England schools the flourishing of all is central to being an 'hospitable community that seeks to embody an ethos of living well together.'(Ibid) Governing bodies should seek to be a 'hospitable space, allowing for healthy diverse debate, agreement and disagreement.'(Ibid) The result of such hospitality leads to deep, mutual understandings and peaceful, negotiated settlements. Therefore, governors should express views openly at meetings, but accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or any individual governor delegated to do so. Governing board members will consider carefully how decisions affect not only the school they represent but also the wider community and other schools. In working together as a community of governors the Christian values of thankfulness, trust, peace, forgiveness, friendship and koinonia will be actively promoted and demonstrated.

This will involve agreement to:

- 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.
- Accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or any that has been delegated by the board. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing board meeting.
- Consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools.
- Be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school/group of schools. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
- Accept that regular attendance at meetings of the board is essential. Where we cannot attend we will explain in advance why we are unable to do so.
- Work as a team ensuring constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- 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.
- Exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school/trust business arise outside a governing board meeting.
- Record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people we are 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.

- Declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
- Commit to not revealing the details of any governing board vote.

Dignity and Respect

Commitment to the dignity and ultimate worth of each person is central to the work of a governing board. Jesus paid special attention to 'the disadvantaged, excluded, despised and feared.' We are called to join with Him in demonstrating this. In particular the dignity of all should be upheld by governors as they discuss matters of safeguarding, prevention of bullying, provision for children with special educational needs and/disabilities and also in relationships with each other. The Christian values of humility, compassion and justice will help us do this.

This will involve agreement to:

- Respect the role of the school leaders and their responsibility for the day to day management of the organisation and avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements.
- Support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- 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.
- Follow the procedures established by the governing board in making or responding to criticism or complaints.
- Maintain our underlying responsibility as a governor/trustee/academy committee member when visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer).
- Accept that in the interests of open governance, 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.
- Accept that in the interests of transparency information relating to governors/trustees/academy committee members will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of governors (Edubase).
- Express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other governors, the clerk and school staff both in and outside of meetings.
- Observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school. This covers all forms of verbal and written communication, including the various forms of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.

It is also important to remember that whilst serving as members of governing boards all individuals are required to uphold the 7 Nolan Committee (1995) principles of public life.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2>

Breach of this Code of Conduct

If it is believed this code has been breached the matter will be raised with the chair of the governing board in the first instance to investigate. They will seek to resolve any issues or disputes constructively through encouraging forgiveness and reconciliation. If it is the chair who it is believed has breached this code, the vice chair will investigate. Any allegation of a breach of this code of conduct by any governor should be raised at a meeting of the governing board, and if agreed by a majority of governors, it should be recorded within the minutes. If this occurs it could lead to consideration of suspension or in some circumstances removal from the governing board. Further advice or mediation support can be accessed from diocesan officers. Please contact the Director of Education for Carlisle Diocese should this be required.

Commitment

As a member of the governing board forChurch of England School, I will do my utmost to always work to the terms of the Code of Conduct to support the ethos and values of the school and for the good of the whole school community.

Signed..... Name..... Date.....

Appendix A

Questions to consider

These questions are presented to stimulate debate and discussion in respect of the Code of Conduct for Governing Boards. Governing board members are encouraged to interrogate the questions, highlight any that resonate, write down any more they provoke but most importantly use them as a means of developing policy and practice of the board in line with the school's Christian vision and values.

Educating for Wisdom, knowledge and Skills

- Christ's followers were 'a community of learners.' How do we create a community of learners amongst ourselves as a governing board?
- How do we model effective challenge of school leaders within the ethos of the church's teaching about 'relationships and commitments?'
- What is more important: the professional skills to meet the demands of the role, or an understanding of, and commitment to, 'the Church of England's tradition of Christian faith and practice?'
- What part might prayer play in guiding us to make wise decisions?
- Wisdom is 'matured through complex experiences.' When things go wrong, how do we reflect on our experiences together, without recrimination, in order to grow our collective wisdom?

Educating for Hope and Aspiration

- How do we demonstrate forgiveness in our everyday encounters? When do we let 'bad experiences' have the last word? How could we demonstrate hope through such situations?
- How do we ensure our decisions do not extinguish hope or limit aspirations of ourselves and others?

Educating for Community and Living Well Together

- How, and how often, is our Christian vision and values discussed by this governing board?
- How does the board's code of conduct demonstrate our commitment to the school's culture, values and ethos?
- Are we sufficiently honest and trusting to challenge each other in the service of 'the common good' when our behaviour undermines the school's values, or do we expect that to be done by someone else?
- How do we seek to understand others' viewpoints when making decisions? Do we recognise and take account of our own biases?

Educating for Dignity and Respect

- How do we foster a culture, within governing board meetings, that recognises 'the ultimate worth of each person... created in the image of God and loved by God?'
- When faced with difficult decisions regarding competence of governors, how do we communicate them in a way which demonstrates our belief in 'the ultimate worth of each person?'

The above and further questions can be found in:

'Ethos Enhancing Outcomes: Exploring 17 Governance Leadership Issues' Church of England Education Office
2018 The National Society London

Appendix B 7 Nolan Committee (1995) Principles of Public Life

These being:

1. **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. **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.
3. **Objectivity:** Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **Honesty:** Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. **Leadership:** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.