

Eastern Learning Alliance

Code of Conduct for Trustees and Governors

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Review cycle	Every two years (August 2025)



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New Version Number	Key changes from previous version	Date of ratification by Trust Board

1. Aims, scope and principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all Trustees and Governors to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that Trustees and 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, and 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, this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, Trustees 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 and 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 and Governors' responsibilities

The 3 functions of our Trust Board are to:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the Trust
- Hold executive leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of the Trust, and the performance management of staff
- Oversee the financial performance of the Trust and make sure money is well spent

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

- Understand and respect the distinction between the [role and responsibilities of the board](#), local governors and those of the executive leadership and school 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 Governing Body

- Promote equity and diversity throughout our organisation, including the Trust Board's and Governing Body's operation
- Preserve and develop the character of the Trust and its Academies
- 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 and relevant Academy 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](#) of each Governing Body and the Trust Board, regularly reviewing performance, constitution and skillset
- Take part in any [training or development](#) required to fill any gaps in the skills needed 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 Trustees
- 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
- We will work to actively identify and manage risks to the trust
- Any offer of a gift or hospitality should be declared to the Head of Academy or CEO before accepting any offer as gifts and hospitality offered by or to contractors, suppliers, service providers etc may place the Trust in a vulnerable position, even when offered and accepted without a hidden agenda.

4. Working with others

We will:

- Support and strengthen Trust and School 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 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 equity 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 and Governors are expected to take an active role
- Will [prepare ahead of meetings](#) to ensure we make informed contributions
- Governors will participate in regular [pre-arranged school visits](#) and will get to know the school well and welcome opportunities to be involved in school activities. Governors acknowledge that these visits are an essential part of their role and will make all efforts to ensure they are attended. Where we cannot attend, suitable notice will be given to ensure that staff are able to make the best use of their time.
- Will attend any training or development activity needed to ensure the Trust Board and Governing Bodies have a wide range of skills and expertise

6. Openness and transparency

Conflicts of interest

To make sure the Trust Board and Governing Bodies takes impartial decisions without bias, we will:

- Publish an up-to-date register of business and pecuniary interests of all Trustees and 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 the Trust Board and Governing Bodies are 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 school's website](#) 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 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
 - 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 Governors will be published on [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 in the Equality Act 2010](#)
 - We understand that providing this information is voluntary and 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 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 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 or 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.

Trustee and Governors understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended or removed from their role.

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 there has been a personal data breach.

9. Social media

We will:

- Uphold the reputation of the trust at all times
- 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 Trustee and Governors, and the executive leadership

We will **not**:

- Accept friend requests from pupils and not join any private parent/carer groups associated with the Trust or any of our schools
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the Trust Board Local Governing Body
- Post [any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media](#) that may bring us or the Trust into disrepute

Appendix 1: breaches of the code of conduct

Trust Board:

If we suspect a Trustee or Governor has breached the code of conduct, we will follow this procedure:

- A Member of the Trust will investigate
- A Member of the Trust will hold a meeting with the Trustee to discuss the issue. The Trustee can bring a friend to the meeting. Another Trustee or Governor will attend to corroborate any decisions
- If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, we will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
 - Further meetings with the member to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
 - Support, mentoring or training for the Trustee
 - Making sure the Trustee withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in

If there is no improvement in the Trustee's behaviour, the board will vote on a motion to ask the Members to remove them in accordance with sections 168 and 169 of the [Companies Act 2006](#) and the Trust's articles of association. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances.

Trustees may be **removed** if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the Trust Board (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the board)
- Have brought, or is likely to bring the Trust or the office of the Trustee into disrepute
- Have acted to undermine fundamental British values or the Trust Board's commitment or ability to deliver on its Prevent duty
- Have been involved in serious misconduct. We will determine what counts as serious misconduct based on the facts of the case, but it will include any actions that compromise the 7 principles of public life, if sufficiently serious
- Have displayed repeated and serious incompetence
- Have acted in a way that is significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the board, or their actions have interfered with the operational efficiency of the school

Local Governing Bodies:

If we suspect a Governor has breached the code of conduct, we will follow this procedure:

- The Governor may be suspended from their role
- A Trustee will investigate
- A Trustee will hold a meeting with the Governor to discuss the issue. The Governor can bring a friend to the meeting. Another Governor or Trustee will attend to corroborate any decisions
- If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, we will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
 - Further meetings with the trustee to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
 - Support, mentoring or training for the local governor

- Making sure the local governor withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in

If there is no improvement in the Governor's behaviour, the Trust Board will vote on a motion to ask the Members to remove them in accordance with the Trust's articles of association. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances.

Local governors may be **suspended** if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the Local Governing Body (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the board) and
- Have brought, or is likely to bring the Academy or Trust into disrepute, or
- Acted to undermine fundamental British values or the board's commitment or ability to deliver on its Prevent duty

Local governors may be **removed** where:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension
- There has been serious misconduct. We will determine what counts as serious misconduct based on the facts of the case, but it will include any actions that compromise the 7 principles of public life, if sufficiently serious
- They display repeated and serious incompetence
- Their actions are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the board, or their actions interfere with the operational efficiency of the school

'Bringing the board into disrepute' may include, but is not limited to:

- Speaking out publicly against the school
- Being disrespectful to members of the school community
- Behaving inappropriately in a public forum, such as a PTA meeting or on social media
- Persistently failing to undertake the training or development they need to contribute effectively to the board's operation