St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Governing Body Code of Conduct

2023-2024

Ratified by Governors Date:	
Date for Review	
Signed (Chair of Governors):	
Signed Headteacher:	

Contents

1. Aims, scope and principles 2
2. The 7 Nolan principles of public life 2
3. Governors' responsibilities 3
4. Working with others 4
5. Commitment to governance 4
6. Openness and transparency 4
7. Confidentiality 5
8. Data protection 6
9. Social media 6
10. Monitoring arrangements 6
11. Links with other policies 6
Appendix 1: breaches of the code of conduct 7

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1. Aims, scope and principles

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

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that 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 Department for Education's guidance on the school governance regulations 2013. It should be read alongside our constitutional documents (e.g. our instrument of government, 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, governors will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

2. The 7 Nolan principles of public life

As 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 interest

- **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. Governors' responsibilities

The 3 functions of our governing board are to:

- Ensure the clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction of the school
- Hold executive leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of the school, and the performance management of staff
- Oversee the financial performance of the school 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 and those of the school leaders
- Set and maintain an ethos of high expectations for everyone in the school community, 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 school
- 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, the local community and the local authority)
- Follow the school's policies and procedures, and the procedures of the board as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the school'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 that sets out how we must manage our school'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 [insert amount] and record them on the gifts and hospitality register. We will not accept bribes.
- We will work to actively identify and manage risks to the school

4. Working with others

We will:

- Support and strengthen school leadership by providing constructive challenge to leaders, and holding them to account
- Respect the role of school leaders 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 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 school policy
- 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 governors including associate members
- 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 community 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 board and any committees, and the full name of the chair of each one
- For each governor who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
    - Their full name
    - Their date of appointment
    - Their term of office
    - The date when they stepped down (where applicable)
    - The body which appointed them
    - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
    - Their attendance record at board and committee meetings over the last academic year

- Relevant interests include:
    - A business interest in a company that could gain from your position on the governing board
    - Governance roles in other educational institutions
    - Relationships with other governors or members of school staff
- We accept that the information relating to governors will be published on Get information about schools
- 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)
- Details of individual 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.

Governors' understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended or removed.

8. Data protection

We will follow the school'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 school's data protection officer immediately if we believe that there has been a personal data breach.

9. Social media

We will:

- Abide by any requirements set out in our school's social media policy

We will:

- Uphold the reputation of the school at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with the school community
- 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 governors, to the chair of governors and the headteacher

We will **not**:

- Accept friend requests from pupils and not join any private parent groups associated with the school
- Disclose any information that is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the governing board or school community
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the school into disrepute

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 full governing board.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Safeguarding
- Gifts and hospitality
- E-safety
- Data protection

Appendix 1: breaches of the code of conduct

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

- The chair will investigate
- The chair will hold a meeting with the governor to discuss the issue. The governor can bring a friend to the meeting. Another 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 chair to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
    - Support, mentoring or training for the governor
    - Making sure the governor withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in
- If there is no improvement in the governors' behaviour, the board will vote on a motion to suspend them for up to 6 months. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances

Governors may be **suspended** if they:

- Are a staff governor undergoing disciplinary proceedings at the school
- Are undergoing court or tribunal proceedings that would result in the governor being disqualified from holding office
- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the ethos of the school (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 school into disrepute
- Breach confidentiality
- Acted to undermine fundamental British values or the board's commitment or ability to deliver on its Prevent Duty

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