

# **WINTERBOURNE NURSERY & INFANT SCHOOL**



## **Code of Practice for Members of the Governing Body**

**Agreed by governors: 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

**Next review: September 2018**

## **Code of Practice for Members of the Governing Body of the Winterbourne Nursery & Infant School**

April 2018

### **Preamble**

Governors should act as a Critical Friend to the School. That is easy to write but difficult to do in practice. The best governing boards get the balance right between support and challenge. They ask the right questions, whatever school they're in.

Good governing bodies focus on the big issues: the quality of teaching, the progress and achievement of their pupils, and the culture which supports this. Day to day and management issues are to be left to the Headteacher and his/her staff.

The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013 defines the core functions of the governing body as being:

- *ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined;*
- *ensuring that the headteacher performs his or her responsibilities for the educational performance of the school; and*
- *ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources.*

It goes on to say that:

*in exercising their functions the governing body shall:*

- *act with integrity, objectivity and honesty and in the best interests of the school; and*
- *be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and in particular shall be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to interested parties.*

There are other publications that lay down expectations of how governors should behave. The Seven Principles of Public Life, known as the Nolan Principles, were defined by the [Committee for Standards in Public Life](#) . They are reproduced as an appendix and are applicable to anyone holding public office. Croydon has produced a Code of Conduct for School Based Staff and that

document has references to other local and national publications; all these are relevant and helpful.

As governors we will have a number of interests. But whatever our role, our loyalty is not to the people who elected or appointed us, to the headteacher, or to any other group. Our obligation and accountability is to the school as a whole. Governors may be parents, staff or members of the community. They may belong to interest groups (political parties, trade unions, religious organisations etc.) but as a governor we must always act in the best interests of the life chances of the children in our care.

The Governing Body has considerable powers and responsibilities. Yet as individual governors we have none. Unless we have been given a specific mandate to act on behalf of the full governing body we have no additional rights over those of an individual. Even the Chair, who may need to make decisions between meetings of the Governing Body, does so on behalf of Governors as a whole and his/her actions must be reported to, and ratified by, the full Governing Body. Note that all governors carry equal responsibility for decisions made.

But although we have no individual powers, parents and staff may not understand that. Governors need to be careful not to appear to be acting with authority that they do not have. Parents and staff need to be educated to use the proper channels of communication with the Governing Body and governors need to be careful not to seem to be “Throwing their weight around”.

Schools need to have a long-term strategy, based on a shared vision. It is the job of governing bodies, working with the headteacher and senior leaders, to agree a strategic plan for the coming years. It is then the job of the senior leaders to turn the strategic plan into school development plans, updated each year, and to implement this in practice.

It is important that governors understand where the line lies between their strategic responsibilities and the management responsibilities of the headteacher and senior leaders. Stepping over that line is inappropriate and can make the headteacher’s job harder. There is, of course, no reason why governors or the Governing Body should not respond to requests for advice on management issues if requested by the Headteacher.

Ofsted will evaluate the extent to which governors both challenge and support the school and hold senior staff, including the headteacher, to account for the achievement of the pupils.

Ofsted remarks that whilst lesson observations can be helpful to governors to get to know their school, it is clear that judging the quality of teaching is a matter for the professional leadership of the school. Governors are not expected to be routinely involved in the day-to-day activity of the school.

The school has a right to expect

- the committed involvement of all governors;
- that governors will attend meetings, including being active members of governing body committees;
- that governors will be prepared before meetings, so they arrive well informed, having read all the information given (in most cases papers will be distributed 7 days in advance of meetings);
- that governors will respond to request for information or produce reports in a timely manner.
- that governors will take their responsibilities seriously and will be willing and able to review their own performance;
- a respect for confidentiality and an acceptance of the collective responsibility of the governing body;
- that governors will use proper procedures when raising complaints or concerns;
- that governors will question and challenge the school to ensure the best opportunities for the pupils;
- that governors will accept responsibility for their own training and development;
- that governors will support the school in the wider community;
- that governors will submit to an enhanced DBS check (the school's policy is that all governors have such a check).

## Code of Conduct

### **The purpose of our Governing Board**

The Governing Board is our school's accountable body. Our Governing Board has 3 core functions:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

### **We fulfil these core functions by:**

- Carrying out our statutory duties, such as safeguarding, and understanding the strategic boundaries of our role as governors.

- Reviewing and disseminating to our stakeholders our vision and ambition for the school, which will incorporate our:
  - Culture of high expectations, aspirations and excellence in academic and vocational work; and
  - Highest expectations for social behaviour among pupils and staff, so that respect and courtesy are the norm.
- Engaging with our key stakeholders, including parents, carers and other stakeholders, such as external agencies, to support all pupils.
- Contributing to and agreeing the school's self-evaluation and understanding the school's strengths and weaknesses, to ensure it leads to planning that secures continual improvement.
- Ensuring the design and implementation of the curriculum has breadth and balance so that:
  - The formal curriculum is supplemented with extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding and to improve their skills in a range of artistic, creative and sporting activities; and
  - It raises awareness and keeps pupils safe from the dangers of abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.
- Ensuring that the school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain and promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.
- Understanding and taking sufficient account of pupil data, particularly our understanding and use of the new Analyse report / internal school tracking data.
- Having an awareness of the impact of teaching on learning and progress in different subjects, key stages and year groups by using the data provided to track the progress of groups of pupils to ensure that none falls behind and underachieves.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the actions school leaders take to secure and sustain improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Ensuring the effective use of additional grants, such as pupil premium, sports premium, the year 7 literacy and numeracy catch up premium, and the Special Educational Needs funding, including monitoring the impact of these grants on pupil outcomes.
- Providing support and challenge for the head teacher.
- Monitoring performance management systems and understanding how the school makes decisions about teachers' salary progression, including the rigorous performance management of the Head Teacher, to:
  - Improve teaching, leadership and management; and
  - Ensure the school has a motivated and effective teaching staff to deliver a high quality education for all pupils.
- Ensuring solvency and probity and that the financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively and support the school's identified development priorities.
- Being transparent and accountable, including in terms of the recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings, and contact with parents and carers.

### **As a corporate body in the eyes of the law, we understand and accept that:**

- No governor can act on their own without proper authority from the full Governing Board. We will only speak or act on behalf of the Governing Board when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- All governors carry equal responsibility for the decisions made. We will encourage the open and constructive expression of views at meetings, but accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Governing Board or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the Governing Board meeting.
- All governors have equal status and although appointed by different groups, our overriding concern will be for the welfare of our school and pupils as a whole.

### **Commitment**

- We accept that by accepting office as a governor at this school, we are committing to significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of our Governing Board and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees, working groups and visiting the school.
- We will attend training yearly to ensure continued development in our role as governors in order to maximise our impact on school standards.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend, explain in advance and in full, why we are unable to.
- We will get to know our school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in strategic school activities.
- Our visits to our school will be arranged in advance with the head teacher and undertaken within the framework established by the Governing Board and agreed with the head teacher.
- We will consider seriously our individual/collective needs for training/development and will undertake relevant training.
- We are committed to actively supporting and constructively challenging the head teacher and senior leadership team in order to effectively fulfil our core strategic functions.

### **Relationships**

- We will work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- We will express views openly, with courtesy and respect in all communications with governors and staff.
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- We will answer queries from other governors 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 head teacher, staff, parents, the local authority (LA), the Education Funding Agency (EFA), other relevant agencies and the local community.

## **Confidentiality**

- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff, parents or pupils, both inside or outside the school.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a Governing Board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any Governing Board vote.

## **Whistle Blowing**

If we have concerns which have been brought to the attention of the Governing Board and Senior Leadership Team, which are not being effectively addressed by the Governing Board or Senior Leadership team, and where those concerns are in the public interest - e.g. fraud, someone's health and safety is in danger, a belief that someone is covering up wrongdoing - we have a duty to report these concerns to the appropriate body e.g. the Local Authority, Education Funding Agency, Ofsted using the school's Whistleblowing Policy.

## **Conflicts of interest**

- We will record any pecuniary interests that we have in connection with the Governing Board's business in the Register of Business Interests.
- We will declare any personal or pecuniary interest - or personal interest which could be perceived as a conflict of interest - in a matter under discussion at a meeting and leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.

## **General**

- We understand the purpose of the Governing Board as set out above.
- We are aware of and accept the Nolan 7 principles of public life (see appendix).
- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for the employment of staff, we will fulfil all that is reasonably expected of a good employer.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting our school we will follow the procedures established by the Governing Board.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other settings.
- We will provide personal information, e.g. conflict of interests, as required, to ensure that the Governing Board fully meets its statutory responsibilities and accept that some of this information is required, by statute, to be published on the school website.
- We will complete all paperwork required by law and the Governing Board, whether to be published on the school website or kept elsewhere, in the stated timeframe.

- We will sign the Code of Practice at the first Governing Board meeting of each school year, with new governors signing when they commence their term of office during the school year. If a governor feels that they cannot commit to and sign the Code of Practice, the Governing Board will deem that the governor is resigning, with immediate effect, from our 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 as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.
- We understand that any allegation of a material breach of this code of practice by any governor shall be raised at a meeting of the Governing Board and, if agreed to be substantiated by a majority of governors, shall be minuted and can lead to consideration of suspension or disqualification from the Governing Board.

### **Undertaking**

To carry out my role effectively, I will be:

- Fully prepared for all meetings, having read all the supporting documentation and ready to ask appropriate, challenging questions.
- Responsive and return all requested information promptly.
- Attending meetings in the evening and during the day as required.
- Visiting the school during the school day, at least once a term to find out more about the school.
- Attending a minimum of one training and development session yearly to (a) meet my personal development needs and (b) to meet the needs of the full Governing Board.
- Prepared to take on an additional responsibility, in line with my own skills and knowledge and needs within the Governing Board.
- A reflective governor, who monitors and reviews my own performance on a regular basis.
- Committing the time necessary to fulfil the role.

As a member of our school's Governing Board, I:

- Agree to abide by our code of practice.
- Always will have the education and wellbeing of the children and the reputation of the school at heart.
- Will do all I can to be an ambassador for the school, publicly supporting its aims, values and ethos.
- Never will say or do anything publicly that would embarrass the school, the Governing Board, the head teacher or staff.
- Agree to the required personal information being published on the school website and providing updates as and when required / necessary.
- Accept that the Governing Board will challenge me if it feels that I am not abiding by this code of practice, and that this could lead to my suspension, disqualification or being asked to resign.

## **Appendix: 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.