

Code of Conduct for Trustees, Governors & Advocates

Document control		Policy Level	Trust / Non-Statutory
Approved by	Full Trustees	Approved date	14 August 2023
Portfolio	Trustees	Next review	July 2024
Published	Website, intranet and GovernorHub		
Version	Date issued	Author	Update information
V1.0	24/04/2018	S Wood	First published version
V1.1	13/12/2018	N McDermott	Document control. Addition of 2.10 (regarding publication of governor-provided biography). Mandatory guidance on use of official email address.
V1.2a	10/03/2020	N McDermott	Reflects NGA Guidance 2019 and Exeter Diocese Model Code
V 1.3	24/09/2020	N McDermott	Reflects NGA Code of Conduct Aug 2020 and Exeter Diocese Model Code 2018
V1.3a	19/04/2021	N McDermott	Updated reference to Local Academy Committee to Local Stakeholder Board.
V1.4	10/05/2022	M Greener	Nolan Principles included into the Code. Updates from Aug 2021 NGA Code of Conduct included.
V1.5	1/9/2022	M Greener	Inclusion of Appendix C – Communication and use of social media
V1.6	26/7/2023	M Greener	Incorporation of the term Governance Colleague to cover the roles of trustee, LSB governor and Primary Advocate.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Code of conduct.....	2
2.1 Role & responsibilities	2
2.2 Demonstrate our commitment to the role.....	3
2.3 Build and maintain relationships	3
2.4 Respect confidentiality.....	3
2.5 Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent	4
3. Breach of this code of conduct	5
4. Agreement.....	5
Appendix A: The Seven Principles of Public Life	6
Appendix B: The Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education	7
Appendix C: Communication and use of social media	9

1. Introduction

This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from all trustees and local stakeholder boards in order to achieve the effective governance of the academies within Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust.

Unless otherwise stated, 'school' includes all schools and colleges in the Trust.

'Governance Colleagues' includes Trustees, Local Stakeholder Board Members and Primary Advocates.

This Code should be read in conjunction with the relevant law, the articles of association and agreed scheme of delegation for the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust.

It is based on the Nolan Principles of Public Life and the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education (see appendices), the National Governance Association Model Code of Conduct (August 2021) and The Exeter Diocese Model Code 2018.

2. Code of conduct

We agree to abide by the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life (see [Annexe A](#)):

As Governance Colleagues, we will focus on our strategic functions:

1. ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of staff
3. overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent
4. ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard

As individuals on the board, we agree to:

2.1 Role & responsibilities

- a. We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management.
- b. We will develop, share and live the ethos and values of our school/s.
- c. We agree to adhere to school/trust policies and procedures as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
- d. We will work collectively for the benefit of the school/s.
- e. We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
- f. We will consider how our decisions may affect the school/s and local community.
- g. We will stand by the decisions that we make as a collective.
- h. Where decisions and actions conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life or may place pupils at risk, we will speak up and bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities.

- i. We will only speak or act on behalf of the board if we have the authority to do so.
- j. We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice.
- k. When making or responding to complaints we will follow the established procedures.
- l. We will strive to uphold the school's / trust's reputation in our private communications (including on social media – see [Appendix C](#)).

2.2 Demonstrate our commitment to the role

- a. We will involve ourselves actively in the work of the board or schools, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, serving on committees or working groups where required.
- b. We will make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
- c. We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
- d. We will get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- e. We will visit the school/s and when doing so will make arrangements with relevant staff in advance and observe school and board protocol.
- f. When visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer), we will continue to honour the commitments made in this code and maintain our underlying responsibility as a Governance Colleague.
- g. We will participate in induction training and take responsibility for developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.

2.3 Build and maintain relationships

- a. We will develop effective working relationships with school leaders, staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders from our local community/ communities.
- b. We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings.
- c. We will work to create an inclusive environment where all members' contributions are valued equally.
- d. We will support the chair in their role of leading the board and ensuring appropriate conduct.

2.4 Respect confidentiality

- a. We will observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of school when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils or families. This covers all forms of verbal and written communication, including the various forms of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.
- b. We will not reveal the details of any committee vote.

- c. We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
- d. We will ensure the use of official school/trust email addresses for all official correspondence.
- e. We understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after a governor leaves office.
- f. We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.

2.5 Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent

- a. We will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the board's business and these will be recorded in the Register of Business Interests.
- b. We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the need arise.
- c. If a conflicted matter arises in a meeting, we will offer to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and any subsequent vote.
- d. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school/trust's website.
- e. We will act in the best interests of the school/trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group.
- f. We 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 Governance Colleague and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the Trust's website.
- g. We accept that information relating to board members will be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database of governors (Get information about schools), some of which will be publicly available.
- h. In the interests of transparency, we agree that brief biography information provided by Governance Colleagues be published on trust/ school websites.
- i. We understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions.
- j. Foundation Advocates in particular, aided by their colleagues, have a specific role in preserving and developing the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the school in accordance with the trust deed.
- k. 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 (see annex) or which may place pupils at risk.

3. Breach of this code of conduct

- 3.1 If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; the Trust Board / Primary Advocate Board or Secondary Stakeholder Board will only use suspension/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.
- 3.2 Should it be the Chair that we believe has breached this code, another Trustee, such as the vice chair, will investigate.

4. Agreement

Trustees and governors will be expected to confirm on the Declarations area of GovernorHub profile that they have read and understood the code of conduct and agree to abide by its contents on an annual basis.

Appendix A: 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.

Appendix B: The Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education

The Ethical Leadership Commission has developed the following Framework for Ethical Leadership to help school leaders take difficult decisions. As important as the language is, these aren't just fine words, they are meant to support a culture in which ethical decision making can flourish.

1. Selflessness School and college leaders should act solely in the interest of children and young people.
2. Integrity School and college leaders must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, they must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.
3. Objectivity School and college leaders must act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Leaders should be dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children and young people.
4. Accountability School and college leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. Openness School and college leaders should expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from scrutiny unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. Honesty School and college leaders should be truthful.
7. Leadership School and college leaders 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. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead schools and colleges and those who volunteer to govern them.
8. Schools and colleges serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do. Leaders should show leadership through the following personal characteristics or virtues:
 - a. **Trust:** *leaders are trustworthy and reliable*
We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.
 - b. **Wisdom:** *leaders use experience, knowledge and insight*
We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our schools and colleges with propriety and good sense.
 - c. **Kindness:** *leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper*
We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.

Code of Conduct for Trustees, Governors & Advocates

- d. **Justice:** *leaders are fair and work for the good of all children*
We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.
- e. **Service:** *leaders are conscientious and dutiful*
We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.
- f. **Courage:** *leaders work courageously in the best interests of children and young people*
We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.
- g. **Optimism:** *leaders are positive and encouraging*
Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.

Appendix C: Communication and use of social media

Governance Colleagues will use their DMAT email accounts for all correspondence in respect of their role or the business of their board or committee.

The Noticeboard area of Governor Hub is the primary means of communication between members of a board or committee.

Individual Boards may use an external communication method such as, a WhatsApp group, providing that:

- The group is private and not accessible to anyone other than committee members
- The group is set up and administered by a member of the committee and membership is optional

Use of social media platforms may **not** be used by any Governance Colleague in the capacity of their role.

A Governance Colleague may not make any public comment about the Trust, or the business of the Trust, on any social media platform without the express approval of the Trust Leader or their delegated officer.

A Governance Colleague should ensure that their personal social media profile clearly states that comments made on that platform are expressly personal.

A Governance Colleague must not respond to any conversation, comment or string on any social media platform in anything other than an expressly personal capacity. There must be a clear separation between their personal profile and their governance role.