

SESSET

Trustee and Governor Code of Conduct Policy Approval

South East Surrey Schools Education Trust

APPROVED BY THE TRUSTEES ON

7th October 2019

SIGNED BY CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

DATE

School Governing Body Approval

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS ON

SIGNED BY CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

DATE

NEXT REVIEW DATE

AUTUMN TERM 2022

Code of Conduct for the SESSET Board of Trustees and School Governing Boards

This code sets out the expectations of, and commitment required, from trustees and school governors in order for the Board of Trustees and the Governing Boards of SESSET schools to properly carry out their work within the Trust, the schools, and the community.

The code may be amended by governing bodies to include specific reference to the ethos of each particular school within SESSET, and to reflect the specific governing board and school structure. Unless otherwise stated it applies to all levels of school governance.

This Code should be read in conjunction with the applicable laws, SESSET's Articles of Association, and the agreed Scheme of Delegation.

The Board of Trustees has the following responsibilities:

The Board of Trustees sets the vision for the trust and holds the executive leader to account for delivering the trust's strategic plan.

The board must have robust, standardised and efficient processes for effective governance, including for:

- The oversight and performance management of executive leaders and other key staff
- Receiving management information in a format that enables comparison of the performance of schools across the trust
- Managing risk, including setting and managing risk appetite, tolerance and mitigation strategies
- Ensuring compliance, regularity, propriety and value for money
- Ensuring accurate and up-to-date documentation is maintained, and
- The effective communication of the board's decisions and their impact to the interested parties e.g. parents, the community, school governing bodies,

Each school governing board has the following strategic functions:

To establish the strategic direction of the school, by:

- Setting and ensuring clarity of vision, values, and objectives for the school
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Meeting all statutory duties

To ensure accountability, by:

- Recommending the appointment of the headteacher for ratification by the Board of Trustees
- Monitoring the educational performance of the school and progress towards agreed targets
- Managing the performance of the headteacher
- Engaging with stakeholders
- Contributing to the school's self-evaluation and ensuring this evaluation is accurate

To oversee financial performance, by:

- Setting the budget
- Monitoring spending against the budget
- Ensuring money is well spent and value for money is obtained
- Ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

Individuals on each board must:

Role & Responsibilities

- Understand the purpose of the board and the role of the executive leaders
- Accept that trustees and governors have no legal authority to act individually, except when the relevant board (i.e. trustee or governing board) has delegated authority to do so, and therefore trustees and governors may speak on behalf of the board only when specifically authorised to do so
- Accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or its delegated agents. This means that trustees and governors will not speak against majority decisions outside the trustee or governing board meeting
- Accept that trustees and governors have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as they have responsibility for staff, trustees and governors will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer
- Encourage open governance and to act appropriately
- Consider carefully how decisions made may affect the community and other schools, both within and outwith SESSET
- Be mindful of governors' responsibilities to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of their school and of SESSET. Governors' actions within the school and the local community will reflect this
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints, follow the procedures established by SESSET and/or the governing board
- Actively support and challenge the executive leaders
- Accept and respect the difference in roles between the trustee and governing boards and staff, ensuring that trustees and governors work collectively for the benefit of the organisation
- Respect the role of the executive leaders and their responsibility for the day to day management of the organisation and avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements
- Agree to 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
- When formally speaking or writing in the trustee or governing role, ensure trustee and/or governors' comments reflect current organisational policy even if they might be different to personally held views

- When communicating in their private capacity (including on social media), be mindful of and strive to uphold the reputation of SESSET and the school.

Commitment

- Acknowledge that accepting office as a trustee and/or a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy
- Involve themselves actively in the work of the trustee and/or governing board, and accept a fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups
- Make best efforts to attend all meetings and, where individuals are unable to attend, explain in advance why they are unable to do so
- In the case of governors, get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve themselves in school activities
- In the case of governors, visit the school, with all visits arranged in advance with the headteacher, and undertaken within the framework established by the governing board
- When visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer), maintain their underlying responsibility as a trustee or governor
- Consider seriously their individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and undertake relevant training
- Accept that in the interests of open governance, their full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the trustee and/or governing board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor and the body responsible for appointing them will be published on the trust or school's website
- In the interests of transparency, accept that information relating to governors will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of governors (Get information about schools).

Relationships

- Strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted
- Express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all communications with other governors and trustees, the clerk to the governing board and school staff both in and outside of meetings
- Support the chairs in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times
- Be prepared to answer queries from other board members in relation to delegated functions and consider any concerns expressed, and acknowledge the time, effort, and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved
- Seek to develop effective working relationships with the executive leaders, staff and parents, the trust, and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

- Observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school.
- Exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school and trust business arise outside a trust or governing board meeting
- Not reveal the details of any trust or governing board vote
- Ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.

Conflicts of interest

- Record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people trustees or governors are connected with) that trustees and governors have in connection with the trust and governing boards' business in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting, offer to leave the meeting whilst that matter is discussed
- Accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the trust's and school's website
- Declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise
- Always act in the best interests of the trust and the schools as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the trust or governing board.

Ceasing to be a trustee or a governor

- Understand that all the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after a trustee or a governor leaves office.

Breach of this code of conduct

Where there is reason to believe this code has been breached, trustees/governors must raise this issue with the chair of trustees/governors as appropriate who will ensure the matter is properly investigated. The trust or governing board will only use suspension/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.

Should it be the chair that is the subject of a suspected breach of this code, another trust or governing board member, such as the vice-chair must be notified so they can investigate the matter.

This Code of Conduct seeks to ensure that the seven principles of public life are upheld in all aspects of school governance.

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.

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.

Objectivity - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

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.

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.

Honesty – Holders of public office should be truthful

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.