

# **Code of Conduct for Trustees of The Wensum Trust**

<b>This policy was created and ratified by the Trust Board in:</b>	<b>October 2020</b>
<b>The policy owner is:</b>	<b>Trustee Board</b>
<b>This policy will be reviewed by the Trust Board in: (unless earlier review is recommended by the Trust)</b>	<b>October 2021</b>
<b>Policy Version:</b>	<b>V2</b>
<b>Signed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees:</b>	<b>Signed by J Smith, Chair of Trustees</b>

## Code of Conduct

This code sets out the expectations on the Trustees role and duties and level of commitment required in order for the Trust board to properly carry out its work within the Trust, its schools and the wider community.

This Code should be read in conjunction with the most up-to-date relevant laws and guidelines for academies including but not limited to the Governors Handbook, Academies Financial Handbook, Wensum Trust's articles of association and our agreed scheme of delegation.

### **The governing board has the following core strategic functions:**

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting and ensuring clarity of vision, values, and the objectives for Wensum Trust
- Agreeing the academy improvement strategy of the trust and member academies with priorities and targets clearly defined.
- Meeting our statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the lead executive (CEO)
- Monitoring the educational performance of our schools and progress towards agreed targets
- Performance managing the lead executive (CEO)
- Engaging with our stakeholders
- Contributing to Wensum Trust Trustees self-evaluation

Overseeing financial performance, by:

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

### **As individuals on the board we agree to the following:**

#### **Role & Responsibilities**

- We understand the purpose of the board of Trustees and the role of our executive leaders.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the board has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing board when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board of Trustees or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing board meeting.

- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- We will encourage open governance and will act appropriately
- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect Wensum Trust, our academies, other academies, schools and the wider community.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our family of schools. Our actions within the trust and the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints we will follow the procedures established by the Wensum Trust governing board.
- We will actively support and challenge the executive leaders
- We will accept and respect the difference in roles between Trustees and staff, ensuring that we work collectively for the benefit of the organisation;
- We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day to day management. We will respect the role of the executive leaders and their responsibility for the day to day management of the organisation and will avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements;
- We agree to adhere to Wensum Trust's policies and the procedures of the Trustee governing board as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
- When formally speaking or writing in our Trustee role we will ensure our comments reflect current organisational policy even if they might be different to our personal views;
- When communicating in our private capacity (including on social media) we will be mindful of and strive to uphold the reputation of our organisation.

### **Demonstrate our commitment to the role**

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a Trustee is unpaid and at all times will involve the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the Trustee board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
- We will get to know the family of academies within Wensum Trust and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will make efforts to regularly visit each of the academies in Wensum Trust and that all visits must be arranged in advance with the senior executive leaders.

- When visiting a school within the trust in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer), we will maintain our underlying responsibility as a Trustee.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and will regularly undertake relevant training commensurate to the role of Trustee.
- 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 and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on Wensum Trust's website.
- We agree to adopt the seven principles of public life presented herein.

### **Build and maintain relationships**

- We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other trustees, the clerk to the governing board and school staff both in and outside of meetings.
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other board members 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 executive leaders, staff and parents of schools within Wensum Trust, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

### **Respect confidentiality**

- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside academy.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding Wensum Trusts' business arise outside of a governing board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
- We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
- We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.

## **Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent**

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people we are connected with) that we have in connection with Wensum Trust board's business in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting we will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time and subsequent vote.
- We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on Wensum Trusts' website.
- We will declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
- We will act in the best interests of the trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group.
- 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 Trustee and appointing body will be published on the Trust's website.
- We accept that the information relating to board members will be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database of governors and trustees (Get Information About Schools (GIAS)), some of which will be publicly available.

## **Ceasing to be a trustee**

- We understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after a Trustee leaves office

## **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 carry out a confidential investigation in order to recommend any action to the Board.
- The Trustee governing board will only use suspension or removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.
- Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, another governing board member, such as the vice chair will investigate.

## **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.

## **Acceptance of the Trustee Code of Conduct**

The Trustees will agree to abide by the Trustee Code of Conduct by completing the appropriate declaration within their personal profile on Governor Hub.

The code of conduct will be reviewed annually. Any new Trustees joining during the year will sign the relevant declarations on Governor Hub.