

ACTON HIGH SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY – CODE OF PRACTICE

This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from school Governors and Associate Members, in order for the governing body to properly carry out its work within the school and the community.

(i) The Governing Body of Acton High School adopted this Code of Practice on 4 July 2012 and revised it on 13 July 2016.

(ii) The next date for review by the Governing Body is May 2017.

(iii) Governors are expected to sign up to this code at their induction or when changes have been made to the code. The Clerk will hold a record of this along with each Governor's Declaration of Interests form.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

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1. Aims

- a. The purpose of the governing body is to help the school provide the best possible education for each of its students, and to enable them to reach the highest standards of achievement.
- b. All Governors are expected to contribute to the development of the school; its strategic framework; determining the character, aims, ethos and values of the school; developing its policies; ensuring financial accountability and value for money.
- c. Governors are expected to behave as "critical friends" to the school at all times. This includes monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, offering support, constructive advice, a sounding board for ideas, a second opinion on proposals and help where needed. This will also include challenging and asking questions of the Headteacher.

2. General Standards

Governors hold a public office and are expected to abide by the principles governing those in public life. These principles apply at all times and should also guide the work and operation of the governing body. Based on the Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (or 'Nolan Committee'), these principles are:

- **Selflessness**

Governors should take all decisions solely in terms of the school's interest. They should not seek to pursue a policy or course of action solely because it benefits family or friends. They must recognise that the reason for holding office is for the benefit of all the students at the school not one particular group in isolation.

- **Integrity**

Governors should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

- **Objectivity**

In carrying out school business, including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, Governors should make their choices on merit.

- **Accountability**

Governors are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

- **Openness**

The Governing Body should be as open as possible about 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 this. They should be mindful of the reasons for determining information as confidential in cases other than when individuals are named or directly affected.

- **Honesty**

Governors have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects public interest.

- **Leadership**

The Governing Body should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

3. Expectations

Mutual understanding and co-operation leads to a more successful governing body.

The Governing Body expects the School to:

- a. understand and respect its statutory role and purpose
- b. recognise the shared commitment to school improvement and securing the best outcomes for every child
- c. respect Governors as volunteers who bring other skills, experiences and perspectives, and value their contribution
- d. work openly with the governing body and provide clear, concise and relevant information on which to base decisions in a timely manner
- e. enable all Governors to become involved in the life of the school
- f. contribute to the induction, training and development of Governors
- g. ensure that where educational jargon is unavoidable it is at least explained

The School expects the Governing Body to:

- a. respect the professional expertise of the Headteacher and staff
- b. work openly in partnership with the Headteacher and staff for the benefit of the school and its students
- c. demonstrate its commitment, collectively and individually
- d. act and take decisions that are in the best interests of the school and not those of self, individuals or groups
- e. support the school with parents and in the community
- f. recognise the need for both Governor induction and ongoing training and development

Breach of this code:

- a. 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/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways. Procedure is addressed in the GB governance and administration policy.
- b. Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, another Governor, such as the vice chair will investigate.

4. Individual Governor Responsibilities

The expectation of individual Governors is that they will:

- a. keep in mind the school mission statement and Acton High School cornerstones
- b. enhance the work of the governing body to enable a strong focus on raising standards, so that every student achieves their potential
- c. be mindful that the role does require a significant level of commitment in terms of time and energy
- d. demonstrate their commitment by getting to know the school and becoming involved in school life and activities
- e. develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher, senior management team, teachers, support staff, parents, local authority and other relevant agencies where appropriate
- f. take personal responsibility for their own ongoing training and development
- g. serve on at least one committee and attend meetings (governing body/committees/working group) promptly and for their full duration whenever possible
- h. prepare for meetings so they are well informed, having at minimum read all of the papers sent out with the agenda
- i. play an active part in meetings
- j. give as much notice as possible to the chair or Headteacher if they cannot attend a meeting
- k. accept that regular non-attendance at meetings will require them to re-evaluate their commitment and may lead to disqualification
- l. accept a fair share of responsibility, including serving on committees and working groups, and visiting the school
- m. should raise new items for the agenda with the Chair at least 21 working days before the meeting to ensure that it can be included on the agenda
- n. support the school with parents and in the community
- o. recognise the corporate status of the governing body and the concept of collective responsibility
- p. should listen to and respect the views of others and be loyal to collective decisions made by

- the governing body
- q. respect confidentiality and the need to act with circumspection, for example: discussions regarding school business arising outside a governing board meeting, matters concerning specific members of staff or pupils (both inside or outside school), not revealing details of a governing body vote
 - r. comply with the school's communications policy, which applies to members of the Governing Body and use of social media
 - s. monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the governing body on a regular basis
 - t. should recognise that each member of the governing body has equal status irrespective of their appointing body (i.e. parents, staff, LA, or the governing body) unless particular responsibilities are conferred on them by the full governing body and to act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the governing body.
 - u. should, on ceasing to be a Governor, ensure that all information relating to the school is returned to the school for its effective disposal.
 - v. undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check on appointment or election to the Governing Body or as required by the school
 - w. complete a Declaration of Interests form to enable the GB to fulfil the responsibilities for publishing the Governors' Details and the Register of Interests may be in breach of the code of practice.

5. School Mission Statement

Achievement by All

Our students will develop: **aspirations** for themselves and for our community; **skills** that will lead them to pursue successful working lives; a **passion for learning** that will stay with them; **values** that will enable them to be responsible and positive members and leaders of society; and a deep-rooted **belief** that they can **achieve excellence** in anything they choose to do.

These are our beliefs and values, and we will build our present and our future on them. All members of the school community should strive to uphold and promote these at all times, because to do so strengthens all of us:

Achievement is personal – everyone has their own potential; everyone can reach their own goals

Creativity frees us to attempt the new and the extraordinary – it comes in many forms, and everyone can be creative

Taking personal responsibility is essential for our success – in the end, all good things come from our own efforts

Optimism is the life-blood of success – we must never let anything make us feel that we can't succeed in the end

Never giving up is the key to meeting life's challenges – everyone fails sometimes, and we learn from our mistakes

High expectations of ourselves and each other drive us all forward

Independent thought and discovery is both joyful and necessary for us all

Growing together as a community comes from respecting and welcoming our differences

Helping each other to learn makes each of us successful, and it is what we must expect from each other

6. Governors' Role in Hearings

Governors have a key role in hearings. We need to listen to and read the evidence put before us, to ensure everyone involved has the opportunity to express themselves and put their side of the case and to consider carefully the decision we make.

Our decisions can have far-reaching consequences for the individuals involved and for the school as a whole. We need to conduct ourselves in line with adjudicatory principles.

Although hearings can sometimes be time consuming for the Governors who volunteer for this work, they can also be of benefit where a constructive outcome is reached as a result.

We believe our hearings should reflect the following principles:

- a. Governors should ensure there is no bias in our consideration, nor any perception of bias. Governors should declare any interest before putting ourselves forward for a particular panel meeting. For example, if we know the child or parents concerned or have worked closely with a member of staff involved, or if we know a victim of an incident, we should stand down from this particular panel. In such cases (including any complaint) this requirement also means the Governors conducting the hearing must have as little prior knowledge of it as possible.
- b. Governors need to consider all the evidence put before them by all parties before reaching a decision. For example, in the case of a disciplinary panel, Governors should take heed of the positive behaviour or achievements of the student or member of staff concerned as well the issue being heard.
- c. During any decisions on exclusion of a student, full consideration should be given to the impact on other students or staff who will be affected by the continued presence of that student. The panel must balance the interests of the pupil at risk of exclusion, taking into account the seriousness of the incident, the pupil's past behaviour and the consequences for her or him of the exclusion, with the interests of all the other members of the school community. That includes the risk of undermining the Headteacher's authority and the general climate of discipline within the school.