Waterton
Academy Trust

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct for Members, Trustees and Governors of Waterton Academy Trust

watertonacademytrust.org

This code sets out the expectations on, and commitment required from Members, Trustees and Governors in order for each Board / Committee to properly carry out its work within the school/s and the community. This code applies to all levels of Trust governance and should be read in conjunction with all relevant governance documentation.

Where options are given (e.g., school/trust) please consider the option that best describes the role that you are playing within Waterton Academy Trust.

Once this code has been adopted by the board, all those involved in governance agree to faithfully abide by it.

We will abide by the Principles of Public Life (see page 6), apply the highest standards in our role and we will;

1. act within our powers
2. promote the success of the trust
3. exercise independent judgement
4. exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence
5. avoid conflicts of interest
6. not accept benefits from third parties
7. declare interest in proposed transactions or arrangements

As Trustees / Governors, we will focus on our purpose;

1. Strategic leadership; defining a vision, fostering a culture and ethos, and championing the strategy.
2. Accountability and assurance; providing robust and effective oversight of performance and operations.
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.
4. Engagement; strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders.

As individuals on the board (or Academy Standards Committee) we agree to:

Fulfil our role & responsibilities

1. We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management.
2. We will fulfil our role and responsibilities as set out in our scheme of delegation.
3. We will develop, share and live the ethos and values of our school/s.
4. We agree to adhere to school/trust policies and procedures as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
5. We shall fully co-operate with individual requests that are necessary to ensure organisational compliance, such as disclosure and barring or right to work checks.
6. We will work collectively for the benefit of the school/s.
7. We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.

8. We will consider how our decisions may affect the school/s and local community.
9. We will stand by the decisions that we make as a collective.
10. 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.
11. We will only speak or act on behalf of the board if we have the authority to do so.
12. We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice.
13. When making or responding to complaints we will follow the established procedures.
14. We will strive to uphold the school's / trust's reputation in our private communications (including on social media).
15. We will not do anything, either in undertaking our governance role or outside of this, which brings the school /trust into disrepute.
16. We will have regard to our responsibilities under The Equality Act and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all.
17. Those governing at local level (Academy Standards Committees) will act as the local ambassadors for the Trust.

Demonstrate our commitment to the role

1. We will involve ourselves actively in the work of the board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, serving on committees or working groups where required.
2. We will make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend, explain in advance why we are unable to.
3. We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
4. We will get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
5. We will visit the school/s and when doing so will make arrangements with relevant staff in advance and observe school and board protocol.
6. 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.
7. We will participate in induction training, prioritise training in required areas (such as safeguarding) and commit to developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.
8. We will conduct ourselves in the same way in a virtual meetings as when attending in person, including attending with video and audio on (where possible) and following all set procedures.

Build and maintain relationships

1. We will develop effective working relationships with school leaders, staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders from our local community/ communities.

2. Those governing at local level (Academy Standards Committees) will champion the voices of our school community and stakeholders.
3. Trustees will engage with and be accountable to those governing at local level.
4. Trustees will respect the remit of, and engage constructively with, relevant authorities, sector bodies and other trusts.
5. We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings.
6. We will support the chair in their role of leading the board and ensuring appropriate conduct.
7. We will work to create an inclusive environment where each board member's contributions are valued equally.

Respect confidentiality

1. 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.
2. We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
3. We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
4. When attending meetings virtually we will be mindful of our surroundings, being aware of others overhearing the meeting particularly if discussing sensitive matters.
5. We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.
6. We will practice good ICT security, keep personal data safe and support GDPR compliance.

Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent

1. 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.
2. We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the need arise.
3. 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.
4. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school/trust's website.
5. We will act in the best interests of the school/trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group.
6. 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 governor and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school's website.
7. 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.

The role and conduct of a Parent Governor

Parent Governors provide a vital "parental viewpoint" to the Academy Standards Committee (ASC), but it's important to remember that a Parent Governor is not a representative for parents at the school, or to be used as mechanism to address any personal concerns.

It's important that the ASC has a range of perspectives and views which is why Parent Governors and Staff Governors are appointed, alongside Governors who are from the community, and also have a range of skills and expertise to effectively provide the support and challenge. Although elected by fellow parents or staff members, neither Parent Governors nor Staff Governors are to be a spokesperson for particular views of parents or staff. Keep the parental perspective in mind and approach all matters with the question 'What do I think as parent about this, and what may other parents think?'

A Parent Governor should work in partnership with other Governors and the senior leadership team to look at the priorities for the school and work together to raise standards and improve outcomes for all children. Every Governor has a responsibility to hold the Headteacher to account, and ask robust and challenging questions, but these must be appropriate and objective, and meetings should not be used to raise issues affecting a Governor's own child as there are policies and procedures in place for those issues to be addressed.

The role of Parent Governor can be a very rewarding one, and there are plenty of opportunities to learn new skills and work closely with a wide range of people. The experience is also good for your CV. There are, however, certain formalities and duties which are required to be adhered to including this Code of Conduct, and training and development will be offered to support you in your role.

Breach of this Code

We understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions including removal from the board as a last resort.

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 which is 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, and 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 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.

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Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Change/Reference
3	September 2024	L Clark	New policy format
4	September 2025	L Clark	GDPR compliance; removed reference to Hubs
6	September 2026	L Clark	Small updates to align with NGA guidance which do not fundamentally change the code.