



CODE OF CONDUCT

Tees Valley Education Trust

The Board of Trustees of Tees Valley Education Trust adopted this Code of Conduct in Autumn 2024.

Trustees will sign the Code of Conduct at the first trust board meeting of each school year.

Version:	1.1
Next review date:	September 2025
Director Lead	Emma Chawner with RCBC Governance Service
Operational Lead/Reviewer	Emma Chawner
Statutory (Y/N)	N
Published on website (Y/N)	N
Type of document:	Other
Approved by:	Trust Board

This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from all trustees, in order for the trust board to properly carry out its work within the aims and values of the trust, its schools and the extended community.

The code of conduct is anchored in the [Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life](#). It also aligns with the [Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education](#) which helps to guide governing boards in their decision making and behaviour.

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.

The Trust Board has the following strategic functions:

In trusts, the purpose of governance is to provide:

1. strategic leadership
2. accountability and assurance
3. strategic engagement

The board has collective accountability and strategic responsibility for the trust. It has a focus on ensuring the trust delivers an excellent education to pupils while maintaining effective financial management and must ensure compliance with:

1. the trust's charitable objects
2. regulatory, contractual and statutory requirements
3. their funding agreement

The board also has:

- strategic and statutory responsibility for safeguarding and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) arrangements within (and across) the academy trust ensuring the promotion of pupil welfare and for keeping their estates safe and well-maintained.
- a role in making sure that it delivers its commitment to other schools and academies, however it is done.

As individuals on the Trust Board, we agree to the following:

Personal Attributes

- **Committed** - Devoting the required time and energy to the role and ambitious to achieve best possible outcomes for young people. Prepared to give time, skills and knowledge to developing ourselves and others in order to create highly effective governance.
- **Confident** - Of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations, to express our opinion and to play an active role on the trust board.
- **Curious** - Possessing an enquiring mind and an analytical approach and understanding the value of meaningful questioning.
- **Challenging** - Providing appropriate challenge to the status quo, not taking information or data at face value and always driving for improvement.
- **Collaborative** - Prepared to listen to and work in partnership with others and understanding the importance of building strong working relationships within the trust and with senior leaders, staff, parents and carers, pupils, the local community and employers.
- **Critical** - Understanding the value of critical friendship which enables both challenge and support, and self-reflective, pursuing learning and development opportunities to improve their own and whole board effectiveness.
- **Creative** - Able to challenge conventional wisdom and be open-minded about new approaches to problem-solving; recognising the value of innovation and creative thinking to organisational development and success.

Fulfil our role & responsibilities

- We agree to follow the [charity governance code](#).
- We understand the purpose of the trust board and the role of the senior leaders.
- We will fulfil our role and responsibilities as set out in the trust scheme of delegation.
- We will develop, share and live the ethos and values of our trust.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the trust when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the trust or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the trust board meetings.
- We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice.
- We will encourage open governance and will act appropriately.
- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the local community, the trust and its schools.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation the trust and its schools. Our actions within the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to complaints we will follow the procedures established by the trust.
- We will actively support and challenge the senior leaders.
- We will accept and respect the difference in roles between the trust board and staff, ensuring that we work collectively for the benefit of the organisation.
- We will respect the role of the senior leaders and their responsibility for the day-to-day management of the trust and avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements.
- We agree to adhere to the trust's rules, policies and procedures, as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
- When formally speaking or writing in our governing role we will ensure our comments reflect current trust 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 the trust and its schools.
- We will have regard to our responsibilities under [The Equality Act](#) and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all;
- We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
- We shall fully cooperate with individual requests that are necessary to ensure organisational compliance, such as disclosure and barring or right to work checks.

Demonstrate our commitment to the role

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a trustee involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the trust board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups, where required.
- We will make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
- We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
- We will get to know the school(s) well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school and trust activities.
- We will visit the school(s) and when doing so will make arrangements with relevant staff in advance and observe school and trust protocol.
- When visiting a school in a personal capacity (for example, as a parent or carer), we will continue to honour the commitments made in this code.
- We will participate in induction training and take responsibility for developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.
- 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.

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, local governors, the governance professional 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 local governing bodies or other trust 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 senior leaders, staff and parents, the trust, local governors, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.
- We will champion the voices of our schools' communities and stakeholders.
- We will engage with and be accountable to those governing at local level.
- We will respect the remit of, and engage constructively with, relevant authorities, sector bodies and other trusts.
- We will work to create an inclusive environment where each board member's contributions are valued equally.

The sector-led academy trust governance code [principle 5: board effectiveness](#) has more information on how the board can work as an effective team.

Safeguarding

- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school(s) and trust and to keep our pupils safe.
- We will ensure that any safeguarding allegations against members of staff, volunteers, trustees or governors are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- We will ensure that the trust board complies with safeguarding duties set out in legislation and ensure that the policies, procedures and training in our school are effective; comply with the law at all times and; allow for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
- 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.

Respect confidentiality

- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff, pupils or families, both inside and outside of school.
- We will always exercise the greatest prudence when discussions regarding trust business arise outside of board meetings.
- We will not reveal the details of any trust board vote.
- We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.

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 the 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.
- We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
- We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the trust website.
- We will act in the best interests of the school(s) and the trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the trust board;
- We will not accept benefits from third parties.
- We will act as a trust board member; 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 trust board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of trustee and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the trust website.
- We accept that information relating to trustees will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database (GIAS), some of which will be made publicly available.

Ceasing to be a trustee

- We understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after a trust board member leaves office.

Breaches of this code of conduct

- We understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions;
- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the Chair and the Chair will investigate; the trust 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 we believe has breached this code, another trust board member, such as the Vice Chair will investigate.

Self-Evaluation

- As a trust board, we believe evaluation is an important element of improving the effectiveness of the board. An annual self-appraisal by means of a questionnaire, along with records of attendance at meetings and visits to school(s), will provide assurance that individuals serving on the trust board are complying with this code.

The objective of the appraisal is to enable trustees to evaluate their performance, to build upon strengths and address any areas for development.

SIGNED UNDERTAKING:

As a member of the trust board I will:

- Adhere to the principles of the Code of Conduct set out in the previous pages;
- Always have the achievement and well-being of the children and the reputation of the trust and its school(s) at heart;
- Do all I can to be an ambassador for the trust and its school(s), publicly supporting its aims, values and ethos;
- Never say or do anything publicly that would embarrass the school or trust, the academy Headteachers or staff; and,
- Follow the [charity governance code](#).

Signed: Date:.....
Trustee