



Code of Conduct for Local Governing Bodies within Plymouth CAST, Multi Academy Trust

2016 Version

In its legal constitution, Plymouth CAST is a company and a charity. However, more importantly it is a network of 35 schools sharing a single mission and purpose. In all our actions we seek to apply the teaching of Jesus Christ within the Catholic Christian tradition of the Diocese of Plymouth. The trustees of Plymouth CAST are the company Directors and the Board of Directors carries ultimate legal responsibility for all aspects of our schools' conduct and performance.

However, in order to be most effective, Plymouth CAST has from its inception devolved high levels of autonomy to the Local Governing Body in each school. This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from local governors in order for the Local Governing Body to properly carry out its work within the school and the community. It should be read in conjunction with other key Plymouth CAST documents especially:

- Plymouth CAST Scheme of Delegation & Governor Guidance
- Plymouth CAST Articles of Association

which are available via your clerk, from the Office Manager at the central support office or on the Plymouth CAST portal.

The Board of Directors of Plymouth CAST gratefully recognises the work of the National Governors Association whose own model document provided the basis for this Code of Conduct. The overall format of the NGA publication has been retained here as a further acknowledgement of the NGA's work. Further information about the NGA can be seen on the back page of this Code.

The governing board has the following core strategic functions:

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting the objectives for the school (with specific reference to the Catholic mission - which is the fundamental purpose of our school - and having regard to any CAST network or Academy Area objectives)
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the head teacher (in conjunction with the Bishop's Episcopal delegate for Schools and Area Adviser)
- Monitoring progress towards targets
- Performance managing the head teacher
- Engaging with stakeholders
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

Ensuring financial probity, by:

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

As individuals on the board we agree to the following:

Role & Responsibilities

- We understand the purpose of the Local Governing Body (LGB) and the role of the head teacher.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when we have been specifically delegated to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing board when so authorised.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the LGB 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 government and will act appropriately.
- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the other Plymouth CAST schools, other schools (especially those who are close neighbours) and the local and wider community.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the Plymouth CAST network and Board of Directors.
- We will actively support the head teacher by bringing our collective wisdom and critical eye to all key dimensions to the life of the school. We will always act courteously but recognise that this role means being prepared to ask challenging questions, even when they might not be welcome.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the LGB and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups (where used).
- 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 school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities: curricular and extra-curricular; academic, social and spiritual.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training.
- We accept that in the interests of open government, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing body, 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.

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 governors, parents, our own staff and the CAST central support team.
- 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 governors 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 head teacher, staff and parents, CAST network schools and central support as well as with relevant agencies and the community.
- We will ensure that our decisions are guided by the greater good of the whole CAST network and its Catholic mission, rather than by particular advantage to the school for which we share stewardship.

Confidentiality

- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed to require this and specifically where they concern particular members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school. (We recognise that confidentiality cannot be maintained if we only speak 'to one other trustworthy person'.)
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a LGB meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any local governing body vote.

Conflicts of interest

- 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 governing 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 accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school's website.
- We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
- We will 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 board.

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 investigate; the LGB 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 governor, 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. 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.

National Governors' Association

The National Governors' Association (NGA) is an independent charity representing and supporting governors, trustees and clerks in maintained schools and academies in England. The NGA's goal is to improve the well-being of children and young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. It does this by providing information, guidance, research, advice and training. It also works closely with, and lobbies, UK government and educational bodies, and is the leading campaigning national membership organisation for school governors and trustees.

The NGA online Guidance Centre is the information hub for governors. It supports you in your role as a governor, giving you access to up to date guidance and advice covering all aspects of school governance, including finance; staffing; Ofsted; curriculum; special educational needs; legislation and school improvement.

Practical governance resources include sample documents; templates; checklists; information summaries; insights; case studies and much more.

To join the NGA and receive regular updates, contact:

T: 0121 237 3780 | E: membership@nga.org.uk | www.nga.org.uk