



PolyMAT

Code of Conduct for Trust Governance (applicable to Members, Trustees and Academy Committee Members)

Reviewed: June 23

Approved: September 23

Revision Due: June 25

This code sets out the expectations and commitment required from all working in governance in order for the Trust Board and its subsidiaries to properly carry out its work within the trust, schools and the community.

Functions of the Trust Board, Committees and LACs

The functions of each level of governance are set out in the PolyMAT Governance Handbook. Anyone occupying a position within PolyMAT's governance is required to be familiar with these functions and to carry out their duties in respect to them.

As individuals involved in governance, we agree to the following:

Role & Responsibilities

- We will adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life as outlined at the end of the Code of Conduct.
- We understand the purpose of the board upon which we sit and the role of the Trust and School leaders who work with us.
- 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 board when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We must not be seen to be following our own individual agendas or interests over those of the collective.
- We must demonstrate a willingness to listen, empathise and take advice in order to make the best collective decisions.
- We will engage in meetings in a collegiate manner, focusing on the core strategic functions which lead to improved standards for students.
- We understand that our core responsibility is to discuss issues relating to raising standards for students and that matters of administration, procedure and legalities are referred to the Clerk/and or the Trust's legal representation or dealt with outside of meetings in order to maximise the impact of the board or committee.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board 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 the community and other schools.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our Trust and our schools. Our actions within our schools and the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints we will follow the procedures established by the Trust board.
- We will actively promote the highest educational outcomes for students through our effective support and challenge of the Trust Executive and Head Teachers/Heads of School.
- We understand that our influence is through the Board or Committees upon which we sit and that we have no individual powers of authority.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a trustee or academy committee member involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the trust or academy committee, 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 our schools well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will visit the schools, with all visits arranged in advance with the Head Teacher/Head of School and undertaken within the framework established by the academy committee.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and will undertake relevant training.
- We accept that, in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the trust board or academy committee, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of trustee or academy committee member and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the trust's and/or school's website.
- In the interests of transparency, we accept that information relating to trustees and academy committee members will be collected and logged on the school's Management Information System and the DfE's national database of governors (Edubase).

Relationships

- We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- We will only act through the appropriate lines of leadership within the Trust and will communicate directly with the Trust Executive and/or the Headteacher/Head of School. We will not compromise this line of communication or operate outside of it as this may undermine the work of the Executive/Leadership.
- We will understand the duty of care that we have for the leaders within the Trust and will communicate with clarity, consistency and kindness, all of which help develop strong relationships through which our roles are most likely to have impact and through which we are able to hold leaders to account more effectively.
- We will actively nurture relationships between ourselves and our leaders to ensure that our working environment is productive and enjoyable.
- We need to always work constructively with the Trust Executive and School Leadership Teams and demonstrate to all staff and students that we act in unity.
- We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other trustees and committee members and the clerk.
- We will support the chair in the 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 develop effective working relationships with the Trust Executive, Head Teachers, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.
- We are committed to ensuring that meetings are conducted in a timely fashion, that they abide by the agenda and that discussion is relevant, balanced and shared among the governing body. We will not tolerate meetings being side-tracked from the agenda or time being wasted/dominated by persistent questioning from any individual trustee or academy committee member.

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 school.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school/trust business arise outside a trust or academy committee meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any trust or academy committee 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 trust or academy committee'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/trust'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 trust or school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the academy committee as a parent or staff member.

Breach of this code of conduct

Every Members, Trustees and Academy Committee Members is under a duty to report any breach of this code or any grounds for believing that a breach of the code has occurred to the relevant Chair (and if the allegation is about the Chair, to the Vice- Chair).

Failing to report a breach of the code is itself a breach of the code

Any breach of this code will be treated extremely seriously and may result in suspension or removal of the Member, Trustee or Academy Committee Member. In the event of a breach of this code each Member, Trustee or Academy Committee Member agrees to participate fully in any investigations procedure instigated and to abide by any sanction that may be imposed on them for such breach.

Local Academy Committee Members

Following a breach of the code of conduct by **a member of the Local Academy Committee**:

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the Chair of the Local Academy Committee and the Chair will investigate, in the first instance through an informal conversation. If this conversation does not reassure the Chair or does not lead to acceptable behaviour, the formal process below will take place:
 - A formal conversation will take place between the individual causing concern and the Chair of the Local Academy Committee and a warning will be issued.

If a further breach occurs, a suspension may be issued for a fixed period of time **or the Academy Committee Member causing concern may be removed by a vote of the Trustees.**

- Should it be the Chair that we believe has breached this code, a Trustee will be appointed to investigate and take action in the same process as above.
- The Trustees reserve the right to directly remove any academy committee member if it is clear that the working relationships with other academy committee members and/or with the Head Teachers/Head of School has become damaging and irreparable.
- The Trust Board reserves the right to remove any member of the Local Academy Committee by vote if they feel that the member is not adhering to the Code of Conduct or not making an acceptable contribution to school governance.
- An elected parent academy committee member who is removed from the Trust Board for breach of the Code of Conduct will not be entitled to stand for re-election.
- Academy Committee members who are moved from the Local Academy Committee by the Trust Board will not be entitled to be reappointed to the board.

Trustees

Following a breach of the code of conduct by **a member of the Trust Board**:

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the Chair and the Chair will investigate, in the first instance through an informal conversation. If this conversation does not reassure the Chair or does not lead to acceptable behaviour, the formal process below will take place:
 - A formal conversation will take place between the trustee causing concern and the Chair of Trustees and a warning will be issued.
 - If a further breach occurs, a suspension may be issued for a fixed period of time or the trustee causing concern may be removed by a vote of the the members.

- Should it be the Chair that we believe has breached this code, another Trustee or Member will be appointed to investigate and take action in the same process as above.
- The Members reserve the right to directly remove any trustee if it is clear that the working relationships with other trustees and/or with the Trust Executive or School Leaders has become damaging and irreparable
- The Board of Members reserves the right to remove any member of the Trust Board by vote if they feel that the member is not adhering to the Code of Conduct or not making an acceptable contribution to Trust governance.

Members

Following a breach of the code of conduct by **a member of the Board of**

Members:

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the Chair and the Chair will investigate, in the first instance through an informal conversation. If this conversation does not reassure the Chair or does not lead to acceptable behaviour, the formal process below will take place:
 - A formal conversation will take place between the member causing concern and the Chair of Members and a warning will be issued.
 - If a further breach occurs, a suspension may be issued for a fixed period of time or the trustee causing concern may be removed by a vote of the Board of Members.
- Should it be the Chair that we believe has breached this code, another Member will be appointed to investigate and take action in the same process as above.

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.

Adopted by the Trust Board of PolyMAT September 2023.