

Code of Conduct for Governors of St Mary's School

This Code of Conduct is written with the aim of improving the Governing Body's working practice. As a Catholic school, St Mary's is committed to promoting the Catholic ethos and all Governors are expected to uphold this at all times.

AIMS AND STANDARDS

1. The purpose of the Governing Body is to help the school provide the best possible education for its pupils. It is accountable to the Trustees of the school (the SMG Order), to parents and to the wider local community for the way it carries out its functions. The Governing Body acts at all times in accordance with the requirements laid down in Acts of Parliament, the Governance Handbook (2015) and the school's Mission Statement. It also acts at all times fairly, without prejudice, and in accordance with the principles laid down by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. These are:
 - a. **Selflessness**. Holders of public office should take decisions 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.
 - b. **Integrity**. Holders of public office 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.
 - c. **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.
 - d. **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.
 - e. **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 this.
 - f. **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.
 - g. **Leadership**. Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

2. Employees of the school are not permitted to chair the full governing body. In certain circumstances, such as when the chair has to take urgent action, individual governors may formally be delegated to act on their own. In every other respect, all governors have equal power and enjoy the same esteem and status.

3. Governors are elected or appointed by different groups to which they may feel some loyalty. However, they are representatives of these groups and not delegates routinely reporting back.
4. The Governing Body's aim is always to work as a team in a truly collaborative manner. It recognises that individual commitments may be uneven due to personal circumstances. However, this should never cause it to work as an 'A' team (those willing and able to give the time) and a 'B' team (those willing to rubber-stamp decisions of the 'A' team). The Governing Body may delegate some of its responsibilities to others but it may not delegate its accountability.
5. The strength of the governing body lies in the talent of its members, and in its ability to work together as a team. Each governor is equally important, whether trustee, foundation, staff, parent, Authority or co-opted governor, and has an equal right to participate and to state his or her view, while respecting the views of others. Each governor makes up his or her own mind about specific issues. Once decisions are made by the group, individual governors are bound by them and are loyal to them.

CONFIDENTIALITY

6. From time to time the Governing Body will discuss items that are confidential. How individual governors vote and opinions regarding a named individual will always be regarded as confidential. Each governor respects the confidentiality of confidential items and must not disclose what individual governors have said or how they have voted. Reports which name individuals, including teachers, pupils or candidates for admission, are treated as confidential to the committee which receives them.
7. All reports to the governing body, or its committees, are public papers after the meeting has considered them and are made available at the school to anyone wishing to inspect them, unless the Governing Body decides they should be confidential. Governors and staff will not mention school business or names on social networking sites.

MEETINGS

8. All governors' meetings are private but the intention of the law is that their business is open, tempered with discretion. If Governors wish to do so, they may invite people to contribute to specific agenda items and others to observe meetings.
9. A great deal of time is spent preparing for, travelling to, attending and following up meetings. Governors are committed to making the most effective use of this time by planning well-structured agendas and running efficient meetings. The Governing Body keeps its meeting practice under regular review.

DECISIONS

10. Decisions are collective. The Governing Body always aims to move towards consensus, but there will be occasions where it will be necessary to take a vote. The main arguments on either side will be recorded impersonally. Having arrived at a decision - whether by vote or consensus - it is vital that all Governors remain loyal to that decision. The key question to consider when making any decision is "How will this decision benefit the education of the pupils of the school?"

WHO MAKES DECISIONS?

11. The Terms of Reference of the sub committees make this clear. The scheme is reviewed annually but in broad terms it aims to clarify how day-to-day management of the school is delegated to the Headteacher and how the committee structure works.

12. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Governors must avoid putting themselves in a position where there is a conflict of interests - actual or potential - between their personal interests and their duty to the governing body. Examples of when a governor should withdraw from a meeting to avoid such a conflict are when:

- a. the behaviour or progress of that governor's child is being discussed
- b. a personnel issue is being discussed in relation to a post where a teacher or staff governor or other employee at the school might directly or indirectly benefit from or be disadvantaged by the outcome.
- c. a contract for building work is being discussed and a governor has an interest in or is employed by one of the companies quoting.

13. The Clerk compiles and updates a 'Register of Interests' which can help to anticipate any such conflict.

COMMITMENT TO THE SCHOOL

14. **Catholic Ethos** All Governors are committed to the Catholic ethos of the school and to upholding it at all times.

15. **Induction**. New governors are encouraged to attend training both from the Diocese and from the LA.

16. **Meetings**. Governors commit themselves, as a high priority, to attend all governing body meetings and as many committee meetings as possible. To facilitate the best possible attendance, dates of all meetings are planned at the beginning of the academic year. To make the most effective use of meetings Governors also commit themselves to prompt starts and proper preparation, including having read and understood papers to be discussed.

17. VISITS

It is not possible to be an effective school governor without knowing about the school, the staff who run it and the children who learn in it. Governors have an agreed policy for visiting the school and classrooms, not as inspectors, but as those given a legitimate role in its strategic development. It is recognised that some governors may not be able to visit as often as others. Monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning is the responsibility of the Headteacher, not the Governing Body.

18. TRAINING

The Governing Body is dedicated to the development of the school and of those who work in it. It recognises that the central role it now has in that development will be effective only if Governors seek appropriate training and support.

19. HARNESSING TALENT

Where possible the Governing Body will recruit new members who possess the skills required. It will show respect for and utilise the different knowledge, skills and experiences of all governors.

Please sign this agreement and return to Clerk to the Governors

AGREEMENT

I agree to conform to the St Mary's School Code of Conduct for Governors as detailed in the document above.

Signed Date