



Trustee and Governor Code of Conduct

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I. Aims and Accountability

I.1 Acting at all times in best interests of children and young people

The overriding purpose of the Trust's Board of Trustees and each Local Governing Board (LGB) is to ensure that all member schools provide the best possible education for their students in accordance with the BET vision and strategy, and in respect of Steyning Grammar School, to uphold the School's special designation as a Church of England school and its Christian ethos.

Trustees and local governors (including those appointed ex officio) have equal status, and although appointed by different groups (e.g. parents, staff, Community, Diocese) the overriding concern is always the best interests of the students in each member School and the Trust as a whole.

As local governors and trustees, we undertake to act individually and collectively in the best interests of all current, and future, children and young people who attend, or are more likely to attend, the member Schools.

I.2 Role of Board/LGB

All local governors and each Local Governing Board is directly accountable to the Board of Trustees of BET, and indirectly accountable to its member school and wider local community for the way it carries out its functions. However, the Board of Trustees alone is directly accountable to its members, beneficiaries and associated regulators, for the way in which it carries out its functions. The Board of Trustees alone are the directors of the charitable company, and as such hold duties in law as directors and charitable trustees.

Trustees commit individually and collectively to comply with the Charity Code of Governance, and local governors undertake to recognise and support the principles of the Charity Code of Governance in their work.

I.3 Trust constitution and policies

As a committee of the Board, each local governing board is constituted according to the LGB Terms of Reference and the Trust's Articles of Association.

Both the Board and each local governing board must therefore act at all times in accordance with the Trust's constitutional documents including its Articles of Association and any approved Terms of Reference, and the legal requirements of any relevant regulators. Governors and trustees recognize that as volunteers they are subject to the Trust policies which apply to all Trust volunteers (including Acceptable Use, Equalities Objectives, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Data Protection, Anti Bribery and Corruption (including Gifts and Hospitality) and Whistleblowing) and that they will undertake appropriate mandatory induction and annual refresher training in such areas as required. Trustees and Local Governors are also reminded that they sit in a position of public office and are therefore subject to the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (Also referred to as the Nolan principles)

1.4 Board and Committee working together

In discharging their duties, and conducting business, trustees and governors will always be mindful of a responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the Trust and member school consistent at all times with the Trust Vision and Strategy. Trustees and Local Governors will strive to uphold the school and trust's reputation within private communications (including on social media), and at all times will act as local ambassadors for member Schools and the Trust, seeking advice and guidance and at direction of Heads of Schools as appropriate in such a role.

~~We, as~~ Trustees and local governors, commit to further the Trust's charitable objectives and its strategic vision upholding the Trust's reputation and constitutional status and ensuring the trust's ethos is effectively implemented through its policy framework.

2. Principles of Public Life

Appointments as local governors and trustees are "public appointments": there is no definition of "public appointment", but in essence, it means individuals giving of their time and skills for the public good. Such roles can be remunerated or voluntary, as for school governors. Employment law does not apply to any public appointment, including for the role of Headteacher ex officio governor or staff governor (which is a voluntary appointment, not remunerated). All those serving in public appointments are bound by the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Local governors and trustees, commit to acting at all times in accordance with the Principles of Public Life as set out below:

Selflessness - We will act solely in terms of the public interest

Integrity - We will avoid placing ourselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence us in our work. We will also not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare and resolve any interests and relationships at least annually and as they change during each year, and we accept we must declare new interests as they arise or conflicts in agenda items.

Objectivity - We will act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability - We are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions and will submit ourselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness - We will act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information will not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty - We will be truthful.

Leadership - We will exhibit these principles in our own behaviour. We will actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. We will undertake courageous conversations seeking advice and guidance as needed.

3. Working with Executive Leaders

3.1 Local Governing Bodies

3.1.1 In accordance with the LGB Terms of Reference, the local governing body is responsible

for ensuring Heads of Schools implement the Trust's overall vision and strategy within the context of the School. This includes:

- How the school should develop in order to maintain and improve its standards of education as set out in the School Improvement Plan, and
- Reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the impact of Trust policies and as appropriate approving School specific policies (or any part of a Trust policy) and procedures which support that development; and
- For Steyning Grammar School, upholding the School's special designation as a Church of England school and its Christian distinctiveness including with respect to the provision of collective worship and Religious Education;

3.1.2 LGBs recognise that the Head of School is responsible to the CEO for the implementation of policy, day-to-day management of the school and the implementation and delivery of the curriculum. Local governors, recognise that they must not become involved in operational matters directly or indirectly that should rightly be handled by the designated member of staff as directed by the Head of School.

3.1.3 The local governing body and Head of School will respect each other's roles and maintain a professional and open relationship, acknowledging the skills and contributions of all, supporting each other and recognising each other's respective responsibilities, so as to form a good working partnership.

3.1.4 The Board and each Local Governing Body will use staff (including BET executive staff) and governor time appropriately, sensitively and effectively, in particular noting that in the way it conducts its business, the Board and each local governing body will always have regard to the need for the Head of School, staff (including BET executive staff) and governors to maintain a reasonable work/life balance.

Local governors commit to acting strategically, supporting the wellbeing and workload of leaders, being ambassadorial, at the direction of Headteachers and committing to maintaining and enhancing the collective reputation of our School and Trust within public and private communications and expectations. LGBs contribute to the overall governance of Bohunt Education Trust as a critical friend to the school and to the Senior Leadership Team of their member School, and through the development, monitoring and evaluation of the School's delivery in its specific context of the Trust's vision and strategy.

3.2 Trust Board

3.2.1 The duties of the Board of Trustees and each individual trustee are set out in the funding agreements, legislation and Trust constitution. Trustees' core purposes are to:

- set vision and strategy for trust, including through stakeholder engagement and effective policy making
- hold Trust Leaders to account for the performance of the Trust as a whole and the academies individually
- demonstrate accountability in all aspects of public resources allocated to the Trust and its member schools, including as employer of all staff;
- for Steyning Grammar School, upholding the School's special designation as a Church of

England school and its Christian distinctiveness including with respect to the provision of collective worship and Religious Education;

3.2.2 The Board delegate the day to day management of the Trust to the CEO together with design implementation and delivery of curriculum, Trustees will not become involved in operational matters that should rightly be handled by the designated member of staff as directed by the CEO

3.2.3 All trustees have equal status, and although appointed by different groups (e.g. ex officio of the Diocese or members) the overriding concern is always the best interests of the students in the Trust as a whole.

3.2.4 In discharging their duties, trustees will be always be mindful of their responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the Trust and all member schools consistent at all times with the Trust Vision and Strategy,

Trustees, commit to acting strategically, fulfilling all responsibilities to all staff as a good employer, being ambassadorial, in consultation with the CEO and committing to maintaining and enhancing the collective reputation of our Schools and Trust in public and private communications and expectations. Trustees actively contribute to the overall governance of Bohunt Education Trust as a critical friend to the Trust and leadership teams and through our demonstrable delivery of core purposes.

4. Working Together as a Collective Body and role where appointed by another body/on behalf of a constituency

4.1 The Board and each Committee is a corporate entity and acts as a group. In certain limited and rare circumstances individual trustees or governors may have formally delegated powers to act on their own, as approved expressly by the Board of Trustees of BET. Individual trustees and local governors will speak or act on behalf of the governing body only when they have been authorised specifically to do so by the Head of School and CEO.

4.2 Each Trustee and local governor has an equal right to participate and to state their view in meetings, while respecting the views of others and, for any committee including a local governing board, the determinations of the Board of Trustees. The strength of the Trust Board and local governing board as separate bodies and together lies in their ability to work together as a team of individuals with individual skills and strengths, and to work with each other to deliver the BET Vision and strategy. Whilst encouraging the open expression of views at meetings, all governors and trustees accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body and the Board of Trustees where such decision impacts directly on the member School.

4.3 In particular, local governors are elected or appointed by different stakeholder groups and thus reflect the community they serve, without being delegates or representatives for any one constituency.

4.4 Any formal canvassing of the opinions of parents or the wider local community or other

stakeholders shall not be undertaken without the prior approval of the whole local governing board and the Head expressly. Any views obtained informally in non-public discussion with small groups of parents or other stakeholders are to be expected as being part of the role of all governors.

4.5 Unless specifically requested by the local governing board and the Head expressly, individual local governors and trustees shall not discuss specific subjects of local governing board business on social media or in other public fora or with local or national media. Any approach by the media to any individual governor should be redirected politely, without comment, to the BET Director of Communications, copying in the Head of School and the Chair of the LGB.

4.6 Once the local governing board or Board has reached a majority decision, local governors and trustees (in the case of the Board) will support that decision, even if they do not agree with it. That in principle excludes lobbying publicly or amongst staff or parents for a different outcome or canvassing views. Should any individual local governor or trustee be unable or unwilling to accept and support the majority decision or the decision of the Board of Trustees on a particular issue, then that governor should consider whether they can remain a member of the local governing board. Resignation would not release that governor or trustee from any previously-accepted duty of confidentiality

Local governors and trustees, commit as individuals to each other that:

- They will act impartially and selflessly
- They will not seek to canvass or be perceived as canvassing opinions or lobby for particular outcomes within our School or Trust's control internally or externally
- They will uphold the decisions made by the Board or any committee including local governing body in accordance with section 3 regardless of our own views
- They will not speak on social media or other public fora around any matter relating to our School or Trust without agreement from Head or CEO

5. Confidentiality and Information Flows

5.1 Trustees and Local Governors are expected to make whatever contributions they can to all discussions, and to all reports to the Local Governing Board or Board of Trustees, and will support the corporate decision-making process, maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality and discretion. Local governors will exercise the greatest prudence if a discussion of a potentially contentious issue affecting the school or the Trust arises outside the local governing body.

5.2 Each local governor and Trustee must respect the confidentiality of those items of business that have been designated by the local governing body or the Board of Trustees as confidential and must not disclose by any means what individual local governors (or trustees or any member of the BET executive or school leadership) have said or how they have voted whether confidential or not.

5.3 If there is evidence that an individual has not complied with their duty of confidentiality, then that may constitute grounds for suspension of that governor for a period of up to six months, or removal from the board, subject to discussion and approval by the Board of Trustees. Any suspension or removal would not release that local governor from any previously-accepted duty of

confidentiality.

5.4 All local governors undertake to support the provision of timely minutes and a summary report to the Board of Trustees following each local governing body meeting.

5.5 Local governors and Trustees agree and confirm that whilst closed social media platforms can be a useful tool in communication, discussion of local governing body or school matters on such platforms can expose the local governing board and the trust and is a contravention of the Nolan principles as set out in 1.9 above. Accordingly, use of such closed social media platforms including WhatsApp groups or messaging should be limited to purely notifications of administrative updates – such as change of meeting dates, or last minute invitations to school events, and in each case should be followed up and recorded by the usual method of communication from the clerk to the local governing body via email or GovernorHub.

All individuals commit that:

- They will keep all discussions confidential
- They will be alert to and aware of perceptions of conflicts of interest, or other steps we might take that might be perceived to suggest we are not acting impartially, honestly, selflessly or with integrity
- They will not use social media for governance or trustee work, other than for basic administrative purposes

6. Governor Relationships and Accountability to each other as members of the same body

6.1 The local governing board and Board will ensure it has sufficient local governors and trustees to undertake its duties effectively and by reference to its overall skills profile. To ensure that the Trust and school can fully utilise available skills and to provide an overview of the local governing body's composite skills and experience profile to assist with planning training, succession planning, and recruitment, governors are asked to provide information on their individual skills. This skills information will be recorded and maintained by the Clerk to the LGB/Board and an overall profile will be available to all local governors. This will be updated annually.

6.2 The local governing board and Board will ensure that it creates an environment which enables it to recruit proactively and retain effective trustees and local governors, recognising that all governors appointed by the community require formal approval from the Board of Trustees prior to appointment.

6.3 New local governors and trustees will be welcomed and provided with appropriate induction and training in accordance with the Induction Process. All trustees and local governors will, where requested, contribute to and support this process.

6.4 All local governors and trustees will strive to undertake training (whether formal or informal) relevant to their role, with a clear link to the School Improvement Plan and the requirements of their local governing board or Board's practice as a whole.

6.5 All governors and trustees will seek to contribute as far as they can to the work of their relevant body and the school outside formal meetings, including taking on additional responsibilities, where relevant and appropriate, such as sitting on governor panels and carrying out monitoring visits.

6.6 All governors and trustees participate in the work of the governing board; this includes preparing for meetings, attending meetings, contributing to discussion, and taking part in agreed actions. Where a governor or trustee cannot attend a meeting, they will send apologies in advance to the clerk and Chair which the Board or LGB can agree to accept or not accept; where a period of absence is prolonged (for 3 or more meetings in any 12 month period), the governor or trustee will engage with the Chair and clerk in order to consider appropriate next steps. All governors and trustees are expected to attend meetings.

6.7 All governors and trustees will become familiar with the School, or Trust as applicable, as a result of discussions with the relevant leaders and other senior staff, reading relevant papers, visiting the school as set out in BET visit protocol. and attending School events in the capacity of local governor or Trustee including at Steyning Grammar School, participation in and evaluation of Christian worship and RE and SIAMS.

6.8 All governors and trustees declare personal or pecuniary interests, and avoid using their position as a local governor or trustee for personal gain, or the gain of other outside parties, or to promote the interest of their own children to the detriment of others. Each governor or trustee will abide by the Trust's Guidance to Trustees and Local Governors around pecuniary interests. Each local governor accepts that the Trust is required by law to publish certain information on the Trust website and to share information relating to each local governor with regulators as required.

6.9 All governors and trustees will undertake at least one governor visit a term within the BET Governor and trustee Visit Framework

As individuals, we commit to each other, as well as our School and the whole Trust that they will:

- Play as full a part within the context of their own circumstances as possible in all governor and trustee activity; including training, preparing for and attending meetings, visiting formally, attending school events,
- Ensure that they contribute proactively in accordance with duties as governors or trustees in all activity
- Remember at all times that they act solely in the best interests of our Schools and Trust and not by reference to or promotion of the interests of those we know, whether household members or not.

Should any local governor or trustee be unable or unwilling for whatever reason to continue to support this Code of Conduct, or the LGB Terms of Reference, they will resign with immediate effect.

All Governors and Trustees are required to confirm on GovernorHub annually that they agree to be bound by and abide by the Governor and Trustees Code of Conduct.