



# St Joseph's College

## Code of Practice for Governors 2020/21

### The purpose of the Governing Board

The Governing Board is the school's accountable body. It is responsible for the conduct of the school and for promoting high standards and for the fostering and preservation of the Catholic ethos and following the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice. The Governing Board aims to ensure that students are attending a successful school which provides them with a good education and supports their well-being.

### The Governing Board has the following core strategic functions:

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting and ensuring clarity of vision, values, and objectives for the school
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the Headteacher
- Monitoring the educational performance of the school and progress towards targets
- Performance managing the Headteacher
- Engaging with stakeholders; ensuring parents, pupils and the community are involved, consulted and informed as appropriate
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

Ensuring financial probity, by:

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

Ensure that other key players with a stake in the organisation get their voices heard, by:

- Gathering the views of pupils, parents and staff and reporting on the results
- Reaching out to the school's wider community and inviting them to play their part
- Using the views of stakeholders to shape the school's culture and the underpinning strategy, policies and procedures

For Governing Boards to carry out their role effectively, governors must be:

- Prepared and equipped to take their responsibilities seriously;
- Acknowledged as the accountable body by the lead professionals;
- Supported by the appropriate authorities in that task; and
- Willing and able to monitor and review their own performance.

### **As individuals on the board we agree to the following:**

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- We understand the purpose of the governing Board and the role of the Headteacher
- No governor can act on her/his own without proper authority from the full Governing Board;
- All governors carry equal responsibility for decisions made;
- Although appointed through different routes (i.e. parents, staff, Foundation or co-opted), the overriding concern of all governors has to be the welfare of the school as a whole.
- We commit to uphold the Catholic ethos of the school and its distinct nature as an Edmund Rice school.
- We are aware of and accept the Nolan seven principles of public life: see appendix.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the Governing Board has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- 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 accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Governing Board or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the Governing Board meeting.
- 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 Catholic 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 Governing Board.
- We will accept and respect the difference in roles between the 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 organisation and avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements.

- We agree to adhere to the school's rules and policies and the procedures of the governing board 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 organisational 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 organisation.
- We will avoid, as far as possible, becoming involved in any communication which may lead to a conflict of interest with the role of the governing board.

## **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 Governing Board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- If acting as directors, we will not go beyond our duties or act outside of the powers of authority conveyed on us, and acknowledge that were we to do so we could be held liable to the school and/or third parties.
- If acting as trustees on the Trust Board, we accept that we may be held responsible up to the limit in the Articles of Association, were the school to go bankrupt.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance in full why we are unable to.
- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will visit the school, with all visits pre-arranged in advance with the Clerk to the Governing Body and undertaken within the framework of the National Governors' Association document 'Knowing Your School: School Visits'.
- When visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer), we will maintain our underlying responsibility as a governor.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training
- We are committed to actively supporting and challenging the Headteacher.
- We accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing board, 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, the Clerk to the Governing Board, and school staff both in and outside of meetings.
- We will communicate with other staff members via the Headteacher, Clerk and/or Chair of Governors only.
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- We will confront malpractice by speaking up against and bringing to the attention of the relevant authorities' any decisions and actions that conflict with the Seven Principles of Public life (see appendix) or which may place pupils at risk.
- 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 Headteacher, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

### **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 business arise outside a Governing Board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any Governing Board vote.
- We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.

### **Conflicts of interest**

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest that we have in connection with the Governing Board's business in the Register of Business Interests in line with the school's Conflict of Interests Policy.
- We will declare any pecuniary interest - or a personal interest which could be perceived as a conflict of interest - in a matter under discussion at a meeting and 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.
- In the interests of transparency we accept that information relating to Governors will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of Governors (Get Information about Schools) and Companies House.
- 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.

## **Ceasing to be a governor**

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

## **Breach of this code of conduct**

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the Chair/Vice-Chairs and the Chair/Vice-Chairs will investigate; the governing board will only use suspension/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.
- We understand that any allegation of a material breach of this code of practice by any Governor shall be raised at a meeting of the Governing Board, and, if agreed to be substantiated by a majority of governors, shall be minuted and can lead to consideration of suspension from the Governing Board.

**Date of last review: September 2020**

**This code will be reviewed at the first Governing Board meeting of each school year.**

### **Undertaking:**

As a member of the Governing Board I will always have the well-being of the students and the reputation of the school at heart; I will do all I can to be an ambassador for the school, publicly supporting its aims, values and ethos; I will not say or do anything publicly that would embarrass the school, the Governing Board, the Headteacher or staff.

Signed .....

Printed name .....

Date: .....

### **Appendix 1: 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.

**Integrity** - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

**Objectivity** - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

**Accountability** - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

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

**Honesty** - Holders of public office should be truthful.

**Leadership** - Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## **Appendix 2: The Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education**

1. **Selflessness** - School and college leaders should act solely in the interest of children and young people.
2. **Integrity** - School and college leaders must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, they must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.
3. **Objectivity** - School and college leaders must act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Leaders should be dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children and young people.
4. **Accountability** - School and college leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. **Openness** - School and college leaders should expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from scrutiny unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. **Honesty** - School and college leaders should be truthful.
7. **Leadership** - School and college leaders should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles, and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead schools and colleges and those who volunteer to govern them.

Schools and colleges serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do. Leaders should show leadership through the following personal characteristics or virtues:

- a. **Trust** - *leaders are trustworthy and reliable*  
We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.
- b. **Wisdom** - *leaders use experience, knowledge and insight*  
We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our schools and colleges with propriety and good sense.
- c. **Kindness** - *leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper*  
We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.
- d. **Justice** - *leaders are fair and work for the good of all children*  
We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.
- e. **Service** - *leaders are conscientious and dutiful*  
We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.
- f. **Courage** - *leaders work courageously in the best interests of children and young people*  
We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.
- g. **Optimism** - *leaders are positive and encouraging*  
Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.