Code of Conduct for Governors on a Local Governing Board in Plymouth CAST

This Code of Conduct has been approved and adopted by the Plymouth CAST Board of Directors to guide Governors of the Local Governing Boards in Plymouth CAST. It is developed from the Model Codes of Conduct produced by the Catholic Education Service and The Key for Governors.

On 24th January 2022

And will be reviewed in September 2022.

Signed by the Chair of the Board of Directors: A. Nicholls

- **This document should be available to view on your school's website**
- **Governors are required to sign an undertaking which can be found overleaf:**

As a Governor of a Local Governing Board, I undertake that:

- I will preserve and develop the Catholic character of the school/s.
- I will not act in any way that is detrimental and/or prejudicial to the interests of the Catholic Education in the Diocese or the school.
- I declare that I am not disqualified by law from appointment as a Governor on the Local Governing Board.
- I agree to an enhanced DBS check and any other relevant checks being conducted that may be required by law or good practice.
- I understand that any refusal to allow such checks may result in the termination of my appointment.
- I have read, understood, and will adhere to this Code of Conduct.
- I understand that failure to keep this Code may result in following the procedure for Breaches of the Code, as described in Appendix 2.
- If I am a Foundation Governor, I understand that I must sign the declaration in Appendix 1: 'Foundation Governor of a Local Governing Board' on an annual basis.

Signed by the Governor: _____

Dated: _____

Printed Name: _____

Type of Governor: _____

- ❖ E-signatures are acceptable
- ❖ Acceptance to the Code is required by signature from every Governor at the beginning of each academic year.
- ❖ Signed copies of this Code from each Governor should be retained by the Clerk to the LGB and copied to the Clerk to the Board of Directors.

1 Aims, Scope and Principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect Governors to follow.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that Governors carry out their role with honesty and integrity and help us to ensure our school is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

The code is based on the Governance Handbook. It should be read alongside our Scheme of Delegated Authority and the Schedule of Accountability.

Please note that this Code of Conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this Code, Governors will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

2 The Nolan Principles of Public Life

As Governors, we will follow these principles, set out by the Government, at all times. They apply to anyone who holds a public office:

- **Selflessness** – we will act in the public interest
- **Integrity** – we will not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare any conflict of interests
- **Objectivity** – we will act and take decisions impartially, fairly, and on merit. We will use the best evidence and avoid discrimination or bias
- **Accountability** – we understand that we are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions. To make sure of this, we will be scrutinised where necessary
- **Openness** – we will act and take decisions openly and transparently. We will not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so
- **Honesty** – we will be truthful
- **Leadership** – we will actively promote and support the above principles and will challenge poor behaviour wherever it happens

3 Local Governors' Responsibilities

The position of the Local Governing Board:

- Appointed/elected to be a Governor of a specific school or schools within the Multi-Academy Trust in accordance with the Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA);

- Have oversight of one (or more) schools in the Multi-Academy Trust and are accountable to the Board of Directors of the Multi-Academy Trust for their conduct as Governors and their support of the Catholic character of their school and the Trust;
- Provide a vital link to the local community;
- Are sub-committees of the Board of Directors and have an important role in supporting the Board of Directors with the delivery of the strategic aims of the Trust, in line with both the Trust Improvement Plan (TIP) and the School Improvement Plan (SIP) as outlined in the Schedule of Accountability.

Key responsibilities of local Governors:

- Support the Board of Plymouth CAST whose responsibility it is to ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Support the Board and Senior Executive Leadership Team of Plymouth CAST whose responsibility it is to hold the appropriate senior leadership within the school/s to account for the educational performance and Catholic character of the school and its pupils; and for the internal organisation, management, and control of the school, including performance management of staff; and
- Set and maintain an ethos of high expectation for everyone in the school community. Understanding that Canon 806§2 says that Catholic schools are to be "…..at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area".
- Conduct the school in accordance with the Scheme of Delegated Authority and follow the Schedule of Accountability.
- Ensure that the school is conducted in accordance with its governing documents which includes the provision of Canon Law [1]; the Curriculum Directive and Bishops' statements on religious education.
- Respond to the needs of the Catholic community.
- Understand and respect the distinction between the role and responsibilities of the Board and senior school leaders.
- Take part in relevant training, including Diocesan training, Governor induction and continuing professional development training, as required by the Trust or the Diocese to ensure effective governance.
- Support fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Follow school and Trust policies and procedures.
- Accept that no single Governor has legal authority to act individually, except when the Governing Board has given delegated authority to do so. An individual Governor will only speak on behalf of the Governing Board when specifically authorised by the Board to do so.

- Accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Governing Board. This means that individual Governors should not speak against majority decisions outside the Governing Board meetings.
- Take responsibility for self-evaluation by carrying out the program of self-review, as described in the Schedule of Accountability.
- Work to actively identify and manage risks to the school, including low pupil numbers.

4 Working with others

We will:

- In all our relations exercise stewardship and draw on the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. All relationships will be built on the core values of the Gospel based on the Beatitudes summarised as: Humility, Compassion, Kindness, Justice, Forgiveness, Integrity, Peace, and Courage
- Support and strengthen school leadership by providing constructive challenge to leaders, and holding them to account
- Respect the role of the school leaders and avoid routine involvement in operational matters
- Respect each other's views'
- Work together as a Board to develop effective relationships with stakeholders
- Engage meaningfully with the communities we serve and understand that we are answerable to these stakeholders
- Follow the Equality Act 2010, and apply the principles of fairness and equality in everything

5 Commitment to Governance

We:

- Acknowledge that accepting office as a Governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- Will attend all meetings where possible. Where we cannot attend, we will explain our valid reason and give suitable notice.
- Understand that work should be shared among members and that all Governors are expected to take an active role.

- Will prepare ahead of meetings to ensure we make informed contributions.
- Will participate in regular pre-arranged school visits in accordance with school policy.
- Will attend any training or development activity needed to ensure the Board has a wide range of skills and expertise.
- Will get to know our school/s well and positively respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities
- Will visit our school/s, with all visits arranged in advance with staff, in line with the Plymouth CAST Governor Visits Policy.

6 Openness and Transparency

Conflicts of interest

To make sure our Board takes impartial decisions without bias, we will:

- Publish an up-to-date register of business and pecuniary interests of all Governors, including associate members
- Declare any potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of each meeting and withdraw from the meeting for the relevant item of business and not vote on the matter.

Publishing information

To ensure our Board is transparent and open to the community we serve, we will make certain information publicly available.

We accept that the following information will be published on the school's website to ensure transparency:

- The structure and remit of the Local Governing Board, and the full name of the Chair
- For each Local Governor who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
    - Their full name
    - Their date of appointment
    - Their term of office
    - The date they stepped down (where applicable)
    - The body that appointed them
    - Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
    - Their attendance record over the last academic year
    - We accept that the information about Governors will be published on Get Information About Schools (GIAS)

- We accept that the approved Board and Committee minutes and any agenda and papers considered at a meeting will be made available to any interested person.

7 Confidentiality

In the course of our role, we are sometimes privy to sensitive information. We will observe confidentiality when discussing this information, and will not publicly disclose:

- Information about sensitive matters
- Information about named individuals (such as staff, pupils and their parents)
- Details of individual Governors' contributions in meetings or how they may have voted

Confidential information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass, or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

Our commitment to confidentiality does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

We will continue to observe confidentiality after we have left office.

Breaches of confidentiality

In the event of a breach of confidentiality, we will inform the Chair as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further.

Governors understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended.

8 Data Protection

We will follow the Trust's information security processes and measures and Data Protection Policy when using, storing, sharing, and disposing of personal data.

Our commitment to Data Protection does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

Personal Data Breaches

We will inform the school's Data Protection Officer (DPO) immediately if we believe that there has been a personal data breach.

9 Social Media

We will:

- Abide by any requirements set out in our Trust's Social Media Policy
- Uphold the reputation of the school at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with the school community
- Review privacy settings regularly to make sure we are happy with the information about us that is publicly available
- Report any incidents of harassment we experience, or see towards Governors to the Chair of Governors or the Headteacher

We will **not**:

- Accept friend requests from pupils and not join any private parent groups associated with the school
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach Data Protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the Governing Board or school community
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the school into disrepute

10 Review

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually alongside the Scheme of Delegated Authority.

11 Links with other Policies

This policy links with policies on:

Scheme of Delegated Authority
Schedule of Accountability
Plymouth CAST Governor Visits Policy
Plymouth CAST Data Protection/GDPR Policy

Appendix I

Foundation Governor Declaration

Dear Bishop Mark

I, …… (*insert name*) hereby accept my appointment as Foundation Governor at: …….. (*insert school name and town*) and promise to serve the mission of the Catholic Church and the Diocese of Plymouth to the best of my ability during my term of office (4 years).

In all my deliberations as a Foundation Governor, I will seek to understand and apply appropriately the wisdom of the Church to the matters under consideration.

In addition, I commit myself to:

- directly supporting the above-named school, but always having regard to the Diocese as a whole and the Church's commitment to the Common Good;
- attending the Diocesan Foundation Governor induction event as soon as possible (and certainly within one year of my appointment);
- taking advantage of opportunities to develop my understanding of the teachings of the Church and their application to educational issues;
- acting as a link between the school and the parish(es) it serves;
- encouraging, through my own example as a Foundation Governor, honest and respectful communication, sensitive listening and prayerful discernment;
- respecting the confidentiality of any given information made available to me through this role;

- giving public support to the reasons of the Local Governing Body even if I did not previously agree with them;
- in all my actions, serving as a witness to the Catholic faith.

Signed: …… Date: ……

Please sign and date both copies of this declaration. Please keep one for your own records and return the other to Plymouth CAST.

Appendix II Breaches of the Code of Conduct

If we suspect a Governor has breached the Code of Conduct, we will follow this procedure:

1. The Chair will investigate/ if the Chair is guilty of the breach the Vice-chair will lead the investigation.
2. The Chair will hold a meeting with the Governor to discuss the issue. The Governor can bring a fellow Governor to the meeting.
3. If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, we will take action to improve the issue. This may involve:
    - Further meetings with the Chair to reset expectations, based on this Code of Conduct
    - Support, mentoring or training for the Governor
    - Making sure the Governor withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in

Governors may be suspended if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the Catholic ethos of the Board (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the Board) and
- Have brought, or is likely to bring the school or Trust into disrepute

Bringing the Board into disrepute may include, but is not limited to:

- Speaking out publicly against the school
- Being disrespectful to members of the school community
- Behaving inappropriately in a public forum, such as a PTA meeting or on social media

We may remove a Governor from office where:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension
- There has been serious misconduct. We will determine what counts as serious misconduct based on the facts of the case, but it will include any actions that compromise the 7 Principles of Public Life, if sufficiently serious
- They display repeated and serious incompetence
- Their actions are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the Board, or their actions interfere with the operational efficiency of the school