



## **Code of Conduct and Expectations for the Governing Board** **for the academic year dated 2023-2024**

This document outlines the key general principles and expectations under which the Sheen Mount Governing Board has agreed to operate. Both the Governing Board and individual governors have committed to carry out their work within the school and the community guided by these principles and expectations.

**As a Governing Board and governors, we have the following purpose and core strategic functions:**

- **Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school**
- **Hold school leaders to account for the educational performance of the school, and the performance management of staff**
- **Oversee the financial performance of the school and make sure money is well spent**
- **Ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard (recognised by NGA as the forth core function of governance)**

### **1. Establishing the strategic direction, by:**

- Setting and ensuring clarity of the aims and values for the school
- Agreeing and monitoring the delivery of the School Development Plan (SDP) with priorities and targets

### **2. Ensuring accountability, by:**

- Monitoring the educational performance of the school and progress towards targets
- Appointing and performance managing the Head Teacher (where delegated)
- Holding the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to account for the performance management of staff
- Meeting statutory duties, compliance and effective delivery of policies and procedures
- Engaging with stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

### **3. Overseeing financial performance, by:**

- Setting the budget and monitoring spend

- Ensuring money is well spent and value for money is obtained
- Ensuring the effective management of physical assets
- Ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

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

### **To fulfil our roles and responsibilities**

- We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day to day management.
- We will develop, share and live the ethos and values of our school.
- We agree to adhere to school policies and procedures as set out by the relevant governing documents and law, to include the principles of fairness and equality (Equality Act 2010) and Sheen Mount's Acceptable Use of IT Policy.
- We shall fully cooperate with individual requests that are necessary to ensure organisational compliance, such as disclosure and barring checks.
- We will work collectively for the benefit of the school.
- We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
- We will consider how our decisions may affect the school and local community.
- We will stand by the decisions that we make as a collective.
- Should decisions and actions conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life (see Appendix 1) or place pupils at risk, we will speak up and bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities.
- We will only speak or act on behalf of the Board if we have the authority to do so.
- We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice.
- When making or responding to complaints we will follow the Complaints procedure approved by the Governing Board.
- We will strive to uphold the school's reputation in our private communications (including on social media).

### **To demonstrate our commitment to the role**

- 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 serving on committees or working groups and link governor roles.
- We will make every effort to attend all meetings (full Governing Board and committees) and where we cannot attend, explain in advance to the Clerk or Chair why we are unable to.
- We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, and ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.

- We will visit the school, and commit to arrange all visits to school in advance with applicable staff, undertaken within the framework established by the Governing Board and agreed with the Head Teacher. Visits should have a specific aim and should be documented and reported back to the Head Teacher and Governing Board as soon after the visit as possible. It is expected that each governor will visit the school a minimum of once a year.
- When visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer), we will continue to honour the commitments made in this code.
- We commit to work collectively to embed a culture of effective succession planning. This will be achieved by identifying successors, nurturing and mentoring talent to ensure smooth transition of leadership roles i.e. Chair, Vice Chair, Chairs of committees and link governor positions. As individuals we will complete an annual evaluation audit to identify strengths or areas for leadership development within the Governing Board.
- We will participate in induction training ('Getting to Grips with Governance' or equivalent), prioritise training in required areas (such as Safeguarding) and take responsibility for developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.
- To ensure our Safeguarding responsibilities are adhered to, we will collectively, as a Board, all commit to reading the most up to date 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance. We collectively acknowledge the requirement for two designated Safeguarding link governors to be in place at all times. The expectation placed on the Safeguarding link governors in this context, is to familiarise themselves with the whole DoE guidance document in its entirety and commit to completing Level 1 NGA safeguarding training (or an equivalent basic level safeguarding awareness programme), followed by tutor lead training such as AfC's 'Role of the Safeguarding Governor' together with any other relevant safeguarding courses. We also request that all governors commit to completing the Level 1 safeguarding training as a minimum.
- We will comply with the school to instigate the application of an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check within 21 days of appointment to the Governing Board.
- We acknowledge and agree to note our application form number and register immediately with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Update Service (free to volunteers) at [www.gov.uk/db-update-service](http://www.gov.uk/db-update-service)
- We acknowledge that by registering to the Update Service, an annual DBS check will be electronically renewed, free of charge, in our capacity as governors.

### **To build and maintain relationships**

- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with school leaders, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant stakeholders within our community.
- We will respect the remit of, and engage constructively with, relevant authorities and other schools.
- 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 inside and outside of meetings.
- We will support the Chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.

- We will acknowledge that as governors we are all equal representatives of the Governing Board, rather than representatives for parents or staff stakeholder groups, and are primarily appointed for the skills and experience that we bring to the Board.

### **Regarding proceedings of the Governing Board**

- As a corporate body, we will publish on the school's website the structure and remit of the Board and its committees, and the full name of the chair of each one.
- As a corporate body, we agree the principles and protocol of adapting to virtual meetings, if deemed necessary, as detailed in Appendix 2.
- As a corporate body, we agree to make quorate decisions by email, if deemed necessary/urgent and such decisions will subsequently be ratified and minuted at the next scheduled meeting.
- As a corporate body, we will take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our Board's performance, constitution and skillset.

### **To respect confidentiality**

- We will not reveal the details of any Governing Board vote and will observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of the schools when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils or families.
- We will comply with the most recent GDPR legislation and ensure that sensitive and confidential data are kept securely (both paper and electronic versions) and are disposed of appropriately.
- We will continue to maintain confidentiality after we leave office.

### **To declare conflicts of interest and be transparent**

- We will not reveal the details of any Governing Board vote and will observe complete
- We will declare any business, personal or other interest (including those related to people we are connected with) that we have in connection with the Governing Board's business in the Register of Business Interests.
- We will declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting and offer to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and any subsequent vote.
- We will act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group.
- 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 (Register of Business Interests), category of governor and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school's website, to include everyone who has served at any point over the past 12 months.
- We accept that information relating to Board members will be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database of governors (Get Information about Schools), some of which will be publicly available.

- As governors we consent to our data being used and shared for the purpose of and in conjunction with, our role as governors at this school.

### **Regarding a breach of this Code of Conduct**

- If a governor regards that another governor may have breached this Code of Conduct, he or she will first approach directly the individual concerned in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If they are not satisfied with this outcome they should notify the Clerk to the governors. This will trigger Stage 2 of the school's formal Complaints Procedure.
- Should it be the Chair that is believed to have breached this code, another governor, such as one of the Chairs of Committee will investigate. Informal resolution will be sought but where this fails, the Complaints Procedure Stage 3 will follow and the Vice-Chair will mediate any proceedings.
- Suspension or removal of a governor will be used only as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.

October 2023

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **The Seven Principles of Public Life**

The Nolan 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. We will follow these principles:

#### **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.

## APPENDIX 2

### Sheen Mount Virtual Meetings Protocol (contingency arrangements)

Under normal circumstances our Governing Board expects governors to be present at all applicable meetings. However, should exceptional circumstances require it, the Board agrees to conduct our duties virtually. Virtual participation includes, but is not limited to, telephone, email, and video conferencing.

As a corporate body we acknowledge that some governors may not have access to the appropriate technology. Under such circumstances, provided a virtual meeting is quorate, it can proceed.

#### Key aspects of this protocol include:

- All governors including the Head Teacher, Associate Members and Clerk may attend virtually for any single meeting.
- Confirmation of virtual participation must be notified to the Clerk by email (at least 48 hours prior to the meeting), and where virtual attendance will not be possible, the governor should notify the Clerk of their non-attendance by email.
- It is the responsibility of each individual governor to ensure they are able to do so through a secure method in an environment conducive to confidential and private communication. **Anyone participating in a meeting using technology must declare that they are in an environment which is secure, and which protects confidentiality.**
- Virtual participation must be for the entire meeting and not just for specific agenda items or solely for voting purposes.
- It is the responsibility of those participating virtually to ensure they have a reliable connection.
- If the communication connection fails and reasonable attempts to reconnect are unsuccessful virtual participation will no longer be possible and the agenda will not be delayed. The Clerk will note the time that the connection was lost.
- Ensuring quorate meetings is the responsibility of the Clerk who will monitor this throughout the virtual meeting and advise the Board if a meeting becomes unviable due to connection failure.
- If there is to be a vote, governors must have relevant documents seven days prior to the meeting. Governors attending the meeting either by telephone or video conference will be entitled to vote on any issue providing they have been 'present' for the whole agenda item which the vote relates to, not just the vote itself.
- If there is to be a vote, secret ballot will **not** be an option. All virtual attendees will need to cast their vote by stating they are either in favour or against.
- Where there is no visual connection, all meeting participants will always start their comments by stating their name, to ensure the Clerk can minute the meeting accurately (although in line with best practice verbatim minutes are not advised).

- If multiple governors speak at the same time, the Chair of the meeting shall determine who will speak first.
- In exceptional circumstances (e.g. extraordinary meetings) meetings can take place virtually as long as:
  - Quorum of governors is adhered to.
  - Every effort has been made to enable all governors to participate.
  - Papers have been circulated at least 24 hours in advance.
  - The meeting is minuted in the same way as other meetings.
  - The meeting is not recorded without the consent of the Board for a specific reason.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

This virtual protocol **does not** apply to any formal hearings e.g. pupil exclusion, parental complaint, staff disciplinaries, admission appeals etc., where all panel members normally must be physically present.