

GSS Publications

5

# A Model Code of Practice for Governing Bodies



People Directorate

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This guidance is published by the **Governor Support Service**, part of the  
Coventry Education & Inclusion Service, Civic Centre 2, Earl Street, COVENTRY CV1 5RS

## Introduction

The governance of schools is now a function of considerable importance and the work of the governing body of a school matters more than ever before. Authority is vested almost entirely in people who are essentially volunteers, whether elected, co-opted or appointed and whose ranges of experience, expertise and interests are likely to be very diverse.

Various pieces of legislation define the duties, powers and responsibilities of Governing Bodies and the procedures to be followed. The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013 define the general duties of governing bodies and require governors to act with *integrity, objectivity and honesty and in the best interests of the school*. The Regulations also require the Governing Body to *be open about their decisions and to be prepared to explain their decisions and actions to others*, within the bounds of reasonable confidentiality. These same regulations define in law the relationship between governing bodies and the Headteacher. However, legislation does not define how governors will relate to each other nor the accepted way in which a governing body carries out its business, beyond the few ideals mentioned above.

This model code of practice is designed to assist members of Governing Bodies and Headteachers in the normal conduct of their general responsibilities so that a balanced view of governance is maintained, harmony is achieved and unnecessary conflict avoided. It is not a definitive statement of responsibilities but is concerned with the common understanding of broad principles by which governors will operate.

## **A MODEL CODE OF PRACTICE**

**Name of School** .....

**Name of Chair** .....

**Name of Headteacher** .....

**Date** .....

The Governors of this school accept the following code of practice.

### **General**

- The authority with which the governing body operates is held corporately. All governors have equal status and their central concern should be the welfare of the school as a whole. Although governors are elected or appointed by different groups, they should not act as delegates. Each governor is a governor in their own right, but each brings an individual perspective to the governing body, whether as parent, member of staff or from outside the school itself.
- Governors have responsibility for:
  - a. Ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined
  - b. Ensuring that the headteacher performs his or her responsibilities for the educational performance of the school, and
  - c. Ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources

the headteacher is responsible for:

- a. The internal organisation, management and control of the school
- b. The educational performance of the school
- c. Presenting aims and objectives, policies and targets for consideration by the Governing Body;
- d. Reporting to the Governing Body on progress on meeting these aims and objectives.

Governors and the Headteacher should each recognise and respect the roles of the other.

- Governors have a general duty to act with integrity, objectivity and honesty in the best interests of the school at all times.
- Governors and the headteacher should seek to work together as a team.
- In so far as they have, or share, responsibility for the employment of staff, governors should fulfil all reasonable expectations of a good employer.
- Governors should consider carefully how their own decisions might affect other schools.
- Governors should be open about the decisions they make and the actions they take and be prepared to explain their actions and decisions as far as reasonable confidentiality allows.

## **Commitment**

- School governance requires significant amounts of time and energy from every governor.
- All governors should involve themselves actively in the work of the governing body and accept a fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees and working groups.
- Governors should know the school well and take all possible opportunities for involvement in school activities.
- Regular attendance at meetings of the full governing body, committees and working groups is essential.
- Governors should be “critical friends” to the school inside its walls and loyally committed to it outside.
- Governors should realise that they will only be effective if they attend to their own development by taking up appropriate support and training opportunities.

## **Confidentiality**

- Governors should observe complete confidentiality when either required or asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff or pupils.
- Governors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when the discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside of the governing body and instead of passing individual comment, encourage issues to be brought to the attention of the

headteacher or governing body (depending on the nature of the issue) through the proper channels.

- Governors should be loyal in word and deed to majority decisions of the governing body, even if they have not themselves agreed with them.

## **Conflicts of interest**

- Publication of Governor's Details and Register of Interests on the school website is required. The detail to be published for each Governor and Associate Member as a minimum includes:
  - their name
  - their category of governor
  - which body appoints them
  - their term of office
  - the names of any committees the governor serves on; and
  - details of any positions of responsibility such as chair or vice-chair of the governing body or a committee of the governing body
  - relevant business interests and details of any other educational establishments governed. The register should also set out any relationships between governors and members of the school staff including spouses, partners and relatives
- Governors and Associate Members are required to complete a declaration of business interest form on an annual basis
- Individual governors should declare any potential conflict of interest and withdraw from the meeting before the particular item is discussed.
- Governors should resist the temptation of outside pressure to use the position of governor to benefit him or herself or other outside parties.

## **Conduct**

- Governors should express their views openly within meetings but accept collective responsibility for all decisions.
- Visits by governors to the school should be undertaken within a framework which has been established by the governing body and agreed with the headteacher.
- In responding to criticism or complaints relating to the school, governors should follow procedures established by the governing body.
- Governors should only speak or act on behalf of the governing body when they have been specifically authorised to do so.

- Governors should follow agreed procedures when wishing to make critical comment on any aspect of the school.
- Governors have a responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the school and their actions within the school community should reflect this.

## **GSS Publications**

*The Governor Support Service has issued guidance on the following topics of interest to Governors. They are free of charge to Governing Bodies subscribing to either of our services and are available from:*

*Governor Support Service, Civic Centre 2, Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RS  
Tel: 024 7683 1561 Fax: 024 7683 3624 e-mail: [angela.carr@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:angela.carr@coventry.gov.uk)*

**GSS 1: The Heateacher's Report to Governors**

**GSS 2: OFSTED Inspections:** *A guide for governors*

**GSS 3: Governing Body Committees and Working Groups**

**GSS 4: The Chair of Governors**

**GSS 5: A Model Code of Conduct** *for governing bodies*

**GSS 6: Becoming a Governor in Coventry** *(recruitment material)*

**GSS 7: Governor Elections:** *Guidance for Headteachers on elections for parent and staff governors*

**GSS 7a: Governor Elections:** *Guidance for Headteachers on elections for parent and staff governors in catholic schools*

**GSS 8: Governing Body Policies**

**GSS 9: Monitoring and Visits to Schools** *by governors*

**GSS 10: Governing Body Performance Review** *(self review materials)*

**GSS 11: Educational terms and abbreviations**

**GSS 12: Extended Schools:** *A guide for Governors*

**GSS 13: Governors and Learners**

**GSS 14: Being a New Governors in Coventry** *(welcome booklet)*

**GSS 15: An Effective Governing Body**