

EQUITAS ACADEMIES TRUST



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TRUSTEES

Review Date: September 2025

To be Reviewed: September 2026

Agreed: Board

Policy Lead: Chief Executive Officer

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TRUSTEES

The following Code of Conduct promotes effective working practices that are mutually supportive and respectful of roles and responsibilities. It sets out the expectations on and commitment required from Trustees in order for the Trust Board to properly carry out its work within each Academy within the Trust and the community.

The DfE Academy Trust Governance Guide (updated June 2025) states that the board needs people with the right skills, expertise, behaviours and capacity who collectively:

- understand the purpose and importance of academy trust governance and the role of strategic leadership
- are committed to, understand and have time for the role
- are appointed through a transparent process against a clear role specification
- meet eligibility criteria and pre-appointment checks to be an academy trustee

Trustees will have the necessary skills to fulfil the board's functions effectively. They will have the ability to:

- bring a diverse range of perspectives for robust decision-making
- understand the educational setting and the cultural and religious contexts of the trust and the communities it serves
- analyse trust performance data
- use financial knowledge to hold the executive to account and drive financial efficiency
- challenge each other effectively and work effectively in committees
- performance manage the senior executive leader
- use active succession planning to ensure the board and the trust have the leadership and people it needs to remain effective

The Equitas Academies Trust Board has the following core strategic functions:

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting the vision, values, and objectives for the Trust
- Agreeing the Trust Improvement Strategy with priorities and targets for each Academy within the Trust
- Meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the Chief Executive Officer and Headteacher of any school within the Trust
- Monitoring progress towards targets
- Performance management of the Chief Executive Officer and Headteachers within the Trust
- Engaging with stakeholders
- Contributing to Trust self-evaluation

Ensuring financial probity, by:

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

As a Trustee of Equitas Academies Trust Board I agree to the following:

Role & Responsibilities:

- I understand the purpose of the Board and the role of the Chief Executive Officer and Headteachers within the Trust.
- I accept that I have no legal authority to act individually, except when the Board has given me delegated authority to do so, and therefore I will only speak on behalf of the Trust Board when I have been specifically authorised to do so.
- I accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Board. This means that I will not speak against majority decisions outside the Trust Board meeting.
- I have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as I have responsibility for staff, I will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- I will encourage open governance and will act appropriately.
- I will consider carefully how the decisions made by the Trust Board may affect the community and other schools.
- I will always be mindful of the responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the Trust. The Trust Board's actions within the Trust and the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints I will follow the procedures established by the Trust Board.
- I will actively support and challenge the Chief Executive Officer and Headteachers within the Trust.
- I will abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life (see appendix).

Commitment:

- I acknowledge that accepting office as a Trustee involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- I will involve myself actively in the work of the Trust Board, and accept my fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- I will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where I cannot attend, explain in advance why I am unable to do so.
- I will get to know the Academies within the Trust well and respond to opportunities to involve myself in Academy activities.
- I will visit the Academies, with all visits arranged in advance with the relevant Headteacher and undertaken within the framework established by the Trust Board.
- I will undertake relevant training.
- I accept that in the interests of open governance, the full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the Trust Board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests and category of Trustee will be published on each Academy's website.
- In the interests of transparency I accept that information relating to Trustees will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of Trustees.
- Support the elimination of discrimination and advance equality of opportunity. We recognise that Birmingham is one of the UK's super-diverse cities, made up of a wide range of cultural, faith and other communities. The City benefits from positive community cohesion within this diversity. We are mindful of our responsibilities under equality legislation, including recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion.

Relationships:

- I will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- I will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all communications with other Trustees.
- I will support the Chair of the Trust Board in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- I am prepared to answer queries from other Board members in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and I will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
- I will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Chief Executive Officer, Headteachers, staff and parents within the Trust, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality:

- I will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside of each Academy.
- I will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding Trust business arise outside a Trust Board meeting.
- I will not reveal the details of any Trust Board vote.

Conflicts of interest:

- I will record any pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people the Trust is connected with) that I have in connection with the Trust Board's business in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting I will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time. I accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the Trust's website.
- I will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
- I will act in the best interests of the Trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the Trust Board.

Breach of this Code of Conduct:

- If I believe this code has been breached, I will raise this issue with the Chair of the Trust Board and the Chair will investigate; the Trust Board will only use suspension/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.
- Should it be the Chair that I believe has breached this code, another Trust Board member, such as the Vice Chair will investigate.

I will adhere to standards of conduct, behaviour and practice referred to in this document.

Signed: _____

Print: _____

Date: _____

Appendix: 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. 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.