



# THAMES LEARNING TRUST

Name of Policy	Code of Conduct for Trustees and Academy Committee Members
Scope of Policy	This policy applies to all Trustees and Academy Committee Members
Approved by	Chief Executive
Date of Approval	March 2021
Review period	Three Years
Review Date	March 2024

GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER



# THAMES LEARNING TRUST

This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from trustees and academy committee members in order for the Trust Board to properly carry out its work within the school/s and the community.

**The Board of Trustees has the following core strategic functions:**

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

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

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the lead executive
- Monitoring the educational performance of the schools and progress towards agreed targets
- Performance managing the lead executive
- Engaging with stakeholders
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

Overseeing financial performance, 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

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

**Role & Responsibilities**

- We understand the purpose of the board and the role of the executive leaders.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the board has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the trust board when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the board meeting.
- 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 governance and will act appropriately.
- 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 ethos and reputation of our school/group of schools. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints we will follow the procedures established by the trust board.
- We will actively support and challenge the executive leaders

- 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 executive 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 polices and the procedures of the Trust board as set out by the relevant governing documents and law
- When formally speaking or writing in our 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

### **Commitment**

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a trustee/academy committee member involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the Trust board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
- We will get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will visit the school/s, with all visits arranged in advance with the CEO or Principal and undertaken within the framework established by the Trust board.
- When visiting the school in a personal capacity (i.e. as a parent or carer), we will maintain our underlying responsibility as a trustee/academy committee member.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and will undertake relevant training.
- We accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the Trust board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of trustee and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school's website.
- In the interests of transparency we accept that information relating to trustees/academy committee members will be collected and logged on the DfE's national database of governors (Edubase).

### **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 trustees/academy committee members, the clerk to the trust board and school staff both in and outside of meetings.

- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other board members 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 executive leaders, staff and parents, the trust, 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/trust business arise outside a board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any 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 (including those related to people we are connected with) that we 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 we will 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/trust's website.
- 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 board.

#### **Ceasing to be a trustee/academy committee member**

- We understand that the requirements relating to confidentiality will continue to apply after a trustee/academy committee member leaves office.

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

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; the 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 we believe has breached this code, another board member, such as the vice chair will investigate.

### **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.

## GUIDANCE TO TRUSTEES RELATING TO SCHOOL VISITS

### Before a visit:

The visit will have been organised with the Clerk as part of an annual schedule. This means that the member/s of staff will be aware in advance of a visit.

- Agree a mutually convenient time with the appropriate member of staff – if it is difficult to contact the member of staff the Clerk should assist with this contact.
- Agree a purpose for the visit
- When visiting lessons ask the teacher whether the trustee should take part in the lesson – the trustee is to recognise that this is a decision for the Teacher not the trustee to make
- If the visit is to a meeting it would be helpful for the Trustee to have the Agenda in advance
- Parent Trustees should avoid visiting lessons where their own child/ren are involved. They should, however, be encouraged to attend activities such as performances, sporting occasions, award ceremonies etc whether they have children taking part or not.

### During a visit:

- Be punctual – this is most important – if for any reason the Trustee is late for a meeting/lesson it is often better not to attend but to ensure that the staff member is informed of the position
- If the visit is to a lesson ensure that the Trustee is introduced
- Keep in mind the purpose of the visit
- Be courteous and friendly
- Observe sensitively
- Listen - keep talk to a minimum unless invited to participate
- Take minimal notes only.
- During a lesson do not ask questions, but if the Trustee is attending a meeting they should ask questions sparingly and then only if appropriate
- Be involved in activities only when invited.
- **Never** comment to the teacher on the conduct of the lesson or on individual pupils.
- The Trustee is to be aware that lessons have to keep to a tight timescale so nothing should be done to jeopardise this
- Thank staff and pupils at the end of the visit.

### After the visit

- The visit may provide an opportunity for a mutual discussion but Trustee must be aware that if the meeting is with a Teacher they may have to go immediately to another lesson so they must not be delayed. If there is a mutual discussion there should be no criticism at this stage.
- If there are any causes for concern they must be dealt with in the most appropriate way after consultation with the Principal. This does not apply to lesson content or delivery as Trustees must be aware that teachers are professional people. It is anticipated that concerns may relate to issues such as health and safety.
- Complete a short report using the school visit record as soon as possible and hand this to the Clerk. The Clerk will use this record to compile a record for the annual report on effectiveness of school visits. Not all visits (e.g. performances) will necessarily require a report.
- In your report, never make judgements on teachers or individual pupils.
- The Clerk will circulate the report to other Trustees in advance of the next meeting.
- Trustee should contact the Chair of the Board if they need any advice at any stage of the process.
- Staff should speak to the Principal if they have any concerns at any stage of the process.
- If there is any criticism of a Trustee the Chair should be informed and it will be his or her responsibility to investigate this matter, with the assistance of the Principal if necessary.

**SCHOOL VISIT RECORD**

**Name of Trustee** ..... **Date of Visit** .....

**Name of staff member / team being visited**.....

**School visited:** .....

**Focus of visit:**

**Trustee comments:**

What did you see? What did you learn? Would you like anything clarified?

**Any key issues arising for the Board of Trustees?**

