



**PONTEFRACT**  
ACADEMIES TRUST

## Governance Code of Conduct



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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 Pontefract Academies Trust's (the Trust) mission is running top-quality, high-achieving schools that give our children and young people the chance in life they deserve, where every child and young person makes outstanding progress.
- 1.2 The Trust aims to be a highly reliable school improvement organisation that is disciplined in its approach to improving performance. A Trust with clear plans, and simple and precisely executed systems that not only develop and sustain excellent performance, but never stifle individual flair.
- 1.3 Effective Governance is critical to ensuring the delivery of the Trust's mission, vision, values and guiding principles. This code of conduct seeks to focus the minds of those vitally important and valued volunteers within the Trust's Governance structure on those strategic aims and objectives, and to achieve clarity of direction whilst describing the expectations placed upon them by the Trust in relation to their personal conduct and behaviour.
- 1.4 The Trust empowers those within the scope of this code to act only in accordance with it, the provisions of its [Articles of Association](#) and within the limits of responsibility set out within its [Scheme of Delegation](#).
- 1.5 The Trust will employ a Head of Governance who will work with colleagues throughout the Trust, providing specialist professional support in relation to all Governance activities and overseeing compliance with the code of conduct and the applicable Legal Framework.

## 2. Legal Framework

- 2.1 This code of conduct has due regard to legislation, statutory guidance and accepted industry standards including but not limited to:
  - [The ESFA 'Academy Trust Handbook'](#)
  - [The Academies Act 2010](#)
  - [The Companies Act 2006](#)
  - [The Charities Act 2011](#)
  - [The Charities Act 2022](#)
  - [The Seven Principles of Public Life \(Nolan Principles\)](#)
  - [The DfE's Governance Handbook](#)
- 2.2 It will also be implemented in accordance with:
  - [The Trust's Articles of Association](#)

- [The Trust's Scheme of Delegation](#)
- [The Trust's Financial Regulations and Financial Scheme of Delegation](#)
- [The Trust's Conflict Policy and Register of Business Interests](#)
- [The Trust's Whistleblowing Policy](#)

### 3. Scope

3.1 This code of conduct applies to those involved with Governance across the Trust including:

- Members
- Trustees
- School Performance Review Board (SPRB) Members - Governors

### 4. Expectations

4.1 The Trust expects all Members, Trustees and Governors to ensure that they adhere to the code of conduct.

4.2 The Trust's Governance Structure is cumulatively responsible for the three core governance functions, set out in the [Department for Education's \(DfE\) Governance Handbook](#).

4.3 The Trust expects that these core functions, as they apply to each layer of Governance in line with the Trust's [Scheme of Delegation](#), will demonstrably be their focus:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

#### 4.5 Commitment

4.5.1 All Members, Trustees and Governors are expected to accept and uphold the following commitments:

#### 4.5.2 General:

- To accept that Governance is a strategic role and will not involve the day-to-day/operational management of the Trust or its schools.
- To understand and accept the differences between the functions of each of the layer of Governance, the Trust Executive Leadership Team and school Senior Leadership Teams as described in the [Scheme of Delegation](#), whilst ensuring they work collectively for the benefit of the Trust and its schools.
- To fulfil their role and responsibilities, as described in the [Scheme of Delegation](#).
- To address decisions made that conflict with the Nolan Principles or that may place pupils at risk via the appropriate authorities.
- To uphold the reputation of the Trust and its schools in both private and public communications, including those on social media.
- To only speak or act on behalf of the Trust where they have the authority to do so, in line with the [Scheme of Delegation](#).
- To comply with any investigations relating to an alleged breach of the code of conduct.

#### 4.5.3 Behaviour:

- To develop, share and embody the mission, vision, values and guiding principles of the Trust.
- To act only in the best interests of the Trust and its schools.
- To complete all required training including induction, annual and refresher training as determined by the Head of Governance or required for compliance with legislative or statutory requirements.
- To accept that failure complete all required training could result in suspension or removal from the Governance role.
- To take responsibility for and actively participate in the development and annual review of individual and collective skills, knowledge and performance within the Governance functions represented.
- To be candid but constructive, and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
- To express views openly, courteously and respectfully when communicating both inside and outside of meetings.
- To adhere to Trust and School Policies and Procedures.
- To consider how decisions may affect the Trust, its schools and the communities it serves.
- To work to advance equality of opportunity for all and against discrimination.

- To work to create an inclusive environment where all contributions are valued equally.
- To active involvement in the work of the Trust and its Governance function including committees, panels and working parties as required, accepting a fair share of responsibility.
- To accept that refusal to support reasonable requests for participation in committees, panels and working parties could result in suspension or removal from the Governance role.
- When visiting the Trust or its school in a Governance capacity, arrangements will be made with the relevant staff in advance.
- When visiting the Trust or its schools in a personal capacity (e.g. as a parent/carer), to continue to uphold all commitments made within the code of conduct.

#### 4.5.4 Relationships:

- To work collectively with others across the Trust and its schools for their benefit.
- To get to know the Trust and its schools, and support engagement opportunities, activities and other events.
- To develop effective working relationships with Trust and School leaders, staff, pupils, parents/carers and other relevant stakeholders in the community.

#### 4.5.5 Proceedings:

- To make every effort to attend all meetings, and where unable, to give advanced notice of and explain absence to the relevant Chair and Head of Governance (excepting for unforeseen emergencies).
- To accept that frequent or unexplained absences from meetings could result in suspension or removal from the Governance role.
- To attend meetings prepared; having read all papers and in a position to make a meaningful, positive contribution.
- To actively support and challenge executive leaders, in line with delegated authorities set out in the Trust's [Scheme of Delegation](#), respecting their operational responsibility for the Trust and its schools, and avoiding and actions or behaviour that might undermine that.
- To support quorate decisions made by the relevant layer of Governance in line with the authorities set out in the [Scheme of Delegation](#).
- To declare any new or previously unidentified conflict or business interest relevant to any tabled meeting agenda item at the start of the meeting and to

permit to these being recorded, and reported on publicly via the Trust and school's website.

#### 4.5.6 Confidentiality:

- To observe complete confidentiality of Trust and school business in relation to matters outside of the public domain, and when in reference to individual members of staff, pupils, parents or carers.
- To maintain the confidentiality of Trust information, meeting papers, reports and data whether in hard copy, or electronic format, including appropriate disposal or destruction of confidential material.
- To support confidentiality by using the Trust domain email account for all correspondence related to the Trust business and to access, papers, reports and other material via the Governance Hub.
- To maintain the confidentiality of any vote.
- To continue to maintain complete confidentiality when no longer in office as a Member, Trustee or Governor.

#### 4.5.7 Conflicts:

- To declare any conflict or business interest at the start of each academic year, whether new or existing, using the Trust's [Conflict of Interest form](#).
- To indicate to the Head of Governance/Clerk if a conflicted matter is raised during a meeting, and to withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and/or be considered ineligible to vote on the matter at the direction of the Head of Governance/Clerk.

#### 4.5.8 Data Processing and Information Sharing:

- To the Trust publishing the full name, appointment and resignation dates, terms of office, attendance data, link roles, committee memberships and governance roles of all Members, Trustees and Governors on the Trust and school websites.
- To the Trust sharing Governance information with the DfE, some of which will be published on the DfE's 'Get Information About Schools' (GIAS) website.

#### 4.5.9 Roles and responsibilities:

- The specific roles and responsibilities of each layer of Governance is described within the Trust's [Scheme of Delegation](#).

- Responsibility, in line with the Trust's [Financial Regulations and Financial Scheme of Delegation](#), for observing the obligations set out in the [Master Funding Agreement](#).
- Accountability, in line with the Trust's [Financial Regulations and Financial Scheme of Delegation](#), to Parliament for ensuring the Trust's financial health and to the Courts in relation to compliance with all legislative and statutory requirements.

## 5. Breaches of the Code

- 5.1 Any alleged breaches of the code of conduct must be brought to the attention of the relevant Chair who, in turn, must notify the Head of Governance.
- 5.2 The notification to the Head of Governance is imperative to ensure that repeat, over time, or multiple alleged breaches by an individual across different Governance functions are aggregated and taken into account during any subsequent investigation.
- 5.3 Where it is alleged that the Chair has breached the code of conduct, the Head of Governance must be notified in the first instance.
- 5.4 The Head of Governance will appoint an appropriate member of the Governance Structure to investigate the alleged breach in line with the [Scheme of Delegation](#).
- 5.5 Suspension or removal will only be considered as a last resort, however the Trust does have the right to exercise this course of action where it believes that this would be in the best interests of the Trust and its schools.

## 6. Author

- 4.1 This code of conduct is the responsibility of the **Head of Governance**.

## 7. Approval

- 7.1 This code of conduct is approved by the **Trust Board**, in line with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation.
- 7.2 This code of conduct was approved by the Trust Board becoming effective on **22/05/2023**.

## 8. Review

- 8.1 This code of conduct will be subject of review every four years.
- 8.2 It will only be re-presented to the Trust Board for approval in the event of any material changes. Where the review results in no material changes, the previous effective date will continue to apply, however the last review date will be specified in this section.
- 8.3 This code of conduct was last reviewed on **22/05/2027**.

## 9. Distribution

- 9.1 This code of conduct will be made available via:
- The Compliance Library
  - The Governance Hub
  - The Trust Website

## 10. Version Control

- 10.1 Changes to this code of conduct over time will be documented in line with the document version. For ease of use this will be located in a separate document that can be accessed [here](#).
- 10.2 If you spot any broken links or errors within this code of conduct, please report this to [dpo@patrust.org.uk](mailto:dpo@patrust.org.uk).