



Vanguard Learning Trust: Code of Conduct

The code of conduct is aligned with the National Governance Association and the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education which outlines principles that support ethical decision-making and challenge unethical behaviour in schools and trusts. It should be read alongside the Vanguard Learning Trust's (VLT or the Trust) constitutional documents (e.g. articles of association, scheme of delegation and governance framework).

This code of conduct must be signed annually by each member, trustee and governor. Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, members, trustees and governors should use their judgement and act in the best interests of VLT, the schools and pupils.

The Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life

All members, trustees and governors will follow these principles at all times. They apply to anyone who holds a public office:

Selflessness – we will act solely in the public interest.

Integrity – We will avoid placing ourselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence us in our work. We will not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity – we will act and take decisions impartially, fairly, and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability – we are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions and will submit ourselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness – we will act and take decisions openly and transparently. We will not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so.

Honesty – we will be truthful.

Leadership – we will actively promote and support the above principles and will challenge poor behaviour wherever it happens.

Roles and Responsibilities

- I understand the eligibility criteria for my role as trustee or governor and will immediately notify the chair and clerk if I have become or am likely to become ineligible;
- I accept that my role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve myself in day-to-day management;
- I understand the VLT governance structures, including the relationships between school and Trust governance and the relationships with senior leaders;
- I understand my role as member, trustee or governor and agree to fulfil VLT's expectations for my role as set out in the relevant role description;
- I will act and make decisions in the best interests of pupils served by VLT as a whole, in accordance with legislation and VLT's governance framework;

- I agree that I have no legal authority to act individually, except when the board of trustees or LGB (where so empowered) has formally delegated authority for me to do so;
- I agree that I will only speak on behalf of the board of trustees or LGB when I have been specifically authorised to do so;
- I accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board of trustees or local governing body (LGB) of which I am a member. I will not speak against decisions, irrespective of my views, outside of the board of trustees / LGB meeting;
- I will not discriminate against anyone and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all;
- I will be accountable for any delegated decisions for which I am responsible;
- I will act in accordance with VLT (and school) policies and procedures;
- I will share and live the ethos and values of the Trust and the school;
- I will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account;
- I will consider how our decisions may affect the Trust, school/s and local community; and
- If an elected parent governor I will:
 - Understand the difference between my role as a parent and as a governor;
 - Contribute to governor discussions with feedback from experience as a parent, but not detailed operational or individual child issues which should be addressed via operational processes;
 - Not act or make decisions as a parent representative but in the best interests of the school and all of its pupils;
 - Use established school processes for queries or comments relating to my child, and not bypass those processes directly to senior leaders or the headteacher.

Commitment

- I agree that successfully fulfilling the role description for a trustee or governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy;
- I will involve myself actively in the work of the board of trustees or LGB of which I am a member and accept my fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups;
- I will make all efforts to attend all meetings and where I cannot attend, I will offer apologies in advance to the meeting chair and clerk;
- I will prepare effectively ahead of meetings to ensure I make informed contributions;
- I will get to know the school(s) well, including visits undertaken as part of my role;
- I will actively participate in VLT's governance and self-evaluation processes;
- I will seek and attend training and development to improve my skills, knowledge, and effectiveness as a trustee or governor.

Working with Others

- I will develop constructive working relationships with my fellow trustees and governors, with VLT staff, with our school community, and our partners (such as the local authority);
- I will express views openly, courteously, and respectfully in all communications with other trustees, governors, clerks, and VLT staff;
- I will work to create an inclusive environment where each board member's contributions are valued equally;
- I will support the chair in their role, including ensuring appropriate conduct by all trustees and governors at all times;

- I will respect the role of senior leaders and avoid routine involvement in operational issues;
- I will speak up against decisions or actions that could place pupils at risk or that would undermine public confidence in VLT's governance, including where appropriate raising issues with the relevant statutory body.

Confidentiality

- I recognise that as part of my role I may be privy to confidential information, including about named individuals;
- I will observe complete confidentiality – at all times, inside and outside VLT – when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils. Specifically, I will never disclose confidential information without the relevant authority, use it to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail someone, or use it for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for;
- I recognise that my commitment to confidentiality does not overrule my duty to report child protection concerns;
- I will not reveal the details of any trustee or governor vote, or details of discussions at trustee or governor meetings, unless this has been agreed by my colleagues;
- I will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately; and
- I agree that these requirements relating to confidentiality continue to apply after I have ceased to be a trustee or governor.

Conflicts of Interest

- I will declare and keep up to date the written record of my pecuniary or other business interest (including those related to people I am connected with) in accordance with VLT policy, and I accept that this information will be published in accordance with DfE requirements;
- I accept that, if a potential conflict of interest is identified, that it will be managed in accordance with VLT policy and I will comply with the approach agreed by my colleagues.
- I will immediately declare and record in writing to the Clerk any gifts received as part of or due to, or that could reasonably be perceived as being part of or due to, my role as Trustee or Governor.

Publishing Information

- I agree that VLT will publish online my name, date of appointment, terms of office, VLT role(s), attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, and any other information VLT is required to publish, as well as sharing that information with the Secretary of State or their agents as required who may also publish it. If I am a Trustee, I agree that personal information will be shared with Companies House.
- I accept that approved minutes and agendas and papers will be made available in accordance with legislation or VLT policy.

Data Protection

- I will follow VLT's information security and data protection processes.

- I will inform the CEO (Trustees) or Headteacher (Governors) immediately if I believe there has been a personal data breach.

Social Media

- When communicating in my private capacity (including on social media) I will uphold the reputation of VLT and maintain a professional presence at all times;
- I will report any incidents of harassment that I experience, or that I witness towards other trustees, governors, or staff, to the chair, EHT or headteacher as appropriate;
- I will not accept requests to friend / connect with pupils;
- I will not make negative comments or post opinions online about any member of the VLT community, including members, trustees, governors, employees, parents, and pupils; and
- I will not post anything (including comments, images, or language) that would bring VLT or a school into disrepute.

Breach of this Code of Conduct

- If I believe this code has been breached – by me or by a colleague – I will contact my chair of trustees or governors and they will investigate. If my concern relates to a chair of governors, I will contact the chair of trustees. If my concern relates to the chair of trustees, I will contact one of the members of VLT. The relevant individual will appoint an individual to investigate the concern raised.
- Investigation will include meeting with the individual who is the subject of the concern (two individuals would hold the meeting), and may involve making recommendations regarding the individual (such as support, mentoring or training) and / or about governance more generally.
- For serious and / or persistent breaches (based on the facts of the case), an investigation may recommend removal of trustee(s) or governor(s). Any such removal would be done in accordance with the articles of association and the VLT governance framework; and
- Serious breaches may include (but are not limited to) serious misconduct, serious incompetence, or conduct aimed at undermining the reputation or operations of VLT or any of its schools.

Declaration

I declare that I have read the VLT Code of Conduct, understand it, and will uphold all the principles, policies, practices, and procedures therein. I understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions.

Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____