CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS, TRUSTEES AND GOVERNORS

As a trust, our ethos is encompassed in our vision statement

'Making Lives Better'

and we commit to doing this through:

Reviewed by:	Trust Board
Adopted:	September 2025
Review due:	Summer 2027
Review cycle:	Two years

SOUTHERN EDUCATION TRUST
Code of Conduct for Members, Trustees and Governors

Our policies refer to Senior Leaders. This can refer to Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School.

Note: Reference to 'Board' or 'Board Members' refers to either Trust Board or Local Governing Board, according to the role that is held.

Once this code has been adopted, all board members agree to faithfully abide by it.

***Trustees and Members**: We agree to follow the charity governance code https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en/pdf

***Those governing at local level**: We recognise and support the principles set out in the charity governance code.

We will abide by the Principles of Public Life:

Selflessness
We will act solely in terms of 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 in an open and transparent manner. Information will not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty
We will be truthful.

Leadership
We will exhibit these principles in our own behaviour. We will actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

We will apply the highest standards and will:

1. act within our powers
2. promote the success of the trust and its schools
3. exercise independent judgement
4. exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence
5. avoid conflicts of interest
6. not accept benefits from third parties
7. declare interest in proposed transactions or arrangements

We will focus on our core governance functions:

1. ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of staff
3. overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent, as laid down in the Scheme of Delegation.
   NGA recognises the following as the fourth core function of governance:
4. ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard.

As individuals, we agree to:

Fulfil our role & responsibilities

1. We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management.
2. We will fulfil our role and responsibilities as set out in our scheme of delegation.
3. We will develop, share and live the ethos and values of our trust.
4. We agree to adhere to trust policies and procedures.
5. We will work collectively for the benefit of the trust.
6. We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
7. We will consider how our decisions may affect the trust and local community.
8. We will stand by the decisions that we make as a collective.
9. Where decisions and actions conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life or may place pupils at risk, we will speak up and bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities.
10. We will only speak or act on behalf of the trust board/Local Governing Board if we have the authority to do so.
11. **Trustees**: We will fulfil our responsibilities as a good employer, acting fairly and without prejudice.
12. When making or responding to complaints, we will follow the established procedures.
13. We will strive to uphold the trust's reputation in our private communications (including on social media).
14. We will have regard to our responsibilities under The Equality Act and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all.
15. **Those governing at local level**: We will act as the local ambassadors for our trust.

Demonstrate our commitment to the role

1. We will involve ourselves actively in the work of the board and accept our fair share of responsibilities, serving on committees or working groups where required.
2. We will make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
3. We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
4. We will get to know the school/s well and welcome opportunities to be involved in school activities.
5. We will visit the school/s and when doing so, will make arrangements with relevant staff in advance and observe school and board protocols which are laid out in Appendix 1.
6. Governors and Trustees will follow the safeguarding responsibilities of all adults working in our schools, voluntary or paid, as set out in the Trust's or School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

7. When visiting a school in a personal capacity (for example, as a parent or carer), we will continue to honour the commitments made in this code.
8. We will participate in induction training and take responsibility for developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.

Build and maintain relationships

1. We will develop effective working relationships with leaders, staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders from our local communities.
2. **Those governing at local level**: We will champion the voices of our school community and stakeholders.
3. **Those governing at local level**: We will establish effective working relationships with trustees.
4. **Trustees**: We will engage with and be accountable to those governing at local level.
5. We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings. We will, at all times, treat others as we would wish to be treated.
6. We will work to create an inclusive environment where each board member's contributions are valued equally.
7. We will support the chair in their role of leading the board and ensuring appropriate conduct.

Respect confidentiality

1. We will observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of the trust when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils or families.
2. We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a board meeting.
3. We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
4. We will ensure that all documentation remains confidential at all times. Information held electronically will be held on secure devices with pin/password protection.
5. We will not disclose to any outside individual/organisation, any information obtained during school visits without the approval of the Head Teacher or Head of School.
6. We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.
7. We understand and will abide by the requirements laid down in the Protocol for Virtual Meetings.

Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent

1. We will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the board's business, and these will be recorded in the register of business interests.
2. We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the need arise.
3. If a conflicted matter arises in a meeting, we will offer to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and any subsequent vote.
4. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the trust's website.
5. *We will act as a trustee/school governor; not as a representative of any group.
6. We accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the trust board/local governing body, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor/trustee and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the trust/school website.

7. We accept that information relating to board members/governors will be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database (Get information about schools), some of which will be publicly available.

Breach of this Code of Conduct

We understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions.

If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise the 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 governor/trustee, such as the vice chair will investigate.

All Members, Trustees and Governors will sign annually via Governorhub to confirm that they have read and will abide by this Code of Conduct.

Appendix 1

Protocols for School Visits

- The local governing board will set up an annual programme of visits that enables each governor to fulfil their strategic responsibilities.
- We will provide feedback on the agreed focus using the appropriate form.

- The purpose of the visit, its potential benefit to teachers, governors and pupils:-
  - Getting to know the staff
  - Getting to know the pupils
  - To become familiar with the working environment of the school
  - To understand the constraints within which teachers have to work
  - To become familiar with the jargon of education at a practical level
  - To observe policies and schemes of work being implemented
  - To recognise different teaching styles
  - To offer support
  - To ensure more informed decision making at governing body level

- What is a visit NOT about?
  - Not about making judgments about quality of teaching
  - Not about pursuing personal interests
  - Not about arriving with preconceived ideas
  - Not about checking on the progress of your own children
  - Not about monopolising teachers' time

- Our schools, including the governors, pride themselves on their relaxed, informal family atmosphere. We believe this is most conducive to learning. To ensure staff feel comfortable and secure when governors visit, we would expect that the following ground rules are adhered to.
  - Governors should not be assigned to year groups where their children are learners
  - Visits should be ***pre-arranged*** with the Head Teacher or Head of School
  - Governors should always sign in and out of the building, according to school procedures
  - An appropriate identification badge should be worn for the duration of visits
  - Any class and school guidelines must be observed
  - Confidentiality must be ensured
  - Governors are expected to be courteous and impartial in dealing with groups and individuals, at all times treating others as they would wish to be treated.
  - The purpose must be clear and agreed with the Head Teacher or Head of School before the visit
  - Governors who visit schools and attend lessons to gain a better understanding of the learning process will benefit from discussing the purpose of the lesson and the context in which it is being delivered.
  - Governors are always welcome to join staff at break times in the staffroom. Our staff rooms are places of relaxation where staff can "unload" the events of the day, in an informal and supportive atmosphere. Governors should be sensitive to the completely confidential nature of all that is discussed in the staffroom.

Members, Trustees and Governors will abide by these protocols under the Code of Conduct for Members, Trustees and Governors.