

CODE OF CONDUCT

Code of Conduct for the Governing Board of Thorngumbald Primary School

1. Rationale

- 1.1 Principles contained in this Code of Conduct are based on the Nolan Report and the Principles of Standard in Public Life (1996). These are contained in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to help promote best practice in the governance of Thorngumbald Primary School. The governing board aims to make a significant contribution to our school's performance, working as a team and involving ourselves in the life of the school. It recognises that effective governance is the result of strong professional relationships that are based on a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities. The Code of Conduct also sets high expectations for everyone involved in governance and requires all board members to take individual responsibility for developing their knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis.
- 1.3 All members of the Governing Board are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is acceptable. This Code of Conduct seeks to express those expectations.
- 1.4 This Code of Conduct will be reviewed on an annual basis at the autumn term meeting of the full governing board.

2. Aims and Standards

- 2.1 The governing board will help our school provide the best possible education for each of its pupils and enable them to reach the highest standards of progress and attainment. In doing so, we accept accountability to those who fund the school, to those who inspect the school and to parents and carers, their children, and the wider community for the way in which our school carries out its functions.
- 2.2 All members of the governing board are expected to contribute to the development of our school. They will do this by helping to establish and maintain the strategic framework within which our school operates and determining the character, aims, ethos and values and policies of our school.
- 2.3 Governors are expected to act as 'critical friends' to our school at all times. This includes monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, offering support, providing constructive advice, acting as a sounding board for ideas, offering a second opinion on proposals and offering help where needed. This will also include asking the Headteacher and senior leaders challenging questions. Governors will politely question facts presented so that they are satisfied with their accuracy.
- 2.4 In order to ensure that all governors are equipped with a basic standard of governance knowledge, each governor is expected to attend a governor induction course within two terms of their appointment/election.
- 2.5 The governing board will act at all times in accordance with the requirements laid down by Acts of Parliament and associated Regulations.

3. Roles and Responsibilities – Individual Governors

- 3.1 Governors will acknowledge that the office of governor involves a commitment of time and energy beyond attendance at termly meetings. Governors are expected to be actively involved

in the work of the governing board, attending meetings regularly and accepting a fair share of responsibility, including serving on committees, working in groups, visiting the school and undertaking relevant training.

- 3.2 Governors are elected or appointed to the governing board by different groups and methods. These include parents, staff, the governing board, or church diocese (if applicable). Although chosen by different groups, each of our governors has a responsibility to make his/her own mind up about issues that are considered by the governing board and not necessarily in accordance with the views of the board through which they were elected. Once decisions are made by the governing board (or under the delegated authority of the governing board for example by a committee), individual governors are bound by them and are expected to support and abide by them. Governors will not expose the details of a vote taken in a governing board meeting and should remain conscious of governors' corporate responsibility when discussing governance issues.
- 3.3 Our governing board respects the right of individual governors to be able to express their ideas openly in meetings and have them heard. Governors will accept that others may not share their views and may strongly disagree with them. However, governors will show respect for each other and be courteous when there are differences of opinion. Individual governors will accept that all governing board decisions are made collectively and will accept majority decisions made. Disagreement in the privacy of a governing board meeting will not be considered as grounds for the removal or suspension of a governor.
- 3.4 Governors will accept the necessity of addressing individual and collective needs for training and development and will corporately monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the governing board on a regular basis.
- 3.5 A governor that persistently fails to attend training or development may be in breach of the governing board's code of conduct, and it may be necessary to consider their position.
- 3.6 Governors have a responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school. Their actions and behaviours within the school and the wider community should reflect this. It is expected that all governors will demonstrate allegiance to the school and not proffer individual views or opinions to any third party that may be construed as views of the governing board.
- 3.7 In responding to criticism or complaints about any aspect of the school, governors will refer the complainant to the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure for the correct procedure to be followed. No individual governor will be expected to respond to criticism or complaint. Governors will ensure that they do not become prematurely embroiled in complaints in order that they will remain eligible to serve on an associated complaints panel, if required. The same will apply to pupil/student/staff disciplinary issues; each having their own relevant procedure.
- 3.8 Should one governor wish to register concern about the conduct of another, the issue will first be discussed with the governor directly. Where this is not practical or reasonable, the governor will address the issue with the Chair. Our governing board encourages informal mediation before progression to paragraph 11, and we agree that politely addressed disagreements on matters of governance do not constitute a concern.

4. Build and maintain relationships

- 4.1 Governors will develop effective working relationships with school leaders, staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders from our local community.
- 4.2 Governors will respect the remit of, and engage constructively with, relevant authorities and other schools.

- 4.3 Governors will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings.
- 4.4 Governors will work to create an inclusive environment where each board member's contributions are valued equally.
- 4.5 Governors will support the chair in their role of leading the board and ensuring appropriate conduct.

5. Roles and Responsibilities – The Governing Board

- 5.1 All governors abiding by the Code of Conduct should do so with a good understanding of the core functions of governing boards, which are to:
- that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined
 - that the headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school
 - the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources
- 5.2 All governors will understand that the Headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of the school, the implementation of policy and delivery of the curriculum. The governing board will have responsibility for determining, monitoring and keeping under review, the policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates.
- 5.3 Our governing board is a corporate entity and acts as a group. No one category of governor or individual governor has any right to act individually, except when the governing board has given delegated authority to do so (or when the Chair must take urgent action).
- 5.4 The strength of our governing board lies in the talents and commitment of its members and in their ability to work together as a team for the good of the school and pupils. Every governor will have an equal right to participate and to state his or her own views.
- 5.5 Our governors will support the Headteacher with their responsibilities for the day-to-day internal organisation, management, and control of the school and for advising on and implementing the governing board's strategic framework. Governors will not seek to perform any duties delegated to the Headteacher (such as the appraisal of staff) but, instead, perform their strategic duty to develop and adopt appropriate policies and frameworks under which the Headteacher will operate.
- 5.6 Our governors will have a responsibility to act fairly and without prejudice at all times.
- 5.7 Our governing board will always carefully consider how the outcomes of decisions made might affect other schools.
- 5.8 As governors, we are responsible for the selection and recruitment of all staff employed at our school (though much may be delegated to the Headteacher). As such, the governing board will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer. Concerns about individual members of staff will be dealt with through the Headteacher in accordance with school policy and where necessary referral made to the relevant committee which deals with Human Resources issues. Concerns shared with any governor will not be aired publicly.
- 5.9 Our governors have a duty to get to know the school and are encouraged to involve themselves in school activities. All governors will be delegated a responsibility (e.g. for disadvantaged pupils, health and safety, Safeguarding or educational visits) and will be expected to visit the school in relation to these at least once per term. Visits to school will be undertaken within the framework established by the governing board and agreed with the Headteacher. Governor visits can be carried out either face to face or virtually. (See paragraph 7 below).

- 5.10 Our governors will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Headteacher and leadership team, staff, parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies based in the wider community and, where appropriate, Diocesan Authorities.
- 5.11 Our governing board will be inclusive in its approach to school governance. All groups within the school community will be made welcome and encouraged to contribute to the work of the governing board. Needs of governors who require extra support to fulfill their role will be addressed, including physical accessibility to meeting rooms, timing of meetings to take into account governors' working hours or caring responsibilities and access to IT.
- 5.12 Governors will, wherever possible, seek to establish secure lines of communication in order to protect the sensitive data which is necessarily shared with them. In practice, this will mean ensuring that governors have school email addresses or that the security credentials of governors' email servers can be verified. We consider that family email addresses or addresses to which more than one person has access are inappropriate and do not constitute responsible stewardship of our school's data. Our preference is that governors make use of school email addresses, managed through mail servers which we know to be secure.
- 5.13 Governors will uphold the school's reputation in private communications including those on social media. When using social media will not initiate, contribute to, support, like' or distribute any comments that include criticism of the school.

6. Confidentiality

- 6.1 All discussions that take place in Part A of the full governing board and committee meetings will be minuted and made available to parents and any other interested party upon request once they have been approved by the full governing board and signed by the Chair. Until the minutes have been agreed and signed as an accurate record, they remain confidential. The governing board will decide if an item for discussion is confidential and all governors are expected to abide by the decision.
- 6.2 All items of a confidential nature will be considered under Part B of each full governing board and committee agenda. Individual governors are expected to respect this confidentiality and not disclose information deemed as confidential in any other forum. All discussions in reaching a decision will remain confidential to those present at the meeting and the minutes of these discussions will not be made available to the general public.
- 6.3 Reports made to the governing board and its committees are public documents after the meeting has considered them and will be available at the school to anyone wishing to view them unless the governing board decides that they should remain confidential.
- 6.4 Equally, the governing board will not be obstructive to interested parties, only withholding information as confidential when appropriate and will ensure that the school makes non-confidential minutes and documents available to interested parties in a timely fashion.
- 6.5 Governors will observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of school when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils or families.
- 6.6 Only those governors specifically authorised to do so will speak or act on behalf of the governing board.
- 6.7 Governors will exercise the highest degree of prudence should discussions of potentially contentious issues arise outside the governing board. Individual governors will not express a personal view of any contentious issue and will refer comments made to them by external parties back to the governing board.

- 6.8 Governors will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
- 6.9 Governors are expected to uphold confidentiality regarding all board matters not only during their term of office but also after their governorship has ended.
- 6.10 In the event of a breach of confidentiality, the chair of governors will be informed as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further.
- 6.11 Governors understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended or removed from office.

7. Data Protection and GDPR

- 7.1 Governors will follow the school's information security processes; measures and data protection policy when using, storing, sharing and disposing of personal data.
- 7.2 Governors' commitment to data protection/GDPR does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.
- 7.3 In accordance with data protection principles, governors must take all reasonable steps to ensure secure communication channels are used when handling sensitive or personal data. This includes, wherever possible, the use of school-issued email addresses managed via secure servers. The use of shared or family email accounts is strongly discouraged, as such arrangements may compromise data confidentiality and do not meet the standards of responsible data stewardship expected by the governing board.

8. Visiting the School

- 8.1 All governors will recognise that they do not have an automatic right to enter the school unannounced but will have the opportunity to arrange visits in order to see school policies in action and to understand how the school works.
- 8.2 The protocol for visits by governors to school is as follows:
- The approximate number of governor visits per term will be agreed in advance with the Headteacher. Visits will have a clear focus, linked to school policy, a curriculum area or an aspect of the school improvement plan.
 - The date and timing of each visit will be arranged in advance with the Headteacher and relevant staff involved.
 - If a governor is going to spend time in a classroom, this will be discussed with the class teacher so that both are clear on the boundaries and outcomes of the visit.
 - Governors will understand that their visits do not replace professional inspections or the monitoring role of the Headteacher and Senior Leaders. Governors will not make judgements about the effectiveness of the teaching that they see. If a governor is concerned about any aspect of what they have seen, this will be raised with the Headteacher.
 - When visiting the school in a personal capacity (for example, as a parent or carer), governors will continue to honour the commitments made in this code.
 - After each visit or series of connected visits, the governor will report back in writing to the governing board. Written reports will be via a proforma agreed and approved by the Headteacher and the governing board. Written reports provide a valuable evidence base which helps the governing board in undertaking our monitoring responsibilities. The written report produced will be shared with the Headteacher before it is considered at a governing board meeting.
 - All governors visit reports will be presented at the next full governing board meeting.

9. Governing Board Meetings

9.1 All our governors will recognise that, individually, they do not have any authority in our school and that it is the collective decisions of the governing board that carry authority. If that authority is to be respected and our governing board is to carry out its functions well, the way it conducts its meetings is crucial.

9.2 With regard to scheduled meetings, as a governor you can expect:

- An agenda and relevant documents to reach you at least seven days before a meeting is due to take place.
- An agenda that makes clear the purpose of each item.
- A Chair who will keep to the agenda, pace meetings so that time is given to each matter in proportion to its importance, draw upon all members for contributions and keep discussions to the point.
- Your contribution in meetings to be heard.
- To receive minutes of meetings that summarise views succinctly and record decisions and actions accurately.

9.3 It is expected that as a governor you will:

- Attend meetings regularly and be punctual.
- Read the agenda, minutes and other papers before the meeting.
- Ensure you have access to the agenda and any other relevant papers at the meeting.
- Make relevant and positive contributions.
- Be prepared to ask challenging questions which clarify and enable your own understanding and hold senior leaders to account.
- Listen to and consider what other people have to say.
- Support new and inexperienced governors to enable their participation and understanding.
- Accept your share of collective responsibility, even for decisions made with which you do not personally agree.
- Be open to new ideas.
- Ensure that you do not allow any personal opinions or grievances to cloud your views.
- Abide by this Code of Conduct.

10. Committee Meetings

10.1 The expectations of governors described in paragraph 8.3 also apply to committee meetings. It must be remembered that committees may be responsible for either presenting decisions made to the full governing board or recommending actions to be taken. It is very important to remember that as a committee member you will also need to:

- Develop a good understanding of the committee's field of interest (e.g. finance, curriculum etc).
- Willingly volunteer to undertake any tasks required by the committee (e.g. researching policy models, seeking views from those who may be involved in carrying out policies made by the committee).
- Be prepared to explain at full governing board meetings how the committee's decisions were reached.

11. Implementation of this Code of Conduct

11.1 Governors will understand that any allegation of a material breach of this Code of Conduct by any governor shall be raised at a meeting of the governing board and, if agreed and substantiated by a majority of governors, shall be minuted.

- 11.2 Governors will understand that any governor whose conduct is minuted twice in a period twelve months shall be suspended for a period of six months from the date of the second minute.
- 11.3 Governors will be aware of the provisions of regulation 17(1) of the School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013, which pertain to qualification and disqualification for the role of school governor and grounds for suspension (held as a separate document).
- 11.4 Where governors find cause to consider the suspension or removal of a governor outside of the provisions in 11.1 and 11.2, they will treat the issue sensitively and with strict confidence.
- 11.5 Should a governor breach the Code of Conduct in a serious way but not in such a way that they are not automatically disqualified from governance, the governing board will convene a meeting with a specific agenda item relating to the suspension or removal of the governor in question. The agenda must be circulated not less than seven clear days before the date of the meeting.
- 11.6 At the meeting, a governor must be prepared to present the case for removal or suspension. This process and address may never be undertaken or led by the Headteacher. The governor whose suspension or removal is to be considered must be given the right to address the governing board in reply. Both governors will then retire for the vote which will decide whether the governor should be suspended or removed. (Note: either suspension or removal must be specified on the agenda). Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that all governors are able to attend a meeting with this purpose.
- 11.7 If the decision is taken to suspend or remove the governor, a further full governing board meeting must be held not less than 14 days after the decision to suspend or remove. The governing board must ratify its decision at this meeting. The governor being considered for suspension or removal may not attend this second meeting.
- 11.8 While suspended, a governor is entitled to receive agendas and documents as normal and may not be removed for non-attendance.
- 11.9 In the event that a complaint is made about a governor, the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure will be followed. Following an investigation in accordance with the Complaints Policy and Procedure, the governing board will consider whether that governor has breached this Code of Conduct, following the procedures set forth in paragraph 11.
- 11.10 Governors understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions including suspension or removal from the governing board as a last resort.

The Governing Board of Thorngumbald Primary School adopted this Code of Conduct

Chair of Governors: Gary Sainty
Next review due by: Autumn 2026

Date: 5 March 2026