

DNEAT Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct

September 2026

Contents

1. Our Christian Ethos and Values.....	1
2. Aims, Scope and Principles	1
3. The 7 Nolan principles of public life.....	2
4. Governor and Trustee responsibilities.....	2
5. Review.....	4
Appendix 1: Breaches of the code of conduct	5

1. Our Christian Ethos and Values

OUR VISION

Our passion and ambition is to see children in all our schools achieve excellent educational outcomes alongside developing and growing into their potential as individuals made in the image of God. Our culture is one of high aspiration rooted in our Christian values as demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This shapes our ethos and culture whereby all working or volunteering within our academy trust should 'walk and talk' our Christian vision and values. A desire to see all truly flourish and to be inclusive organisations, welcoming those of all faiths and none, is at the heart of our approach.

Our Trust vision is based upon Proverbs 24: 3 – 24: 4 (ESV); *By wisdom a house is built; and by understanding it is established: By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.* We try to live all Christian values but have selected **kindness**, **courage**, **community** and **wisdom** as the key ones for our Trust. These are our guiding stars on our journey.

That means we put people at the centre of the organisation and want to see them flourish and grow. Our schools are inclusive, welcoming those of all faiths and none.

- We believe in the affirmation of individual worth
- We believe in nurturing hope and aspiration
- We believe in service to others
- We believe in a holistic education
- We believe in the importance of excellent leadership and role models
- We believe in the development of mutual trust
- We believe in collaboration
- We believe in commitment and endurance

2. Aims, Scope and Principles

This document aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all Governors and Trustees to follow.

DNEAT Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct

September 2026

By creating this code of conduct, we aim to ensure that Trustees and Governors carry out their role with honesty and integrity, and help us to ensure our Trust is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

The code is based on the [academy trust governance guide](#) and the [Academy Trust Handbook](#). It should be read alongside our constitutional documents, the Articles of Association and Scheme of Delegation. All Trustees and Governors will be required to review and commit to the code of conduct on an annual basis in the autumn term (or on appointment for new appointees). Failure to follow the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in the appendix.

Please note, this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, professional judgement and the best interests of the Trust and its pupils will be the measure by which the situation is assessed.

3. The 7 Nolan principles of public life

As Governors and Trustees, we will follow these [principles](#) set out by the government at all times. They apply to anyone who holds a public office:

- **Selflessness** – we will act in the public interest
- **Integrity** – we will not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare any conflict of interests
- **Objectivity** – we will act and take decisions impartially, fairly, and on merit. We will use the best evidence and avoid discrimination or bias
- **Accountability** – we understand that we are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions. To make sure of this, we submit to external scrutiny where necessary
- **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 in our actions, decisions and reporting
- **Leadership** – we will actively promote and support the above principles and will challenge poor behaviour wherever it happens

4. Governor and Trustee responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of Governors and Trustees are set out in our Scheme of Delegation.

To carry out these roles and responsibilities effectively, as individuals we agree to do the following:

What we do:

- Develop, share and live the Trust's Christian vision and values to uphold the religious character of the Trust
- Hold the executive leaders to account in a respectful and purposeful way
- Attend meetings, and be committed, accountable and active

DNEAT Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct

September 2026

- Operate and make decisions in the best interests of pupils, informed by the views and needs of our key stakeholders (pupils, parents, staff, local communities and Local Authorities as appropriate)
- Take part in any training or development required for our role (including Safeguarding Training) and be proactive in identifying skills gaps for training and development
- Avoid conflicts of interest and where a conflict arises, declare any interests in proposed transactions or arrangements (including those related to people with whom we are connected)
- Follow the Trust's policies and procedures (including but not limited to: Safeguarding Policy, ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy, Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct Policy, Data Protection Policy), and the procedures of governance as set out in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the Trust's constitutional documents
- Take responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our Board or Committee's performance, constitution and skillset
- Keep informed about the Trust, its strengths, challenges and opportunities, and its internal and external relationships
- Trustees only: When undertaking duties as a Trustee, understand the responsibilities of Trustees as Directors under Company Law and Trustees under Charity Law
- Trustees only: Fulfil the expectations of a good employer and the contract of trust between the employer and those who are employed

How we do it:

- Accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core purpose rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management
- When undertaking duties as a Governor or Trustee, ensure that anything that is said or written reflects the policies and values of the Trust (even when this is different to private views)
- Observe confidentiality about information provided to us whilst in the role and continue to observe confidentiality after we have left the role. Our commitment to confidentiality does not overrule our duty to appropriately report child protection concerns where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

In the event of a breach of confidentiality, we will inform the Governance Team as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further. Governors and Trustees understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended or removed
- Work in collaboration and corporately with other Governors/Trustees when carrying out our role
- Promote equality and diversity throughout our organisation
- Not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Uphold the values and decisions of the Trust and be an ambassador for the Trust in all aspects of public and personal life, including on social media (including WhatsApp groups)
- Carefully consider how appropriate it would be to accept any friend requests from parents/carers or to join any parent/carer groups associated with the Trust. We will never accept friend requests from pupils

DNEAT Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct

September 2026

As Governors/Trustees we agree to step down from our role if we believe we are unable to fulfil the expectations for our responsibilities outlined above.

5. Review

This code of conduct will be reviewed and agreed annually, upon significant changes to the law, or as needed.

Governors and Trustees should confirm that they agree to abide by this Code of Conduct via the Declarations area on GovernorHub.

DNEAT Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct

September 2026

Appendix 1: Breaches of the code of conduct

Process

Where there has been a suspected breach of the code of conduct, this should be reported to the Governance Team (governance@donesc.org). Depending on the nature of the allegation or persistence in allegations, the Governance Team will determine whether the process should be picked up at Stage 1 or Stage 2.

Any allegations about a Headteacher or Staff Governor's code of conduct should be raised under the Trust's Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct Policy.

Stage 1 – Informal conversation

Depending on the nature of the suspected breach, the Governance Team may choose to have a conversation with the individual accused of breaching the code of conduct prior to initiating a Stage 2 investigation. The Governance Team should offer an appointment to discuss the issue as quickly as possible, this will provide the time to talk about the issue calmly and politely without being interrupted. The parties involved should be encouraged to offer their view of what would be a realistic resolution to the issue or highlight where additional support may be needed.

At the conclusion of the conversation, or following any agreed upon investigation, the individual suspected of breaching the code of conduct will be provided with an informal written response. The response will be provided within 20 school days of the date the allegation of the breach to the code of conduct was made.

If the issue remains unresolved or the individual is accused more than once of a breach to the code of conduct, a Stage 2 investigation will commence.

If the individual accused of breaching the code of conduct refuses to engage with the Governance Team on the issue or does not respond to the Governance Team within 10 school days of the allegation, a Stage 2 investigation will commence.

Stage 2 – Investigation and decision making

If a Stage 2 investigation is undertaken, the individual accused of breaching the code of conduct will be informed in writing at the earliest opportunity.

The Governance Team will appoint a member of the Governance Team to investigate the code of conduct breach. The appointed member of the Governance Team will play no part in any further arrangements related to the same process e.g. appointment of panel members or meeting arrangements at Stage 3.

During the investigation, the investigator will:

- If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those accused of breaching the code of conduct, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.
- Seek advice from appropriate organisations or colleagues.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the investigator will provide a formal report to all parties within 20 school days of the investigation notification to include recommendations for next steps where appropriate.

Investigation recommendations may include (but are not limited to):

- Further meetings with the individual to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct

DNEAT Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct

September 2026

- Support, mentoring or training for the individual
- Making sure the individual withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in
- A recommendation that the individual is removed from their Governor/Trustee role

If the investigation outcome includes a recommendation that the individual is removed from their Governor/Trustee role, Stage 3 of the process will be initiated.

A recommendation that an individual is removed from their governance role may be made if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos or Christian values of the Trust (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the Board)
- Have brought, or have acted in a way that is likely to bring the Trust into disrepute
- Have acted to undermine fundamental British values or the Board's commitment or ability to deliver on its Prevent duty
- Have been involved in serious misconduct. The Governance Team will determine what counts as serious misconduct based on the facts of the case, but it will include any actions that compromise the 7 Principles of Public Life, if sufficiently serious
- Have displayed repeated and serious incompetence
- Have acted in a way that is significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the Board or Committee, or their actions have interfered with the operational efficiency of the Trust

'Bringing the Trust into disrepute' may include, but is not limited to:

- Speaking out publicly against the Trust
- Being disrespectful to members of the Trust community
- Behaving inappropriately in a public forum, such as a community meeting or on social media (including WhatsApp groups)
- Persistently failing to undertake the training or development they need to contribute effectively

Stage 3 – Right to appeal

If the individual accused of breaching the code of conduct wishes to appeal the findings and recommendations of the investigation report, whether or not the recommendation is that the individual is removed, they have the right to request a panel meeting.

The panel will consist of at least three Trustees for Governors or Members for Trustees who were not directly involved in the code of conduct breach or investigation. This is the final stage of the breach of the code of conduct procedure.

The aim of the panel meeting will be:

- To determine if the investigation process was carried out correctly.
- To determine if the findings of the investigation and recommendations are appropriate and proportionate.
- (if included in the investigation report recommendations) to determine whether the individual should be removed from their Governor/Trustee role.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Governance Team, within 10 school days of the date of the Stage 2 response.

DNEAT Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct

September 2026

The Governance Team will record the date the request is received and acknowledge receipt of the request in writing within 5 school days. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The Governance Team will make all reasonable endeavours to arrange a mutually convenient date and time for the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request or 15 school days after the Stage 2 Investigation Report is provided (if applicable). If this is not possible, the Governance Team will provide an anticipated date and keep the individual informed.

If the individual rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Governance Team will decide when to hold the meeting. The meeting will then proceed in the individual's absence with written submission from the individual. The individual may bring someone to the meeting to provide support.

The Stage 3 panel will consist of:

- at least three Trustees for Governors or Members for Trustees with no prior involvement or knowledge in the code of conduct breach or investigation.
- Prior to the meeting, the Governance Team will agree with the panel who will act as the Chair at the meeting.
- The Governance Team will appoint a clerk to the Stage 3 panel meeting.

At least 7 school days before the meeting, the Governance Team will:

- confirm and notify the individual of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted for the panel at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded, or documents tabled at the meeting.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless the individual's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent to recording from all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in the minutes. The Trust will make the recording and share it with those present.

The panel will consider the breach of the code of conduct allegation and all the evidence presented. The panel can:

- uphold the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation in whole or in part.
- not uphold the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation in whole or in part.
- Determine to remove the individual from their Governor/Trustee role (if consideration is recommended in the Stage 2 investigation)

If the outcome of Stage 2 is not upheld in whole or in part, the panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the issue.
- Determine if there are any further recommendations for the Trust or individual.

DNEAT Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct

September 2026

The Chair of the Stage 3 panel meeting will provide the individual and the Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days. Where appropriate, it will include details of any further recommendations for the Trust or individual.

If the panel decides to remove an individual from their Governor/Trustee role, this will be actioned at the earliest opportunity and within 2 school days of the outcome decision.

The minutes of the Stage 3 meeting will be provided to any party on request.

A written record will be kept of all allegations of breaches to the code of conduct, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel meeting, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Trust is required by law to provide them to a third party.