Staffordshire University Academies Trust

# SUAT Code of Conduct for Local Academy Councils 2025

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| **Last reviewed** | **December 2025** |
| **Reviewed by** | **Operations Director** |
| **Approved by** | **CEO** |
| **Date of approval** | **December 2025** |
| **Policy owner** | **Operations Director** |
| **Location** | **Trust Website** |

This Code of Conduct sets out the behaviour and conduct expected of all members of Local Academy Councils in Staffordshire University Academies Trust. The code sets out the standard of personal and professional behaviour required of the LAC Members and is designed to assist them in understanding their legal and ethical duties. It is not, however, a definitive statement of the law or good practice.

**The Local Academy Council**

The Trust Board is the body that is legally responsible for the conduct of every Academy in the Trust, with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. The Trustees are the governors of all of the SUAT academies.

The purpose of the Local Academy Council is to provide confident leadership in their Academy and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. In order to enable them to discharge this duty the Trust Board delegates considerable authority to the LACs through a detailed Scheme of Delegation.

It is a requirement of Staffordshire University Academies Trust (SUAT) that all Local Academy Council members, should read, and undertake to comply with, this code of conduct.

At SUAT, we recognise and value the effort taken by LAC Members who contribute towards the governance of the academies. We encourage your assistance and want to make sure that your time spent as part of the LAC is productive and enjoyable.

This code of conduct outlines what is expected from members of the LAC Members and sets out the code of conduct which all LAC Members are required to comply with.

For the purpose of this agreement, the information referred to will include all information or material that constitutes personal information under the UK GDPR about any pupil, parent, member of staff or stakeholder of the setting, or has or could have value, commercial or otherwise, in the business in which the disclosing party is engaged. LAC members must ensure the security and confidentiality of all Academy, confidential and personal data is maintained at all times.

Any material breach of the Code of Conduct may result in a LAC Member being removed.

**Core functions of the Local Academy Council**

1. **Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction**

   It is the job of the LAC to:
   - Set a clear and explicit vision for their Academy, set within the overall vision of the Trust Board for their academies.
   - Ensure strong and clear values and ethos are defined and modelled by the LAC.
   - Set their own Academy's strategic framework, defining medium to long-term goals and processes to monitor and review progress.
   - Ensure mechanisms are in place for the LAC to listen, understand and respond to the voices of parents, pupils, staff and the local community.
   - Provide strategic support and challenge to their Academy.

2. **Holding the Principal/senior executive leader to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils/students, and the performance management of staff**

   This will take place through:
   - A rigorous analysis of pupil progress and attainment and Academy compliance.

- Clear processes for overseeing and monitoring the Academy's improvement.
- A transparent system for the performance management of the Principal / leaders.
- Effective oversight of the performance of all other employees.
- A regular cycle of meetings.

**3. Ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the Academy's financial resources**

Once the Trust has allocated that Academy's resources, the LAC is responsible for making sure the Academy's money is well spent with effective controls for managing within available resources. They should do this by ensuring they have at least one LAC member with specific skills, training and experience of financial matters, but everyone on the LAC should have a basic understanding of the financial cycle and legal requirements.

**The LAC should play a strategic role and leave the running of the Academy to the Principal / Head Teacher they have appointed. The LAC must not interfere in the day-to-day running of the Academy.**

**Ways of Working**

- The way the LAC operates and organises itself should be kept under review.
- The LAC should consider how to use their powers to delegate functions and decisions to committees or individual LAC members.
- The LAC will be made aware annually, by the Trust, of their terms of reference, constitution and membership.
- The LAC must meet at least three times a year.
- Principals / Executive Leaders and Chairs should work together to ensure that meetings are well planned at appropriate intervals and that agendas are fit for purpose.
- The LAC must appoint an independent Clerk to their LAC to advise them on the nature of their functions and duties and ensure the LAC operates efficiently and effectively.

**The Principal / Senior Executive Leader (SEL)**

- The Principal's / SEL's responsibilities include the internal organisation, management and control of the Academy and the educational performance of the Academy.
- The Principal / SEL will deliver the aims of the Trust and the LAC through the day-to-day management of the Academy, implementation of the agreed policy framework and Academy improvement strategy and the delivery of the curriculum.
- It is the Principal's / SEL's legal duty to provide the LAC with all the information they need to do their job well. This means they should help the LAC access the data published by the DfE and Ofsted. They should also provide regularly a wide range of other management information so that the LAC can monitor different aspects of life in the Academy throughout the year.
- The Principal / SEL must comply with any reasonable direction of the LAC.
- The Principal / SEL is accountable to the LAC for the performance of all his or her responsibilities.

**The Chair**

- The LAC must appoint a Chair to lead and manage their LAC.
- The Chair plays a crucial role in setting the culture of the LAC and is first among equals but has no individual power.
- The Chair may make only make decisions or act on behalf of the LAC, in accordance with the scheme of delegation if:
  - The LAC have delegated that decision to the Chair of the LAC.
  - The Chair is of the opinion that a delay in exercising a function would be detrimental to the Academy, anyone who works at the academy or any pupil at the Academy or their parent.

- The Chair is the principal link between the LAC and the Principal. The Principal and Chair should meet regularly at mutually convenient times to discuss Academy matters, and the Chair should be a critical friend by offering support, challenge and encouragement.
- The Chair works with the Clerk to set LAC agendas and approves draft minutes of LAC meetings.

**The Vice-Chair**
In the absence of a Chair, the Vice-Chair will take on that role.

**Chairs of Committees**
In SUAT, the LACs do not have to have committees, but they can choose to do so. Chairs of committees work with the Clerk to set committee meeting agendas and approve draft minutes for those meetings. They have responsibility for ensuring that if a function of the LAC has been delegated to the committee or a function of the LAC has otherwise been exercised by the committee, it is reported to the LAC.

**Governors**
In SUAT, in law, the corporate body is the Trust Board, which means that no Trustee can act on her/his own without proper authority from the Trust Board. All Trustees carry equal responsibility for decisions. If a function of the Trust Board has been delegated to an individual Trustee, the individual must report to the Trust Board in respect of any action taken or decision made in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

The Trustees of SUAT have chosen to extend this principle to the LACs and their members.
The overriding concern of all LAC members has to be the welfare of the Academy as a whole, regardless of the route by which they were appointed and the type of LAC member they are i.e. Staff, Parent, Foundation, Community or Co-opted.

For LACs to carry out their role effectively, members must be prepared and equipped to take their responsibilities seriously. They should:
- Be committed to improving education and welfare for all pupils.
- Prepare for meetings by reading papers beforehand.
- Ask questions to clarify understanding and gain assurances.
- Make every effort to attend meetings promptly, regularly and for the full time.
- Take responsibility for their own learning, training and development as a LAC member.

In addition, they should:
- Work as a member of a team at all times and be loyal to collective decisions made by the LAC.
- Recognise that all members have the same rights.
- Act in the best interests of the Academy at all times.
- Not do anything that might undermine the LAC's delegated requirement to promote community cohesion.
- Promote British Values with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Respect confidentiality and adhere to the confidentiality agreement at all times.
- Listen to and respect the views of others.
- Express their own views clearly and succinctly.
- Declare any conflicts of interest, including via annual declarations and at every meeting.
- Take their fair share of work/positions of responsibility.
- Know, understand and work within the prescribed regulatory framework.
- Report any evidence of fraud, corruption or misconduct to an appropriate person or Authority.
- Adhere to the seven principles of public life (below) originally published by the Nolan Committee.

- Ensure that communication undertaken via social networking sites is comparable to one-to-one interaction, meaning that all aspects of this code of conduct are taken account of when posting information, messages, pictures or video footage on-line.
- Ensure that all Academy data and information remains confidential at all times, and that any actions taken ensure that data is maintained securely.
- Follow the Trust's data protection policy requirements.

**The Seven Principles of Public Life**

As recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life.

1. **Selflessness -** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
2. **Integrity -** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
3. **Objectivity –** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
4. **Accountability -** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
5. **Openness -** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
6. **Honesty -** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
7. **Leadership -** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

**The Agreement**

**In General**

**a)** We understand the purpose of the LAC, its relationship to the Trust Board and the role of the Principal, Chair, Vice, Chair and Chairs of Committees as set out above.

**b)** We are aware of and accept the Nolan seven principles of public life.

**c)** We accept that the Trust Board has the legal authority to act for all of the academies in SUAT and understand that they choose to delegate considerable authority to the LACs (in accordance with the scheme of delegation). We understand that we must not act individually, except when the LAC has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the LAC when we have been specifically authorised to do so.

**d)** We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.

**e)** We will encourage open government and will act appropriately.

**f)** We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Trust and the LAC or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the LAC meetings.

**g)** We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools.

**h)** We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our Academy and to promote community cohesion. Our actions within the Academy and the local community will reflect this.

**i)** In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the Academy we will follow the procedures established by the Trust Board.

**k)** We understand that communication via social networking sites in a variety of formats is deemed comparable to one-to-one interaction for the purposes of this code of conduct and must adhere to the confidentiality requirements within this code of conduct.
**l)** We are committed to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of employees and children as a priority.

**Commitment**
**a)** We acknowledge that accepting office as a LAC member involves the commitment of time and energy.
**b)** We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the LAC, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups or as nominated link members.
**c)** We will prepare for meetings by reading papers beforehand.
**d)** We will make every effort to attend all meetings promptly, regularly and for the full time. Where we cannot, we will endeavour to explain in advance in full why we are unable to.
**e)** We will get to know the Academy well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in Academy activities.
**f)** Our visits to the Academy will be arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established by the Trust Board and agreed with the Principal / Head Teacher.
**g)** We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development and will undertake relevant training.
**h)** We are committed to actively supporting and challenging the Principal / Head Teacher.
**i)** We are committed to safeguarding children and will ensure that our actions are reflective of safeguarding policies and procedures. We will undertake safeguarding level one training upon commencing our post on the LAC and update this accordingly. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and wellbeing of both staff and children.
**j)** We will adhere to the Scheme of Delegation.
**k)** We are committed to supporting the Academy within the role and remit of the LAC, recognising that this may involve attending meetings and panels outside of the LAC from time to time, as relevant to the role of individual LAC members.

**Relationships**
**a)** We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
**b)** We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully. The person chairing a meeting is responsible for ensuring appropriate conduct at all times, and the other LAC members are responsible for supporting the Chair in that role.
**c)** We are prepared to answer queries from other LAC members in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and we will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
**d)** We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the Principal / Head Teacher, staff and parents, the Trust Board and other relevant agencies and the community.

**Confidentiality Principles**
a) It is the responsibility of all Local Academy Council members who have access to academy data, confidential information and personal information, business critical / sensitive data, to undertake and maintain the security and integrity of such data at all times. This is inclusive of such data which falls under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation.
b) Academy Principals and Data Protection Leads are responsible for making LAC members aware of the contents of this agreement which must be followed during the handling of all academy data and personal information disclosed during meetings, written, electronic and verbal communications.
c) Pupils, parents and members of staff are entitled to assume that any personal information which is collected or recorded during the course of their involvement with the organisation will not be disclosed inappropriately by any person or persons on the Local Academy Council.
d) The Academy is entitled to assume that all of its data, in written, electronic and verbal forms will not be disclosed inappropriately by any person or persons on the Local Academy Council.

e) All LAC members of SUAT Academies are in a position of privilege and trust. Any abuse of this trust will be construed as gross misconduct and may result in legal action.
f) All LAC members in this position of trust are accountable for the security and integrity of personal information, confidential information, business critical / sensitive information and Academy data.

We will:

a) Observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential, business critical or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, and personal information, both inside or outside the Academy.
b) Exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding Academy business arise outside a LAC meeting.
c) Not reveal the details of any LAC vote.
d) Not reveal the details of discussions in LAC meetings or comments made by individual LAC members at those meetings.
e) Keep any personal, confidential and sensitive data secure at all times, and ensure that we comply with data protection policies in this regard.

**Confidentiality Requirements**

a) Any personal information gained during the LAC members' term must not be discussed with anyone, either inside or outside the Academy, unless specifically requested to do so by the CEO of the Staffordshire University Academies Trust.
b) Passwords for any academy systems, Governor Hub, email accounts and other mediums for the storage and communication of electronic personal data must not be shared and are to be kept secure at all times.
c) Passwords for electronic systems utilised by the LAC member for Academy purposes must be changed on a regular basis.
d) All communications will be conducted in a professional manner, inclusive of written and verbal methods of communication.
e) All papers containing Academy, confidential and personal information, business critical / sensitive data, must be kept in a lockable location, within a secure area which mitigates any third party access. Papers must be returned to the Academy following use and not taken off premises unless necessary for a specific purpose and agreed with the Headteacher.
f) The use of paper documentation should be avoided as far as reasonably practicable. If paper documentation is utilised for meetings, or where copies are taken, they must be disposed of in a secure format by secure shredding facilities or cross cut shredder located on the Academy premises.
g) Any documentation which is paper based and transported by the LAC must be kept secure at all times, for example paper based documentation may not be left in a car overnight, for example.
h) When accessing electronic personal information, the LAC member must ensure that:
i) Electronic devices used to access Academy data, personal and confidential information are encrypted, including laptops, computers, mobile phones and tablets.
j) The computer or device is locked before leaving the workstation, even for a short period of time.
k) Following use of emails or Governor Hub, the LAC member logs out of the system.
l) USBs or hard drives are not used to store Academy data, business critical / sensitive information, personal or confidential information.
m) Emails containing personal information are adequately protected. Email communication should be professional, clear and appropriate in nature.
n) All devices being used have appropriate antivirus and firewalls in place.
o) No Academy documents or personal information is downloaded to or stored on the device.
p) LAC members must remain vigilant when utilising email systems to access links to SharePoint requests and email attachments, no matter who they appear to come from. LAC members must not click on or enter any email account information into any links or requests they are unsure of

or not expecting, and must check the legitimacy with the sender. If LAC members have concerns they must report this to the Principal/Head Teacher immediately.

q) Before sharing personal information, LAC members must ensure the following:
   - They are allowed to share it.
   - Adequate security is in place to protect it, for example, anonymisation, password protection and encryption.
   - The recipient is authorised to receive the information.

r) Caution should be exercised in dealing with telephone requests. If phone calls of this nature are received by the LAC member, they should refer this on to the Principal at their Academy and decline to respond in the first instance.

s) Communication received by LAC members from parties outside of the organisation should be referred to the Academy in the first instance. Complaints regarding Academy staff or LAC members must be escalated to the appropriate party.

t) Academy data includes but is not limited to staff and staffing, pupil, parent, financial, health and safety, human resource, educational, results, attainment, management, appraisal, appeal, school improvement, governance, data protection, premises and Ofsted reports. Data Protection, Information Security and Information Sharing policies can be found on the Trust website.

u) It is important that care is taken on telephone calls, using emails and posting on social media. LAC members must be mindful not to disclose information that may be overheard by members of the public on a telephone conversation. Emails used for SUAT business must be kept private and secure. Personal social media posts about Trust / Academy business must not disclose any sensitive business information such as personal data, information about meetings, financial, legal, or operational status.

v) Passwords for any Trust / Academy systems, email accounts and other mediums for the storage of electronic personal, confidential or business critical / sensitive data must not be shared and are to be kept secure at all times.

w) LAC members will not disclose any information, or partake in any discussions with unauthorised individuals, about ongoing investigations into allegations against staff members, volunteers, or stakeholders.

x) Passwords for any Academy email accounts and other mediums for the storage and communication of electronic personal or organisational data must not be shared and are to be kept secure at all times.

y) LAC members will be aware that other staff, volunteers or stakeholders may have connections within the setting and may overhear conversations of a sensitive nature.

z) LAC members must uphold the good name and reputation of the Trust at all times, both inside and outside of the setting.

LAC members must hold and maintain personal, confidential business critical / sensitive information in strictest confidence for the sole and exclusive benefit of the Academy / Trust; therefore, must not, without prior approval of the setting, use any data for their own benefit, publish, copy, or otherwise disclose to others, or permit the use by others for their benefit or to the detriment of the setting, any personal, confidential, business critical / sensitive information. It is recommended that Data Protection and Cyber Security training is undertaken annually.

NB. The Academy may find it useful to induct the LAC member to ensure that they understand their obligations in relation to protecting Academy, personal and confidential information. The Data Protection Policy, Compliant Records Management Policy and GDPR Information for LAC Members is located on the website www.suatrust.co.uk.

**Conflicts of interest**

**a)** We will record any pecuniary interest that we, or close family members, have in connection with the LAC's business in the Register of Business Interests.

**b)** We will declare any personal or pecuniary interest in a matter under discussion at a meeting and offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.

**Implementation of this Code of Conduct**

**a)** We understand that any allegation of a breach or material breach of this code of conduct by any LAC member shall be raised at a meeting of the LAC and, if agreed to be substantiated by a majority of LAC members, shall be minuted. Where a breach of conduct occurs, a formal meeting will be held with the LAC member who will be provided with the opportunity to respond to the breach of conduct.

**b)** We understand that any LAC member whose conduct is minuted twice in twelve months shall be suspended for a period of six months from the date of the second minute.

**c)** We understand that, where it is substantiated that any LAC member who materially breaches this code of conduct, the decision can be made to remove the LAC member by majority decision or upon decision of the Trustees. Where a breach of conduct occurs, a formal meeting will be held with the LAC member who will be provided with the opportunity to respond to the breach of conduct. Where a LAC member is removed, written notice will be provided by the Clerk to the LAC.

**d)** We are aware of the provisions of regulation 15(1) of the School Governance (Procedures) (England) Regulations which pertain to qualification and disqualification for the role of school Governor and grounds for suspension and the 2017 amendment regarding parent and staff governors.

**e)** We understand that no LAC member can refuse a DBS check and that all LAC members must hold an Enhanced DBS certificate, the details of which will be recorded by the Academy. Copies will not be retained in the Academy.

**Publication on Website**

The following information about each LAC member will be published on the Academy's website:

- Name.
- Category of LAC member.
- Which body appoints them - **this is SUAT**
- Term of office.
- The names of any committees the LAC member serves on.
- Details of any positions of responsibility such as Chair or Vice-Chair of the LAC or a committee.
- Attendance at meetings.

*LACs have a duty to publish on their website their register of interests. The register should set out the relevant business interests of LAC members and details of any other educational establishments they Govern. The register should also set out any relationships between LAC members and members of the Academy staff including spouses, partners and relatives.*

**Get Information About Schools (GIAS)**

The following additional Governor information will be held, but not published, on GIAS – a Government National database with effect from September 2016, (formally known as Edubase)

- Post Code.
- Date of Birth.
- Previous names.
- Nationality.
- Direct email address for Chair.

**To the LAC Member:**

Your signature on this statement will explicitly acknowledge that you undertake to comply with this Code of Conduct.

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| I have read and understood the above requirements and accept the conditions stated therein. |

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name (print):

_____

Academy Name:

_____

Date:

_____

**To the Academy, please ensure:**

- You retain the original completed and signed copy of this form within Academy governance records.
- You give a photocopy of the signed original to the LAC member named above.

**The Local Academy Council of (name of academy) adopted this code of conduct on (date).**

_____ **Chair Signatories**

LAC members will sign the Code at the first LAC meeting of each new academic year. Anyone joining the LAC during the year will be asked to sign the agreement at the time of appointment.

| Signed | Print Name | Date |
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