

Local governance WhatsApp code of conduct

1.0 Purpose and use

1.1 WhatsApp is becoming a more frequent communication tool for local governing boards (LGB) within the Trust. To ensure a professional, respectful, transparent and equitable environment when using WhatsApp, it is important to establish a code of conduct. If the LGB chooses to use WhatsApp, the code of conduct must be followed.

1.2 This code of conduct sets clear guidelines for appropriate use of and behaviour when using WhatsApp and will ensure an appropriate and professional communication environment.

1.3 LGB WhatsApp groups must only be used for meeting-related communication and collaboration. Personal conversations, jokes, memes, and unrelated content should not be shared to maintain focus and professionalism. Governance discussions and conversations related to the school or Trust must not be undertaken via WhatsApp and LGB decision-making is not permitted via WhatsApp.

2.0 Group admin

2.1 It is suggested that the clerk or chair of the LGB take the role of the WhatsApp group admin and maintain oversight of the group to ensure this code of conduct is adhered to.

3.0 Respect and inclusivity

3.1 LGB WhatsApp groups must only be used if **all** members of the LGB agree to participate in the group, this includes the headteacher, staff governor and clerk. No-one is expected to join an LGB WhatsApp group if they do not wish to, and this decision will be accepted and respected.

3.2 If any local governor chooses to leave the WhatsApp group, the group must be closed.

3.3 All group members will be treated with respect and courtesy at all times. Offensive, discriminatory, or derogatory language or behaviour will not be tolerated.

4.0 Confidentiality

4.1 Confidential information must not be shared within the LGB WhatsApp group.

5.0 Professional language and tone

5.1 Professional language and a respectful tone must be used in all communications. Inappropriate or offensive language, sarcasm, or aggressive behaviour that may create a hostile governance environment must not be used.

6.0 Timeliness and responsiveness

6.1 If agreeing to use a WhatsApp group, local governors commit to responding to messages in a timely manner, especially when they require immediate attention. Unnecessary delays in communication that may hinder productivity or cause misunderstandings must be avoided.

7.0 Privacy and data security

7.1 The privacy of other group members must be respected at all time. Local governors must not share personal contact information or sensitive data without consent. Files must not be shared via WhatsApp.

8.0 Use of Emojis and Abbreviations

8.1 Use emojis and abbreviations sparingly and appropriately. Avoid excessive use of emojis or abbreviations that may hinder clear communication or professionalism.

9.0 Group etiquette

9.1 Avoid excessive posting or spamming the group with irrelevant or repetitive messages. Keep messages concise and to the point. Use separate messages for different topics to maintain clarity and organisation.

10.0 Compliance with Trust policies

10.1 All relevant Trust policies, including the LGB Code of Conduct and data protection policies must be adhered to when using a WhatsApp group. The group admin must ensure that the use of WhatsApp aligns with these policies and any legal or regulatory requirements.

11.0 Failure to comply with this code of conduct

11.1 The LGB Code of Conduct will be followed in the event of any breach of this code of conduct.

12.0 Communicating expectations

12.1 This code of conduct should be communicated to all LGB WhatsApp group members and shared with any new local governor as part of their school-based induction. It sets the foundation for a respectful and professional use of WhatsApp within the LGB, promoting collaboration and effective communication among local governors.