Ethical Leadership Policy

Written by	Reviewed and Ratified by Governors	Shared with Staff	Last Updated	Review Cycle	Next Review due
Polly Ross Headteacher	September 2026	September 2026, via staff and leadership handbook and regularly referred to in communications	September 2026	Annual	September 2027

1. What is ethical leadership?

1.1 Ethical leadership is leadership that is directed by ethical beliefs and values. It embraces the **Seven Principles for Public Life:** selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. In education there is now a need to re-examine ethical leadership.

1.2 In a school-led, self-improving system, it is right that the profession convened and appointed such a panel. ASCL therefore convened and appointed the ELC to consider matters of ethical leadership and public life as these relate to education leadership in the context of a highly diversified and increasingly autonomous landscape.

1.3 Ethical leadership is firstly a matter of the values and behaviours of those appointed to hold positions in public life and lead our educational organisations. It is therefore intrinsic to leadership standards, development, and qualifications. It is also clearly a matter for governing boards in the appointments they make, the monitoring they undertake, and for the regulation and inspection of the system.

1.4 As a set of words, concerning values and virtues, which are recognised in educational discourse. These words act as a counterpoint to the language about measurement of schools and colleges and pupils that is commonly used. They are designed to make us stop and think.

2 THE FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

2.1 Selflessness School and college leaders should act solely in the interest of children and young people.

2.2 Integrity School and college leaders must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, they must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.

2.3 Objectivity School and college leaders must act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Leaders should be dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children and young people.

2.4 Accountability School and college leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

2.5 Openness School and college leaders should expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from scrutiny unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

2.6 Honesty School and college leaders should be truthful.

2.7 Leadership School and college leaders should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles, and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead schools and colleges and those who volunteer to govern them.

2.8 Schools and colleges serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do. Leaders should show Leadership through the following personal characteristics or virtues:

2.9 Trust | *leaders are trustworthy and reliable*
We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.

2.10 Wisdom | *leaders use experience, knowledge and insight*
We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our schools and colleges with propriety and good sense.

2.11 Kindness | *leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper* We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.

2.12 Justice | *leaders are fair and work for the good of all children*
We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.

2.13 Service | *leaders are conscientious and dutiful*
We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.

2.14 Courage | *leaders work courageously in the best interests of children and young people*
We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.

2.15 Optimism | *leaders are positive and encouraging*
Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.

3 Why is ethical leadership important?

School and college leaders face ethical dilemmas every day but have never had an agreed Framework that enables us to explore and test these dilemmas against ethical principles. Members of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) expressed concern that there was little specifically about ethics in the discourse on education leadership. They felt this lack was particularly noteworthy in a school leadership climate where structures are diverse, accountability measures and their consequences are severe, and in which decisions are often taken under great pressure with competing demands in play. They felt that a clear set of principles, owned by the profession, was needed to help everyone navigate the educational moral maze. In April 2017, ASCL called together an independent commission of opinion-formers from across education The ELC met nine times between June 2017 and September 2018.

4 How will the framework be used?

- In training, induction and reflection for leaders, teachers, governors, trustees and anyone concerned with how we educate the nation's young people.
- In participation in the Pathfinder Project and the development of explicitly ethical reflection in teacher and leadership training and development. In the use of CPD and the creation of ethical scenarios (case studies).
- In participation in an Ethics Forum at the Chartered College of Teaching which will keep language and discussion about ethics live, grounded and relevant.
- All staff will read the *Framework* for ethical leadership and it will be an ongoing part of the induction process.

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- Staff understanding of the values and virtues will be supported through CPD and through the use of ethical language throughout policies.
- Practical ethical leadership and management requires working practices which build up the ethos of the school and the values and virtues you have espoused.
- The school's staff code of practice will be written with the ethical framework in mind

5.0 Monitoring and Review:
Staff understanding of these principles will be routinely checked against the ethical framework and the leadership culture will be audited.

5.1 Staff Understanding

Staff understanding of these principles will be routinely checked through:

Annual questionnaires to assess how well staff understand and can apply the ethical framework
Discussion of ethical scenarios during staff meetings and CPD sessions
Reference to the framework during performance management conversations

5.2 Leadership Culture Audit

The leadership culture will be audited annually by:

Gathering feedback from staff, governors, pupils and parents on how well leaders demonstrate the seven principles and virtues
Reviewing key decisions against the ethical framework to ensure they align with our stated values
Analysing any complaints or concerns to identify patterns that might indicate gaps in ethical practice

5.3 Governing Board Oversight

Governors will receive an annual report on:

Staff engagement with the ethical framework
Examples of how the framework has informed decision-making
Any areas for development identified through the audit process

5.4 Recording and Action

Findings from monitoring activities will be documented and used to:

Identify training needs
Inform policy reviews
Celebrate good practice
Address any concerns promptly

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Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education

SELFLESSNESS
School and college leaders should act solely in the interest of children and young people.

INTEGRITY
School and college leaders must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Before acting and taking decisions, they must declare and resolve openly any perceived conflict of interest and relationships.

OBJECTIVITY
School and college leaders must act and take decisions impartially and fairly, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Leaders should be dispassionate, exercising judgement and analysis for the good of children and young people.

ACCOUNTABILITY
School and college leaders are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

OPENNESS
School and college leaders should expect to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from scrutiny unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

HONESTY
School and college leaders should be truthful.

LEADERSHIP
School and college leaders should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead schools and colleges and those who volunteer to govern them.

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