



Conflicts of Interest Policy

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1. Introduction

The Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust (DBAT) is a multi-academy trust with a faith designation and a Christian religious ethos that is both distinctive and inclusive. Distinctive in the sense that all decisions about the nature and purpose of the Academy are taken through the lens of Christian values, inclusive in the sense that all students and staff are equally valued for their uniqueness in the eyes of God and their belonging to the school community.

2. Ethos statement

Vision

The Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust (DBAT) shares the Church of England’s Vision for Education 2016, “Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good”, which includes four basic elements wisdom, hope, community and dignity. We aim to deliver values-led education with the very best outcomes for children and young people.

Purpose

To provide high quality education enabling young people to flourish and grow: spiritually, in love and in understanding.

3. Scope/ aims

At the Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust we want to ensure that the decisions taken by our Board of Trustees and Academy Councils are free from personal bias, and do not unfairly benefit any individual or company connected to the Trust or individual schools.

Trustees and Academy Council members in our trust must act in the best interests of the trust, and in accordance with the trust's articles of association, in order to avoid situations where there may be a conflict of interest.

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Everyone to whom the policy applies understands what a conflict of interest is.
- Everyone to whom the policy applies understands their responsibility to identify and declare any conflicts of interest.
- Every potential relevant conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, is identified, recorded and prevented.
- Decision-making is not affected by conflicts of interest.
- There are clear procedures for managing conflicts of interest where these arise.

This policy applies to:

- Academy trust members
- All members of the board of trustees
- Members of Academy Councils
- Senior trust employees, including Trust Senior Leadership team

For the purposes of this policy we refer to all of the above as "governors", except where we make reference to some specific roles.

4. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on:

- [Companies Act 2006](#)
- Guidance from the Charity Commission which explains statutory requirements and good practice regarding [conflicts of interest for charity trustees](#)
- [The Academy Trust Handbook](#)
- [The Governance Handbook](#)

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

5. Definitions

5.1 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is any situation in which a governor has a business or personal interest or loyalty which could, or could be perceived to, prevent them from making a decision only in the best interests of the school and/or the trust.

The following list provides examples but is not exhaustive:

- Governors work for companies that provide, or have the potential to provide, services to the school or trust.
- A governor owns their own business, and sometimes does work for the school or trust.
- A governor is in a relationship with a member of staff.
- A governor also sits on the governing board of another school or trust.
- The class teacher of a parent governor's child is subject to a disciplinary hearing.

5.2 Trustee Benefit

A trustee benefit is any instance where money, or other property, goods or services which have monetary value, are received by a trustee from the academy trust. This doesn't include where trustees are compensated for proper out-of-pocket expenses.

Trustees can only benefit from the trust in such a way, either directly or indirectly, where there is an **explicit authority** in place before any decisions are made.

Examples of trustee benefits include where trustees decide to:

- Sell, loan or lease trust assets to a trustee.
- Acquire, borrow or lease assets from a trustee for the trust.
- Pay a trustee for carrying out a separate paid post within the trust, even if that trustee has recently resigned as a trustee.
- Pay a trustee for carrying out a separate paid post as a director or employee of the trust's subsidiary trading company.
- Pay a trustee, or person or company closely connected to a trustee, for providing a service to the trust.
- Employ a trustee's spouse, partner or other close relative at the trust or its subsidiary trading company.
- Make a grant to a service user trustee, or a service user who is a close relative of a trustee.
- Allow a service user trustee to influence trust activities to their exclusive advantage.

Explicit authority will come from either:

- Our articles of association
- A statutory provision (such as the power in the Charities Act which allows charities to pay trustees for additional services in some circumstances)
- The Charity Commission
- The court

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Chair of Trustees and Chair of Academy Council

The Chair of Trustees will:

- Ensure that the register of interests is completed each year.
- Make sure declarations of interest are made before each meeting.
- Arbitrate decisions about how to deal with conflicts of interest, where appropriate.
- Monitor this policy and seek advice on any necessary changes.

6.2 The Clerk to the Board of Trustees/ Clerk to the Academy Council

The Clerk will:

- Maintain the register of interests and update it when governors inform them of changes to their circumstances.
- Advise the board on how to deal with conflicts of interest.

6.3 All governors

All governors will:

- Declare their conflicts of interest before or during meetings and complete the register of interests faithfully when requested each academic year.
- Make sure they inform the chair and clerk immediately of any changes to their circumstances.
- Take appropriate action to remove any conflict of interest or seek advice on how to do so if necessary.

7. What governors must declare

Governors must declare:

- Directorships, partnerships and employments with businesses.
- Trusteeships and governorships at other educational institutions or charities.
- Material interests arising from relationships with other members, trustees or local governors (including spouses, partners and close relatives).
- Material interests arising from relationships with trust employees (including spouses, partners and close relatives).
- Business or personal interests of their spouses, partners and close relatives, where there's a possibility that the school or trust will have dealings with that person.

If an individual is not sure whether something constitutes a conflict of interest, or needs to be declared, they should err on the side of caution and declare it.

Senior trust employees, and governors/trustees who are staff members, must declare an interest in relation to matters of their own pay and appraisal, and must not participate in discussions or decisions about these.

8. Procedures

8.1 Register of interests

The Trust requires each governor to complete a declaration of interests form at the beginning of each academic year.

New governors will also be asked to complete a declaration of interests form if they join after the start of the academic year.

The trust will publish information about the interests of members, trustees, local governors, and the accounting officer (where the accounting officer is not already included due to being a trustee).

Senior trust employees, and governors/trustees who are staff members, are not required to record their employment with the trust on the register of interests.

If an individual's circumstances change after the register of interests is completed, they must immediately alert the chair and the clerk that they need to make amendments or further declarations.

8.2 Declaring conflicts of interest and taking action

Agendas of meetings will be circulated in advance. Governors must review any agenda sent to them and alert the chair and the clerk as soon as possible if they have a conflict of interest related to any item on the agenda.

Each meeting will also include a standing agenda item to allow declarations to be made.

If a conflict becomes apparent during a meeting, and governors did not declare these prior to or at the beginning of the meeting, they must declare these immediately.

Depending on the nature of the meeting or discussion, and the interest in question, the board will decide whether the individual needs to:

- Withdraw from the meeting.
- Refrain from contributing to the discussion.
- Refrain from voting on a decision.

The board may also decide that, having declared the interest, the governor is free to participate in the discussion or decision as normal.

When deciding which course of action to take, the board must:

- Always make their decision in the best interests of the school/ Trust and be able to demonstrate this.
- Act to protect the school/ Trust's reputation.
- Consider the impression that their actions and decisions may have on those outside of the school/ Trust.
- Consider the level of risk related to the decision in question, and the risk that the conflict will affect the individual's ability to be impartial, or to act only in the best interests of the school/ Trust.

- Be aware that the presence of a conflicted governor (even if they cannot participate in the decision or discussion) may inhibit free and open dialogue and may affect the decision in some way.

In cases of **serious conflict of interest**, the board may also choose to avoid the conflict by:

- Not pursuing a particular course of action.
- Proceeding with the issue in a different way.
- Not appointing a particular governor or employee.
- Securing a resignation from a conflicted governor.

A serious conflict of interest includes situations where the conflict:

- Is so acute or extensive that the individual is not able to make their decisions in the best interests of the school/ Trust or could be seen to be unable to do so.
- Is present in significant or high-risk decisions.
- Means that effective decision-making is regularly undermined or cannot be managed in accordance with the required or best practice approach.
- Is associated with inappropriate trustee benefit.

Details of any conflicts declared, and relevant actions taken, will be recorded in the minutes.

9. Failure to declare a conflict of interest

Failure to declare a conflict of interest is a breach of the board's code of conduct.

If the board becomes aware that a governor has not declared a relevant conflict of interest, it will immediately update the register of interests to ensure the record is complete and accurate.

Depending on the nature of the omission, the board may also:

- Vote to suspend the governor.
- Vote to remove the governor from office.
- Follow any relevant disciplinary procedures.

If a governor is aware of another governor's undeclared interest, they should alert the chair and the clerk immediately.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and approved by the board of trustees.

11. Our Ethos and Values

As identified at the opening of this policy, our structure and approach here is underpinned by our Christian ethos and values, focused on an ethos that is both distinctive and inclusive.

In our adoption and subsequent adaptation of this policy we have asked ourselves two clear questions: “Is this policy and practice underpinned by our vision and values?” and “What is the impact of our vision and values on those subject to the policy?”. This is a key focus of our ongoing development of policy and practice.

12. History of most recent policy changes and review period

Date	Page	Change(s) made	Origin of Change (e.g. TU request, change in legislation)
November 2023	Whole document	New policy	Internal audit Based on The Key model policy
June 2024	Front page	Updated registered address	Change to registered address

Policy Owner	People Directorate (Governance)
Policy Approved by	Audit and Risk Committee
Date Adopted	November 2023
Latest Review Date	June 2024
Next Review Date	Two years
Level	Level 1
DBAT Policy levels:	
LEVEL 1	DBAT policy for adoption (no changes can be made by the Academy Council; the Academy Council must adopt the policy)
LEVEL 2	DBAT policy for adoption and local approval, with areas for the Academy to update regarding local practice (the main body of the policy cannot be changed)
LEVEL 3	DBAT model policy that the Academy can adopt if it wishes
LEVEL 4	Local policy to be approved by the Academy Council