

Gifts and Hospitality Policy

Category:	Trust-wide Policy
Authorised By:	Finance Committee under delegated authority
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Version:	3
Status:	Ratified
Issue Date:	March 2024
Next Review Date:	March 2027

Version Control

<u>Ver.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Comment</u>
1	April 2018	Initial policy based on the model from The Key
2	March 2021	Cyclical update
3	March 2024	Cyclical update

This policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or best practice (where appropriate).

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1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- The Eden Academy Trust's (the Trust) funds are used only in accordance with the law, its Articles of Association, its funding agreement and the latest Academy Trust Handbook.
- The Trust and those associated with it operate in a way that commands broad public support.
- The Trust has due regard to propriety and regularity, and ensures value for money, in the use of public funds.
- Trustees fulfil their fiduciary duties and wider responsibilities as charitable trustees and company directors.
- Staff members, Trust Members, Trustees, Local Advisory Board (LAB) and Committee members are aware of what constitutes acceptable gifts and hospitality, and the process that must be followed if they are presented with any of the same.

This policy applies to all members of the Trust community, including Members, Trustees, LAB/Committee members as well as all staff whether employed in one of our schools, settings or satellites or employed centrally by the Trust.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Academy Trust Handbook, which states that academy trusts should have a policy and register on the acceptance of gifts, hospitality, awards, prizes or any other benefit which might be seen to compromise the personal judgement or integrity of Members, Trustees, Local Advisory Board (LAB) or Committee members, staff and/or any other representative of the trust.

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

3. Definitions

Gifts are any items, cash, awards, prizes, goods or services, offered without expectation of payment or benefit. Gifts also include goods or services offered at a discounted rate, or on terms not available to the general public.

Hospitality is defined as food, drink, accommodation or entertainment (such as cultural or sporting events) provided free of charge, heavily discounted or on terms not generally available to the general public.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1. Staff, Members, Trustees, Local Advisory Board and Committee members.

Staff, Trust Members, Trustees, LAB and/or Committee members:

- Must not give or accept gifts or hospitality to or from a third party where it might be perceived that their personal integrity has the potential to be compromised, or that the trust might be placed under any obligation as a result of acceptance.
- Must not use their official position to further their private interests or the interests of others.
- Must not solicit gifts or hospitality.
- Must record any gifts or hospitality offered to them or the trust with a value of over £50 on the gifts and hospitality register (see appendix 1) within 7 working days, even if declined.
- Must consult the Chief Operating Officer (COO) or the Head¹ before accepting or offering any gifts or hospitality with a value of over £50.

4.2. Trustees

Trustees will ensure that the Trust's funds are used in a way that commands broad public support, pays due regard to propriety and regularity, and provides value for money.

4.3. Senior Leaders

Executive/Regional Directors, Cluster Leads and Heads are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of and understand this policy, and that it is being implemented consistently.

Senior leaders will act with the utmost integrity on all matters relating to gifts and hospitality, ensuring that they set a good example to the rest of the school, the Trust and to those outside the organisation.

They will also ensure, alongside the COO, that decisions on whether individuals or the trust can accept or offer gifts or hospitality with a value of over £50 are in line with this policy.

4.4. The Chief Operating Officer

The COO will ensure that:

- The Trust maintains a gifts and hospitality register.
- Figures for transactions relating to gifts made by the Trust are disclosed in the Trust's audited accounts, in accordance with the Academies Financial Handbook.
- The Trustees are provided with information on gifts and hospitality received and given, as appropriate. They will also ensure, alongside Cabinet members and Heads, that decisions on whether individuals or the Trust

¹ For the purposes of this policy, Head refers to Head of School/Setting/Satellite, Headteacher or Executive Head as appropriate

can accept or offer gifts or hospitality with a value of over £50 are in line with this policy.

4.5. The governance team

The Trust's Governance Professional is responsible for ensuring that Members, Trustees, and LAB/Committee members are aware of and understand this policy, and that it is being implemented consistently.

The central governance team will maintain the gifts and hospitality register on a day-to-day basis.

4.6. The Audit & Risk Committee

The committee will have a standing agenda item to receive an update on any additions to the gifts and hospitality register at its meetings, and to comment on updates to this policy.

5. Acceptable gifts and hospitality

5.1. Offer of gifts and hospitality received

Members, Trustees, or LAB/Committee members and staff can accept gifts and hospitality that have a value of up to and including £50. These do not have to be pre-approved or recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

Generally, gifts of nominal value, such as small tokens of appreciation, may be accepted. If in any doubt, guidance must be sought from the COO or Head.

Similarly, hospitality such as working lunches may be accepted in order to maintain good relationships with key contacts, provided the hospitality is reasonable in the circumstances. If in doubt, guidance must be sought from the COO or Head.

Any gifts or hospitality offered with a value in excess of £50 must be recorded on the gifts and hospitality register within 7 working days, even if declined. Any Member, Trustee, LAB/Committee member or member of staff who is offered such gifts or hospitality must consult the COO or Head before accepting.

If the Head or Regional Director is the recipient, or intended recipient, of any offer of gifts or hospitality, they must inform the COO or CEO and record the offer on the gifts and hospitality register.

If the COO is the recipient, or intended recipient, of any offer of gifts or hospitality, they must inform the CEO and record the offer on the gifts and hospitality register.

Failure to declare any offer of gifts or hospitality on the register in line with this policy will be treated as a staff disciplinary matter or dealt with under the Governance Code of Conduct in the case of Members, Trustees, LAB/Committee members.

5.2. Offer of gifts and hospitality given

Any hospitality provided by the Trust or one of its schools, such as a working lunch for visitors, must not be extravagant. A maximum value of £25 per head should be used as a guideline.

Alcohol must not be purchased out of the school budget.

The purchase of gifts should apply only to visitors or external parties and not staff. The COO must be consulted about any proposal to provide gifts or any proposal for hospitality in excess of £25. School staff should also consult with the Head prior to consulting the COO.

Gifts should not be given to staff from school funds e.g., flowers or gifts on birthdays, when children are born, retirements or when staff leave. These should be funded through staff collections or from the Head's own expense.

Expense claims should be made through the school office for school staff or the line manager for central staff and receipts must always be enclosed.

Details of expenses claims related to off-site working are set out in the Travel Policy for staff and the Expenses Policy for Trustees, Members and LAB/Committee members.

6. Unacceptable gifts and hospitality

The following must **never** be offered or accepted:

- Monetary gifts.
- Gifts or hospitality offered to family members, partners or close friends of members, trustees or staff.
- Gifts or hospitality from a potential supplier or tenderer in the immediate period before tenders are invited or during the tendering process.
- Lavish or extravagant gifts or hospitality, even if they relate to activities the recipient undertakes in their own time.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

7. Declining gifts and hospitality

Any Member, Trustee, LAB/Committee member or member of staff who is offered any of the unacceptable gifts or hospitality outlined in section 6 above should politely decline the offer and must log the offer with the DFO.

If a Member, Trustee, LAB/Committee member or member of staff feels it would not be appropriate for them to decline, they should refer the matter to the DFO or Head. The DFO or Head may decline the offer or donate the gift or hospitality to a worthy cause and must also record the offer on the gifts and hospitality register.

Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who fails to decline gifts or hospitality the Trust has deemed unacceptable.

Failure to declare any gifts or hospitality offered on the gifts and hospitality register, in line with this policy, will be dealt with as a staff disciplinary matter or under the Governance Code of Conduct in the case of Members, Trustees, LAB/Committee members.

8. Monitoring arrangements

The gifts and hospitality register is monitored regularly by the COO and by the Audit & Risk Committee as a standing agenda item.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the COO and approved by the Finance Committee.

9. Links with other policies

This gifts and hospitality policy is linked to the:

- Staff Code of Conduct.
- Staff Disciplinary Procedures.
- Accounting Policy (incorporated within the Finance policy).
- Travel Policy
- Expenses Policy
- Governance Code of Conduct
- Conflicts of Interests Policy

Appendix 1 – Gift and Hospitality Register

[illegible]

Appendix 2 – Gift and Hospitality Declaration Form

Name	
School or team	
Role	
Description of gift or hospitality and approximate value	
Party offering the gift or hospitality	
Date of offer	
Accepted or declined	
Date of declaration	
Approved by	
Comments Please add any comments of explanation as appropriate	
Date added to register	