

Gifts and hospitality policy



ADVANTAGE
S C H O O L S

Approved by: Finance, Audit & Resources

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1. Introduction

Advantage Schools is committed to the highest level of integrity, honesty and accountability in all its business dealings. All staff, Trustees, members and governors are expected to maintain high standards of propriety and professionalism in all their dealings, ensuring they are free from any conflict of interest through their business in the name of Advantage Schools or any of the schools/academies within the Trust.

This Policy aims to lay down guidelines, which will enable the schools/Trust to meet the aims and core values of Advantage Schools and to protect individuals from misunderstanding or criticism. Inevitably, some issues will affect Trustees and senior post holders more than they will affect others and some breaches of the policy may be regarded more seriously for those in such positions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Advantage Schools Finance Handbook and Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy. The principle of integrity requires that trustees and staff should not place themselves under an obligation that might influence, or be perceived to influence, the conduct of their duties. This means that the receipt of hospitality and gifts must be subject to clear restrictions and that any that are accepted must be declared and recorded.

In order to protect all individuals associated with the Trust, and the reputation of the Trust and its academies, from accusations of bribery or corruption staff, Trustees, and governors must take extreme care that none of their dealings, directly or indirectly, could be deemed as a reward or benefit, in line with the Bribery Act 2010. This Act makes it a criminal offence to:

- offer, promise or give a bribe
- request, agree to or accept a bribe
- (by an organisation) fail to prevent bribery by those acting on its behalf (associated persons) to obtain or retain business or a business advantage for the organisation.

Under this Act, a bribe is 'a financial or other advantage' offered, promised or given to induce a person to perform a relevant function or activity improperly, or reward them for doing so.

The Trust and each Academy will hold a Gifts and Hospitality Register. All gifts/hospitality over the value of £30 must be recorded in the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

For the purpose of this document, the terms 'school' and 'academy' refer to any school/academy which is part of Advantage Schools multi academy Trust.

2. Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- The academy trust's 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
- Members, Trustees and staff 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

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the ESFA's Academies 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, staff and/or any other representative of the trust.

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

4. 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.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Members, Trustees and staff

Members, Trustees and staff:

- 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 £30** on the gifts and hospitality register (see appendix 1) within 7 school days, even if declined
- Must consult the Chief Financial Officer or Chief Executive Officer before accepting or offering any gifts or hospitality with a value of **over £30**.

5.2 Academy Trustees

Academy 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.

5.3 The Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of and understand this policy, and that it is being implemented consistently.

The Chief Executive Officer 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 and trust and to those outside the organisation.

They will also ensure, alongside the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), that decisions on whether individuals or the Trust can accept or offer gifts or hospitality with a value of over £30 are in line with this policy.

5.4 The Chief Financial Officer

The CFO will ensure that:

- The Trust and each academy 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 Academy Trust Handbook
- The academy Trustees and Chief Executive Officer are provided with information on gifts and hospitality received and given, as appropriate

They will also ensure, alongside the Chief Executive Officer, that decisions on whether individuals or the Trust can accept or offer gifts or hospitality with a value of over £30 are in line with this policy.

5.5 Parents

It is common for appreciative parents and pupils to register their thanks for the work of staff in the form of a small personal gift. If these are valued at less than £30 these are perfectly acceptable without reference to senior members of staff. These will not need to be recorded in the register. Where gifts valued over £30 are accepted, these should be recorded in the register.

5.6 Other

Where a more valuable gift, benefit or service is offered which is to the good of the Academy, rather than an individual, it must be referred to the CFO or Chief Executive Officer, for approval within their discretion; if acceptable, then these terms must be recorded in the register.

6. Acceptable gifts and hospitality

6.1 Offers of gifts and hospitality received

Members, Trustees and staff can accept gifts and hospitality that have a value of up to £30. 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 or free promotional pens, calendars, diaries and similar items, may be accepted. If in any doubt, members, Trustees and staff must consult the CFO or Chief Executive Officer.

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. Other hospitality may be accepted for instance where

- There is a genuine need to impart information or represent Advantage Schools in the community.
- An event is clearly part of the life of the community or where Advantage Schools should be seen to be represented.
- The hospitality concerns attendance at a relevant conference or course where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal

If in doubt, guidance must be sought from the CFO or Chief Executive Officer.

Any gifts or hospitality offered with a value of over £30 must be recorded on the gifts and hospitality register within 7 school days, even if declined. Any member, Trustee or member of staff who is offered such gifts or hospitality must consult the CFO or Chief Executive Officer before accepting.

If the Chief Executive Officer is the recipient, or intended recipient, of **any** offer of gifts or hospitality, they must inform the chair of the board of Trustees 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.

6.2 Sponsorship

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor the activity of Advantage Schools, whether by invitation, tender or negotiation, or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning the award of contracts, and acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply

6.3 Offers of gifts and hospitality given

Any gifts or hospitality provided by the Trust, such as a working lunch for visitors, must not be extravagant. For working visitors, a maximum of £25 per head applies. At the discretion of the Executive Team for other visitors/hospitality events, a maximum value of £50 per head should be used as a guideline.

Alcohol must not be purchased out of the school budget.

Expense claims should be made to the finance office and receipts must always be enclosed.

The CFO or Chief Executive Officer must be consulted about any proposal to provide gifts or hospitality with a value of over £50. If the Chief Executive Officer should propose to or provide gifts or hospitality over the value of £50 he should consult with and/or inform the Chair of Finance, Audit and Resources Committee.

7. 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.

8. Declining gifts and hospitality

Any members, Trustee or staff member who is offered any of the unacceptable gifts or hospitality outlined in section 6 above should politely decline the offer.

If they feel it would not be appropriate for them to decline, they should refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer or CFO. The Chief Executive Officer or CFO 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 or refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer or CFO, 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.

9. Monitoring arrangements

The gifts and hospitality register is monitored regularly by the CFO.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 Years by the CFO, or more often if required, and approved by the Finance, Audit and Resources Committee.

10. Links with other policies

This gifts and hospitality policy is linked to the:

- Staff code of conduct
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- Anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Advantage Schools Financial Handbook

Appendix 1: Gifts and hospitality register

Date	Name	Description of gift/hospitality and approximate value	Party offering gift/hospitality	Accepted/rejected	Approved by