



PONTEFRACT
ACADEMIES TRUST

Conflicts Policy

Including register of business interests for Trustees, School
Performance Review Board Members and Employees



Summary:

The Conflicts of Interest and its associated business interest procedures sets out the framework for ensuring that the decisions and decision-making processes at the Trust are, and are seen to be, free from personal bias and do not unfairly favour any individual or company connected with the Trust or any of its schools.

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Document Control

Date	Version	Action	Amendments
July 2019	01	Reviewed and updated in line with review period	None
06 July 2022	02	Reviewed and updated in line with review period	Transferred to new Trust template. Updated job titles as appropriate.
July 2025	2.1	Revised	New review date of 10/10/25 agreed by Trust Board.
Sept 2025	2.2	Reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Reference to paragraphs 1.45-1.48 of the Academy Trust Handbook 2025 added. ii. Goods or services provided by individuals or organisations revised, to specify that the 'at cost' requirement applies to contracts with a related party exceeding £2,500, cumulatively, in any one financial year. Where a contract takes the trust's cumulative annual total with the related party beyond £2,500, the element above £2,500 must be at no more than cost. iii. Monitoring and implementation revised, to state the policy will be shared annually. iv. Appendix A: annual conflict of interest statement removed, as declarations are now shared via a google form.

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1. Introduction

Pontefract Academies Trust (the Trust) is committed to the highest possible standards of conduct and has a wide range of interrelated policies, procedures, codes and guidance that provide a corporate framework to counter the possibility of fraudulent activity and/or bribes. This policy and associated procedures must be read in conjunction with the following other Trust policies/procedures:

- Anti-Fraud Bribery and Corruption Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Governance Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Procedures
- Complaints Procedures
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Donations Policy

The conflicts of interest and its associated business interest procedures sets out the framework for ensuring that the decisions and decision-making processes at the Trust are, and are seen to be, free from personal bias and do not unfairly favour any individual or company connected with the Trust or any of its schools.

Trustees, SPRB members, committee members, and employees of the Trust all have an obligation to act in the best interests of the Trust and in accordance with its Articles of Association in order to avoid situations where there may be a potential conflict of interest.

Situations may arise where family interests or loyalties conflict with those of the Trust. They may create problems as they can inhibit free discussions, result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of the Trust and risk the impression that the Trust has acted improperly.

The Trust therefore intends to:

- Ensure that every trustee, SPRB member, and employee, understands what constitutes a conflict of interest and that they have a responsibility to identify and declare any conflicts that might arise.
- Record the conflict and the actions taken to ensure that the conflict does not affect the decision-making in any part of the organisation.

2. Definition

The Trust adopts the definition of the Charity Commission, which states that a conflict of interest is any situation where a trustee or SPRB members' personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen, to prevent the trustee or SPRB member from making a decision in the best interests of the Trust or its schools.

For the purposes of this definition the personal interest of a "trustee" or "SPRB member" shall include that which may relate to any child, stepchild, parent grandchild, grandparent, brother, sister of spouse of the "trustee" or "SPRB member" or any person living with the trustee/SPRB member as his or her partner.

This definition extends to employees who, through their contracts of employment and/or schemes of delegation have decision making responsibilities delegated to them.

3. Expectations

The Trust expects conflicts of interest to be identified at an early stage by:

- individual trustees, School Performance Review Board (SPRB) members or employees,
- the Trust Board, its committees or its SPRB's.

Individual trustees, SPRB members, or employees who fail to identify and declare any conflicts of interest will also fail to comply with their personal legal responsibility to avoid conflicts of interest and act only in the best interest of the Trust and its learners.

The Trust Board, its committees, or its local governing bodies must ensure that any conflicts of interest do not prevent them from making a decision only in the best interests of the Trust and its learners.

The Trust's Articles of Association paragraph 97 state that:

Any Trustee who has or can have any direct or indirect duty or personal interest (including but not limited to any personal financial interest) which conflicts or may conflict with his duties as a Trustee shall disclose that fact to the Trustee as soon as he becomes aware of it. A Trustee must absent himself from any discussions of the Trustee in which it is possible that a conflict will arise between his duty to act solely in the interests of the Academy Trust and any duty or personal interest (including but not limited to any personal financial interest).

Trustees, SPRB members or employees will be expected to declare the following interests where **they are connected to the undertaking of their duties/responsibilities:**

- Holding another public office.
- Being an employee, director, advisor or partner of another business or organisation.
- Trusteeships and governorships at other educational institutions and charities.
- Pursuing a business opportunity.
- Being a member of a club, society or association.
- Having a professional or legal obligation to someone else.
- Having a beneficial interest in a trust.
- Owning or occupying a piece of land.
- Owning shares or some other investment or asset.
- Having received a gift, hospitality, or other benefit from someone / an organisation.
- Owing a debt to an individual or an organisation.
- Holding or expressing strong political or personal views that may indicate prejudice or predetermination for or against a person or issue.
- Being a spouse, partner, relative or close friend of someone who has one of these interests.

4. Trustee or SPRB benefits

Trustees, SPRB members, or employees can only benefit from the Trust where there is an explicit authority in place in the Trust's funding agreement/articles of association before any decision conferring trustee, SPRB member, or employee benefit is made.

Trustee or SPRB members benefits include any payments or benefits to trustees, SPRB members or a connected person, apart from their reasonable out of pocket expenses. They also cover situations where a trustee or SPRB member could receive property, loans, goods or services from the Trust.

Where there is a proposed sale or lease of Trust land to a trustee/SPRB member/employee or to a person or company closely connected with a trustee/SPRB members/employee this will need to be authorised by the Department for Education, even if the disposal is at full market value.

The payment of reasonable expenses to trustees and SPRB members is not a benefit, so it does not create a conflict of interest or require authorisation.

The payment of expenses to employees as part of their responsibilities in their employment contract and in accordance with the Trust's travel and subsistence policy is not a benefit therefore does not create a conflict of interest.

5. Registering interests

Paragraphs 1.45 – 1.48 of the Academy Trust Handbook 2025 specifies that:

The trust must keep a register of any relevant business and financial interests, for (as a minimum) members, trustees, local governors and senior employees, serving at any point over the past 12 months.

The register must include their full names, date of appointment, who appointed them and their term of office (for trustees and local governors), date they stepped down (where applicable), and relevant business and financial interests including:

- directorships, partnerships and employments with businesses
- trusteeships and governorships at other educational institutions and charities
- for each interest: the name and nature of the business, the nature of the interest and the date the interest began

The register must identify relevant interests from close family relationships between the academy trust's members, trustees or local governors. It must also identify relevant interests arising from close family relationships between those individuals and employees.

Trusts should consider whether other interests should be registered, and if in doubt should do so. Boards of trustees must keep their register of interests up-to-date at all times.

6. Declaring interests

Members, Trustees, SPRB members and senior employees must complete a declaration each September. The Lead Governance Officer is responsible for collating these **by 30 September** each year.

The Lead Governance Officer must ensure that arrangements are in place for all declarations of interest made under this policy to be published and kept up to date on the Trust websites.

Trustees or SPRB members **must** have a standard agenda item at the beginning of each meeting of the Trust Board, trust committee, to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Trustees or SPRB members **must** declare any interest which he/she has in an item to be discussed, at the earliest possible opportunity and before any discussion of the item itself.

If a trustee or SPRB member is uncertain whether or not he/she is conflicted, he/she **must** declare the issue and discuss it with the other trustees or SPRB members.

If a Trustee or SPRB member is aware of an undeclared conflict of interest affecting another trustee or SPRB member, then he/she **must** notify the other trustees or SPRB members or the Chair of the meeting.

Employees engaged in decisions where conflicts of interest may arise **must** declare this to their Headteacher/Senior Leader at the earliest opportunity.

7. Removing conflicts

Trustees or SPRB members must consider the conflict of interest so that any potential effect on decision-making is eliminated.

Trustees or SPRB members must follow the Trusts Articles of Association and Funding Agreement requirements on how a conflict of interest must be handled, but may, in serious cases, decide that removing the conflict of interest itself is the most effective way of preventing it from affecting their decision-making. Serious conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, those which:

- Are so acute and extensive that the trustees or SPRB members are unable to make their decisions in the best interest of the Trust and its pupils, or could be seen to be unable to do so.
- Are present in significant or high-risk decisions of the trustees.
- Mean that effective decision-making is regularly undermined or cannot be managed in accordance with the required or best practice approach.
- Are associated with inappropriate trustee or SPRB member benefit.

8. Withdrawing from decision

Where there is a proposed financial transaction between a trustee or SPRB member and the Trust, or any transaction of arrangement involving trustee/SPRB member benefit:

- The benefit must be authorised in advance.
- The Trust Board/SPRB expects the affected trustee/SPRB member to be absent from any part of any meeting where the issue is discussed or decided.
- The affected individual should not vote or be counted in deciding whether a meeting is quorate.

Where there is a conflict of loyalty and the affected trustee or SPRB member does not stand to gain any benefit and there are no specific governing document or legal provisions about how the conflict of loyalty should be handled, the affected trustee or SPRB member should declare the conflict of loyalty.

The remainder of the Trust board, committee or local governing body must then decide what level of participation, if any, is acceptable on the part of the conflicted trustee or SPRB member. The options might include, but are not limited to, deciding whether the conflicted trustee or SPRB member:

- having registered and fully declared the interest, can otherwise participate in the decision.
- can stay in the meetings where the decision is discussed and made, but not participate.
- should withdraw from the decision-making process in the way described above.

In deciding which course of action to take regarding a conflict of interest, SPRB Member/Trustee:

- must always make their decisions only in the best interest of the Trust and its learners.
- should always protect the Trust's reputation and be aware of the impression that their actions and decisions may have on those outside the Trust/school.
- should always be able to demonstrate that they have made decisions in the
- best interests of the Trust and its learners, and independently of any competing interest.
- should require the withdrawal of the affected trustee or SPRB member from any decisions where the trustee or SPRB member's other interest is relevant to a high risk or controversial trustee or SPRB member decision or could, or be seen to, significantly affect the trustee or SPRB member's decision-making at the Trust.
- can allow a trustee or SPRB member to participate where the existence of his/her other interest poses a low risk to decision-making in the Trust's interest, or is likely to have only an insignificant bearing on his/her approach to an issue.
- should be aware that the presence of a conflicted trustee or SPRB member can affect trust between SPRB members/trustees, could inhibit free discussion, and might influence decision-making in some way.

Trustees or SPRB members can, before their discussion, ask a Trustee or SPRB member who is withdrawing, to provide any information necessary to help make the decision in the best interests of the Trust and its learners.

9. Goods or services provided by individuals or organisations connected to the Trust

The Trust will not pay more than 'cost' for goods or services provided to it by the following persons ('services do not include services provided under a contract of employment):

- Any Member or Trustee of the Trust.
- Any individual or organisation connected to a Member or Trustee of the Trust.

In accordance with paragraph 5.49 of the Academy Trust Handbook 2025, 5.49 the 'at cost' requirement applies to contracts with a related party exceeding £2,500, cumulatively, in any one financial year. Where a contract takes the trust's cumulative annual total with the related party beyond £2,500, the element above £2,500 must be at no more than cost.

10. Records and confidentiality

Trustees or SPRB members should record in the minutes, details of any and all discussions on potential conflicts of interest and the decisions made.

Trustees or SPRB members cannot use information obtained at the Trust or any of the incorporated schools for their own benefit or that of another organisation if it has been obtained in confidence or has special value such as commercial sensitivity.

11. Monitoring and implementation

The Trust Board, its committees and its SPRB's will carry out continuous monitoring of its activities and members to ensure that any conflicts of interest are identified and mitigated as soon as possible.

Trustees or SPRB members who fail to declare an interest and are found to be in conflict with the best interests of the Trust or any incorporated school will be expected to explain to the trust board, and/or local governing body his/her reasons for their omission.

The Trust Board may decide to terminate the membership of the relevant trustee or SPRB member from the Trust Board or SPRB, if he/she is found to have knowingly and deliberately failed to declare an interest and has brought the Trust or any of its incorporated schools into disrepute.

This policy will be circulated annually to every trustee, member of a committee, SPRB member and senior employee with delegated decision-making responsibilities.

This policy will be included in the publication scheme on the Trust's website and will be made available to the public.

12. Review

The Conflicts Policy and associated Register of Business Interests Procedures will be reviewed by the Trust Audit and Risk Committee every three years, or earlier, to ensure that it continues to uphold the highest standards of conduct and openness.

