

Highfield CE Primary School Conflict of Interest Policy 2025



Approved by:

The Governing Body

Date: May 2025

Last reviewed on:

May 2025

Next review due by:

May 2026

Purpose

At Highfield CE Primary School, we are committed to conducting school business with integrity, transparency, and accountability. This policy ensures that decisions are made in the best interests of our children and community, free from undue influence or personal gain.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Help identify, declare, and manage conflicts of interest
- Protect the integrity of decision-making
- Uphold public trust in our school and governing body

This policy applies to governors, school staff, senior leaders and any individuals involved in decision-making on behalf of the school, including volunteers where relevant.

What is a Conflict of Interest?

A **conflict of interest** arises when someone's personal, professional, or financial interests could (or could be seen to) influence their decisions or actions in their role at school.

Conflicts can be:

- **Actual:** the conflict is real and current
- **Potential:** the conflict might happen in the future
- **Perceived:** it appears to others that a conflict exists, even if it does not

Examples include:

- A governor's family member is applying for a job at the school
- A staff member owns a business that provides services to the school
- A volunteer has a close relationship with a pupil being considered for disciplinary action
- A staff member is involved in a procurement process involving a relative's company

Legal Framework

This policy is based on:

- The Academies Financial Handbook (if applicable)
- Department for Education Governance Handbook
- The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)
- Charity Commission guidance for governors/trustees
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Teachers' Standards and leadership frameworks

Responsibilities

Governors

- Must declare any business or personal interests annually and at the start of any relevant meeting
- Must not be involved in decisions where there is a conflict
- Must update their declarations when circumstances change

Staff

- Must avoid using their position for personal gain
- Must inform the Headteacher of any conflicts, including outside employment or relationships
- Senior leaders must take appropriate steps to manage any conflict raised

Volunteers and Others

- Must disclose any relevant interest that could affect their role or decisions in school

Declaring Conflicts

Annual Declarations

- Governors and senior leaders complete a Declaration of Interests form annually
- The Clerk to Governors maintains a register of interests, which is published on the school website (for governors)

Meeting Declarations

- At the beginning of meetings, all attendees must declare any interests relevant to the agenda
- The minutes will record all declarations and any actions taken

Managing Conflicts of Interest

If a conflict is declared:

- The person must withdraw from the discussion and any decision-making process
- They may not vote or influence others in relation to the matter
- In some cases, they may be asked to leave the room for that agenda item

If the Headteacher has a conflict, it should be declared to the Chair of Governors. If the Chair of Governors has a conflict, it should be declared to the Vice Chair.

In the case of staff, the Headteacher (or line manager) will decide whether the conflict can be managed or if other action is needed, such as:

- Changing responsibilities
- Referring decisions to another staff member
- Seeking external advice

Confidentiality

All information related to conflicts will be handled confidentially and in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy and relevant privacy laws.

Breaches of the Policy

Failure to declare a conflict of interest, or misuse of position for personal gain, may result in:

- Disciplinary action for staff (in line with HR policies)
- Removal from the governing body (in line with the school's Instrument of Government and DfE guidance)

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually or as needed. The Clerk to Governors keeps the Register of Interests up to date and ensures the governing body is compliant with relevant regulations.