



CONFLICTS OF INTEREST POLICY

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Policy sets out the Framework for ensuring that the decisions and decision-making processes at the MILL Academy Trust are, and are seen to be, free from personal bias and do not unfairly favour any individual or company connected to the Trust.
- 1.2. Members, Trustees/Directors, Committee Volunteers and Senior Employees of the Trust 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 conflict of interest.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. The aim of this Policy is to ensure that:
 - a. Every Member, Trustee/Director, Committee Volunteer and Senior Employee understands what constitutes a conflict of interest and that they have a responsibility to identify and declare any conflicts that might arise.
 - b. Every potential conflict of interest is identified, prevented and recorded, ensuring that the conflict does not affect the decision-making of the Trust.

2. Definition

- 2.1. For the purpose of this document:
 - a. Members, Trustees/Directors and Local Volunteers are referred to as Trustees;
 - b. The MILL Academy Trust is referred to as the Trust;
 - c. Students refers to all students being educated or on site at any one of the schools within The MILL Academy Trust.

3. Legal Framework

- 3.1. This Policy takes its legal framework from the following legislation and statutory guidance:
 - a. Companies Act 2006;
 - b. Conflicts of Interest: A Guide for Charity Trustees;
 - c. The Academy Trust Handbook (formerly the Academies Financial Handbook);
 - d. The Articles of Association of The MILL Academy Trust.

4. What is a Conflict of Interest

- 4.1. The Trust adopts the definition of the Charity Commission which states that a Conflict of Interest is any situation where a Trustee or Senior Employee's personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen, to prevent the Trustee or Senior Employee from making a decision in the best interests of the Trust.
- 4.2. Conflicts of interest usually arise in the following situations:

- a. **Benefits to Trustees/Senior Employees** - There is a potential financial or measurable benefit directly to a Trustee or Senior Employee, or indirectly through a connected person. Examples of benefits are where the Trustees or Senior Employees decide to:
- sell, loan or lease Trust assets to a Trustee or Senior Employee;
 - acquire, borrow or lease assets from a Trustee for the Trust;
 - pay a Trustee for carrying out their Trustee role;
 - 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, or a person or company closely connected to a Trustee or Senior Employee, for providing a service to the Trust. This covers anything that would be regarded as a service and includes legal, accountancy or consultancy services through to painting or decorating the Trust's premises, or any other maintenance work;
 - employ a Trustee's or Senior Employee's spouse, immediate family member and/or interested other at the Trust;
 - make a grant to a Trustee, or a person who is an immediate family member and/or interested other to a Trustee or Senior Employee;
 - allow a Trustee or Senior Employee to influence service provision to their exclusive advantage.
- b. **Conflict of Loyalty** – A Trustee's or Senior Employee's duty to the Trust may compete with a duty or loyalty they owe to another organisation or person. A conflict of loyalty could also arise where the religious, political or personal views could interfere with the ability of the Trustee or Senior Employee to decide the issue only in the best interests of the Trust. For example, a Trustee's or Senior Employees' loyalty to the Trust could conflict with his or her loyalty to:
- another organisation, such as their employer;
 - another charity or trust of which they are a Trustee/Director;
 - a member of their family;
 - another connected person or organisation.
- c. The test is always that there is a conflict of interest if the Trustee's or Senior Employees' other interest could, or could be seen to, interfere with the Trustee's or Senior Employees' ability to decide the issue only in the best interests of the Trust.

5. Identifying the Conflict of Interest

- 5.1. Trustees and Senior Employees are expected to identify any conflicts of interest at an early stage.
- 5.2. A standard agenda item must be included at the beginning of each Board of Trustee and Trust Committee Meetings to enable the declaration of any actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- a. If a Trustee is uncertain whether or not he or she is conflicted, he or she should err on the side of openness, declaring the issue and discussing it with the other Trustees;
 - b. If a Trustee is aware of an undeclared conflict of interest affecting another Trustee, they should notify the other Trustees or the Chair.
- 5.3. If a conflict of interest is identified outside of a meeting, the Trustee or Senior Employee must complete a Conflict of Interest Form and submit it to the Clerk of the Board of Trustees.

5.4. On an annual basis, or when a Trustee or Senior Employee joins the Trust, a Conflict of Interest Form must be completed to enable the Register of Interest to be kept up to date.

6. Dealing with the Conflict of Interest

6.1. Trustees must consider the conflict of interest so that any potential effect on decision making is eliminated.

6.2. Where available, legal or governing document requirements on how a conflict of interest must be handled is to be used, however, in serious cases, it can be decided that removing the conflict of interest itself is the most effective way of preventing it from affecting the decision-making.

6.3. Examples of Important legal or governing document requirements are:

- a. The Academy Trust Handbook;
- b. Trust's Articles of Association.

6.4. Serious conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to those which:

- a. Are so acute and extensive that the Trustee is unable to make their decisions in the best interest of the Trust, or could be seen to be unable to do so;
- b. Are present in significant or high-risk decisions of the Trustees;
- c. Mean that effective decision-making is regularly undermined or cannot be managed in accordance with the required or best practice approach;
- d. Are associated with inappropriate Trustee benefit.

6.5. **Benefits to Trustees/Senior Employees** – Where there is a proposed financial transaction between a Trustee/Senior Employee and the Trust, or any transaction of arrangement:

- a. The benefit must be authorised in advance by the Trustee Audit or Finance and Resources Committee. If there is no Committee meeting planned within the time frame of authorisation being required, then the Chair of the Trustee Audit or Finance and Resources Committee and one other Audit or Finance and Resources Trustee can be contacted to authorise the benefit. If the person affected is the Chair of the Audit, Finance and Resources Committee then the Chair of the Trustee Board plus one other Audit or Finance and Resources Trustee must authorise the benefit;
- b. The Trustees expect the affected Trustee to be absent from any part of any meeting where the issue is discussed or decided;
- c. The affected individual should not vote or be counted in deciding whether a meeting is quorate.

6.6. **Conflicts of Loyalty** – Where there is a conflict of loyalty and the affected Trustee 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 should declare the interest. The remainder of the Trustees must then decide what level of participation, if any, is acceptable on the part of the conflicted Trustee. The options might include, but are not limited to, deciding whether the conflicted Trustee:

- a. Having registered and fully declared the interest, can otherwise participate in the decision;
- b. Can stay in the meetings where the decision is discussed and made, but not participate;
- c. Should withdraw from the decision-making process in the way described above;
- d. If a conflict of interest is raised outside of a meeting and there is no meeting planned within the time frame of the conflict needing to be reviewed, the Chair of the Trust plus one other Trustee can be

contacted to consider the conflict of interest and determine the resolution. Where the Chair of the Trust is affected then a Member and one other Trustee must consider the conflict of interest and determine the resolution. The resolutions must be recorded on the Conflict of Interest Log.

6.7. In deciding which course of action to take regarding a Conflict of Interest, Trustees:

- a. Must always make their decisions only in the best interest of the Trust;
- b. 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;
- c. Should always be able to demonstrate that they have made decisions in the best interest of the Trust and independently of any competing interest;
- d. Should require the withdrawal of the affected Trustee from any decisions where the Trustee's other interest is relevant to a high risk or controversial Trustee decision or could, or be seen to, significantly affect the Trustee's decision-making at the Trust;
- e. Can allow the Trustee to participate where the existence of the other interest poses a low risk to the decision-making in the Trust's interest, or is likely to have an insignificant bearing on their approach to an issue;
- f. Should be aware that the presence of a conflicted Trustee can affect trust, could inhibit free discussion, and might influence decision-making in some way.

7. Recording the Conflict of Interest

7.1. The Trust must keep a Register of Interests for the Board of Trustees, Senior Employees and for each Committee including Local Committees, which must be published on their websites. This Register of Interest must be kept up to date through regular review. A copy of the Register of Interest Form is in Appendix A and the Register of Interest Log is in Appendix B.

7.2. The Academies Financial Handbook covers what must be captured in the Register of Interest and what must be published on the website and is extracted below:

- a. The Academy Trust's register of interests **must** capture relevant business and pecuniary interests of Members, Trustees, local governors of academies within a multi-academy Trust and Senior Employees, including:
 - directorships, partnerships and employments with businesses;
 - Trusteeships and governorships at other educational institutions and charities;
 - for each interest: the name of the business; the nature of the business; the nature of the interest; and the date the interest began.
- b. The register must also identify any material interests arising from immediate family and/or interested other relationships between the academy trust's Members, Trustees, or local committee volunteers and relationships between Members or Trustees and Employees;
- c. Trusts should consider carefully whether to include the interests of other individuals in the register of interests. This may include other employees of the Trust and immediate family and/or interested others of the individuals already on the register. If in doubt the presumption should be towards including an interest in the register;
- d. Trusts must publish on their websites relevant business and pecuniary interests of Members, Trustees, local committee volunteers and accounting officers. Trusts have discretion over the publication of interests of other individuals including child, parent, spouse, civil partner, immediate family member and/or interested other.

7.3. A Declaration of Interest Log must be kept by each Board of Trustees and Local Committee, which details the potential conflicts, the discussions and the resolutions. A copy of the Log is at Appendix B.

7.4. The Logs will be monitored by the Company Secretary to ensure that actions forming part of the resolution are appropriate, are following legal requirements and have been implemented correctly.

8. Confidentiality

8.1. Trustees or Senior Employees cannot use information obtained from the Trust for their own benefit or that of another organisation if it has been obtained in confidence or has special value such as commercial sensitivity.

9. Monitoring and Enforcement

9.1. The Trust's Audit and Finance and Resources Committee will undertake continuous monitoring of its activities and the Trustees/Senior Employees to ensure that any conflicts of interest are identified and mitigated as soon as possible.

9.2. Trustees and Senior Employees who fail to declare an interest and are found to be in conflict with the best interests of the Trust will be expected to explain to the Chair of Trustees, their reasons for their omission.

9.3. Members reserve the right to terminate the membership of the relevant Trustee, if they are found to have knowingly and deliberately failed to declare an interest and has brought the Trust into disrepute.

9.4. It will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter if a Senior Employee is found to have knowingly and deliberately failed to declare an interest and brought the Trust into disrepute.

Appendix A**DECLARATION OF INTEREST FORM**

In accordance with the Trust's legal obligations, your declarations of interest will be held by the Trust and you will be asked to confirm this declaration annually. These declarations will be published on the Trust's or school's website – whichever is appropriate and will remain published for one year after you cease to be a Member, Trustee or committee volunteer.

These interests are anything that might sway your decision making, or affect your ability to act in an impartial way. For example, this might mean that you:

- Are a Member, Trustee, committee volunteer or Governor at another school or charity,
- Work for a company that the school might engage the services of (a catering or payroll provider etc.);
- Have a personal relationship with any employees, Members, Trustees or local committee volunteers or members of the Trust (e.g. spouse, partner, relative etc.).

If you're not sure an interest counts, err on the side of caution and declare it. If you have any queries, contact the Clerk to the Board clerk@millacademy.co.uk.

We ask that you update us whenever your circumstances change.

Full Name	
Date of Birth	
Home Address	
Telephone Number/s	
Email Address	
Contact Address (if different from home address)	
Membership Category (please delete as appropriate)	Member/Trustee/Local Committee
Date First Appointed	

Biographical Details

Please include here details of any current employment details and/or career history and/or professional, voluntary or social membership(s) of organisations of relevance, together with personal interests that you consider are or might be pertinent to your directorship)

Close family members

Please list details of any close family members (parents/spouses/partners/children) and their directorships/Trustees

Please list details and amounts of any transactions made with the MAT by you or close family members

Pecuniary Interests

Personal Directorships/Partnerships/ Proprietorships/Governorships/Charity Trusteeships/Local Authority Memberships, tribunals etc.

Please list here all personal directorships/partnerships etc. you currently hold, naming the organisation, date of appointment and nature of activity.

Personal Equity Interests

Please list any equity holdings such as ordinary or preference shares or bonds (but not holdings forming part of unit or other trusts) which are held in your name with organisations with which the Trust has, or in your

opinion may have, any contractual dealing. If in doubt consult the Clerk to the Trustees for advice. Please show type of holding and amount.

Relevant Family Interests

Please list any holdings in excess of £25,000 value held in equities or bonds by any immediate family member, i.e. parent/spouse/partner/child, in any organisation with which the Trust has or in your opinion may have, any contractual dealing.

Gifts/Hospitality

Please list any gifts or hospitality you have received during the past year in your capacity as a Member/Director/Committee Volunteer/Staff from any external organisations.

Are there any other areas that may pose a conflict/potential conflict of interest which are not covered by the above questions?

For example, a partner/family member being an employee of the Trust – please list below.

I understand that the information I have provided above is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed..... Dated.....

