67 – GIFT AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

Agreed Summer 2024

Signed by Chair of Trustees

MINSTER TRUST FOR EDUCATION
REVIEW DATE SUMMER 2027

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1.0 Introduction and Aims

1.1 This document expands upon and updates the details referred to in section 3.6.9 of the Trust's Finance Policy and Section 21 of the Code of Conduct.

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

1.3 This policy aims to ensure that:

- The Minster Trust for Education's (the Trust's) funds are used only in accordance with the law, its Articles of Association, its funding agreement and the latest Academies 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, and all other stakeholders 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 those named above as well as all staff whether employed in one of our schools or employed centrally by the Trust.

2.0 Legislation and Guidance

2.1 This policy is based on the 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.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Staff members and Trustees:

- 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 advise the Trust Accountant the details of any gifts or hospitality offered to them, the school or the Trust with a value of over £100 within 7 working days, even if declined. The Gift and Hospitality Declaration Form (see appendix 1) must be completed and forwarded to the Trust Accountant in order for the details to be added to the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

- Must consult the Trust Accountant before accepting or offering an individual gift or hospitality with a value of over £150.

- 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.

4.2 Trust leaders and Heads 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 Trust Accountant, that decisions on whether individuals or the Trust can accept or offer gifts or hospitality with a value of over £100 are in line with this policy.

4.3 Trust leaders and Heads are responsible for ensuring that Staff, Members and Trustees are aware of and understand this policy, and that it is being implemented consistently.

4.4 The Trust Accountant 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 Trust Handbook.

- The Trustees are provided with information on gifts and hospitality received and given, as appropriate. They will also ensure, alongside Trust leaders and Heads, that decisions on whether individuals or the Trust can accept or offer gifts or hospitality with a value of over £100 are in line with this policy.

5.0 Acceptable Gifts and Hospitality

Gifts and hospitality offered to or received by Trust Staff

5.1 Members, Trustees and staff can accept gifts and hospitality that have a value of up to and including £100. These do not have to be pre-approved or recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

5.2 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 Trust Accountant or Head.

5.3 Any gifts or hospitality offered with a value in excess of £100 must be recorded on the gifts and hospitality register within 7 working days, even if declined. Any Member, Trustee, or member of staff who is offered such gifts or hospitality must consult the Trust Accountant or Head before accepting.

5.4 Where a key person is the recipient (defined as being a person who has financial influence for example a person who makes decisions over awarding contracts), or intended recipient, (for example the Head Teacher, the CEO of the Trust) of any offer of gifts or hospitality in excess of £50, they must inform the Trust Accountant or Chief Operating Officer in order to ensure that the offer is recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

Gifts or Hospitality offered by the Trust/School to others:

5.6 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 £30 per head should be used as a guideline. Alcohol must not be purchased out of the school or Trust budget. The purchase of gifts should apply only to visitors or external parties and not staff. The Trust Accountant must be consulted about any proposal to provide gifts or any proposal for hospitality in excess of £30 per person. School staff should also consult with the Head prior to consulting with the Trust Accountant.

5.7 Gifts for staff members should not be purchased from public monies. This includes flowers or gifts on birthdays, when children are born, or when staff leave. However such gifts could be funded through staff collections or from the Head's own expense.

5.8 Consideration will be given to funding a retirement gift to a staff member who has a significant length of service record, this gift must not exceed £50 in value and must be approved by the Trust Accountant as per the rules previously stated.

6.0 Unacceptable Gift and Hospitality

6.1 The following must never be offered or accepted:

- Cash

- 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.

  Please note - this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

6.2 It is also likely that any gift or hospitality offered to family members, partners or close friends of staff are inappropriate. An exception might include offering flowers in the case of bereavement. If in doubt, please seek advice from the Trust Accountant or COO before purchase.

7.0 Declining Gifts and Hospitality

7.1 Any Member, Trustee, 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 Trust Accountant. If a Member, Trustee, or member of staff feels it would not be appropriate for them to decline, they should refer the matter to the Trust Accountant. The Trust Accountant 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.

Appendix 1 – Gift and Hospitality Declaration Form

Name	
School/Organisation	
Role	
Description of Gift or Hospitality	
Approximate Value	
Party Offering Gift or Hospitality	
Date of Offer	
Accepted or Declined	
Date of Declaration	
Approved By	
Comments – please add any comments or explanations as appropriate	
Date Added to Register (by Trust Accountant)	