



SAFE START SCHOOL

WILLPOWER-INITIATIVE-SUCCESS-EMPATHY-RESPECT

Gifts & Hospitality Policy

Reviewed: October 2026

Reviewed by: Grace Speakman

Approved by: Rachel Pilling

Next Review: October 2027

Policy statement and purpose

Safe Start School expects the highest standards of integrity, transparency and professional conduct. Gifts, hospitality and other benefits must never influence, or appear to influence, decisions about pupils, families, staffing, admissions, commissioning, procurement or the use of school funds. This policy protects staff and the school from actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

Scope and responsibilities

This policy applies to employees, leaders, directors/proprietors, governors, agency staff and volunteers when acting for or representing the school. Contractors and suppliers are expected to observe equivalent standards. The Headteacher oversees day-to-day implementation; the proprietor/directors oversee decisions involving the Headteacher and review the register for trends or concerns. No person may authorise their own gift, hospitality or expense.

General principles

- Never solicit gifts, hospitality, discounts, favours or benefits for personal advantage.
- Never accept or offer cash, cash equivalents (including vouchers or gift cards), loans or personal services from pupils, parents/carers, suppliers or other parties connected with school business.
- Decline any offer that could create an obligation, impair impartiality or reasonably appear to do so, regardless of value.
- Gifts or hospitality connected with an active tender, contract award, inspection, admissions decision, employment decision or complaint must normally be declined.
- Where refusal might cause offence, explain the policy courteously and seek advice before accepting or retaining an item.

Gifts received

Modest unsolicited tokens of appreciation with an estimated value of £25 or less, such as chocolates, flowers or low-value promotional items, may normally be accepted if there is no conflict of interest. Staff should consider cumulative gifts from the same person or organisation; repeated low-value gifts may be inappropriate. Gifts above £25 must not be personally accepted without advance written authorisation and an entry in the Gifts and Hospitality Register. Approval is exceptional and may require the gift to be shared, donated or declined.

Gifts from suppliers, prospective suppliers or organisations seeking school business must normally be declined, irrespective of value, except insignificant promotional items where there is no conflict. If an offer raises a potential conflict of interest, staff must promptly inform the Headteacher, even where it has been declined.

Hospitality received

Modest working refreshments or light meals incidental to a legitimate meeting may normally be accepted without prior approval where there is no conflict. Other hospitality, including event invitations, meals, travel or accommodation, requires advance written approval from the Headteacher, or from an uninvolved director/proprietor where the Headteacher is the recipient. Record approved hospitality and any significant declined offers in the register. Retrospective approval should be exceptional and must be documented.

Approval depends on a clear school-related purpose, modest cost, timing, frequency, supplier relationships and the risk of perceived influence. Staff must not accept lavish hospitality or hospitality that the school could not reasonably justify or reciprocate.

Gifts and hospitality provided by the school

School funds may be used for proportionate staff wellbeing, recognition or bereavement gestures with prior budget-holder authorisation. Retain the existing guideline of no more than £25 per person for such gestures. Leaving gifts and personal celebrations should normally be funded by voluntary staff contributions. Alcohol must not be purchased using school funds.

School-funded celebratory meals or business events must have a legitimate purpose, be authorised in advance and be reasonable. The existing guideline is a maximum of £50 per head; this is a ceiling, not an entitlement. The Headteacher will consider budgets, value for money, any relevant tax implications and the source and permitted use of funds. A director/proprietor must approve expenditure benefiting the Headteacher personally; any director benefit requires approval by another uninvolved authorised person.

Reporting and approval

The school does not maintain a separate gifts and hospitality register. Staff must seek approval for gifts or hospitality where this policy requires it and promptly report any potentially inappropriate offer or conflict of interest to the Headteacher, normally within five working days. Approval or advice may be requested by email and should briefly identify the offer, its estimated value, who made it and any relevant relationship with the school. The Headteacher will retain written approvals or significant decisions in the normal school management or finance records, rather than a standalone register. Routine permitted tokens of appreciation of £25 or less do not need to be reported unless there is a concern or potential conflict.

Where the Headteacher, a director/proprietor or governor is involved, approval or concerns must be referred to an appropriate uninvolved authorised person. Material conflicts of interest must be dealt with under the school's conflict-of-interest arrangements. No person may authorise a benefit for themselves.

Expenses and record keeping

Reimbursement claims must be supported by receipts or other acceptable evidence and approved by the appropriate budget holder before payment. No individual may approve their own claim. Relevant expense records and any written approval or significant decision under this policy will be retained in the school's normal financial or management records in accordance with its retention arrangements.

Concerns, breaches and safeguarding

Staff should raise concerns about inappropriate gifts, pressure, bribery or conflicts with the Headteacher, or with an uninvolved proprietor/director if the concern involves the Headteacher. Serious concerns may be raised under the Whistleblowing Policy. Suspected bribery or fraud may require external reporting and appropriate investigation. Breaches may result in action under the Disciplinary Policy or relevant contractual arrangements.

Gifts must never be used to establish inappropriate relationships with pupils or families. Any safeguarding concern, including grooming or boundary violations, must be reported immediately in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Review and related policies

The school will review this policy annually and sooner if legislation, governance or operational arrangements change. Related documents include the Staff Code of Conduct, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Financial Procedures, Conflicts of Interest arrangements, Data Protection Policy and Expenses procedures.

Appendix A – Quick guide for staff

- Small, unsolicited gifts worth £25 or less (without a conflict): normally acceptable; no declaration needed.
- Cash, vouchers or gifts that could influence decisions: decline.
- Supplier offers and anything raising a conflict: decline or seek advice and tell the Headteacher.
- Hospitality beyond modest working refreshments: obtain written approval beforehand.
- Offers involving the Headteacher or directors: refer to an uninvolved authorised person.
- Keep any necessary approval email with ordinary school records; no separate register is required.