



## **Leicester Diocesan Board of Education Policy for Close Family Members on same Governing Bodies**

### **The Policy**

To ensure the fullest possible compliance with the Nolan Principles it is Leicester Diocesan Board of Education (LDBE)'s policy that appointing close family members on the same Governing Body is not allowed.

Permitted exceptions to this are where it is necessary **as a last resort and then, only as a temporary measure.**

This applies to married and co-habiting couples and for people who are closely related such as brothers and sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles etc.

LDBE will **not** approve the appointment of Foundation Governors where a close familial relationship on the Governing Body exists.

If Governors wish for the DBE to make an exception, the case needs to be made in writing for the DBE to consider.

Further details and the background that underpins this policy are below.

### **Background**

LDBE have used the Nolan principles as a basis for the formulation of this policy. These principles outline key areas which those serving in public life should pay attention to and are:

#### **1. Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

#### **2. Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

#### **3. Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

#### **4. Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

#### **5. Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

#### **6. Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

#### **7. Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour.

They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2>

This policy applies to maintained schools as well as Single and Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) boards and Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) for schools in MATs. The terms used in different contexts may vary. For example, governors may also be referred to as trustees or directors in academies. For the purposes of this policy, the term, 'governor' applies to anyone serving in a governance capacity.

Governors' personal and professional connections can bring benefits to the work of a school and they often form part of the reason why an individual has been asked to join the governing body or trust board. However, they can give rise to questions about integrity, objectivity and openness. Governors must respond robustly and effectively and in line with the Nolan principles.

#### **Potential advantages for familial relationships on same board**

Board members need to trust one another, and a trust relationship may already exist among family members. Boards want to know who will work hard and meet their commitments; they may know this about a family member. Both family members may have appropriate skills and the commitment to make a difference to the school and community.

#### **Potential disadvantages for familial relationships on same board**

Diversity in governance is more important than ever. "Samethink" or "Groupthink" from people who travel in all the same circles, or come from the same household, will not solve the complex challenges that face governing bodies and/or trust boards.

Additionally, in the case of the two family members living in the same house, it is highly likely that issues will be discussed, and possibly action taken for expediency without reference to the rest of the Governing Body. Transparency is essential. The 'dinner-time' conversations are rarely recorded so this would make absolute transparency/sharing information with all other governors very difficult. Even if they do communicate effectively and efficiently, there will always be a suspicion that something else is going on or has not been disclosed.

Essentially, the concern with having both spouses on the same board is that the organisation can suffer if they do not get along or even if they get along too well. If the spouses start to have marital problems, then any divisive issue discussed by the board can turn into an awkward marital 'discussion' during the board meeting. If the spouses function as a perfect unit, the effect is much like having one board member

with two votes. Spouses serving on the same board can only avoid these problems by applying the greatest level of consideration to the Nolan principles as possible.

Nevertheless, even with scrupulous application of the Nolan principles, the concern is not addressed in relation to perception of inappropriate decision-making or collusion. When a tricky issue arises, there is undoubtedly a perception of collusion between the husband and wife.

### **Conclusion**

From a governance perspective, there is nothing technically which disallows a people who have a close familial relationship serving on the same board or committee. For example, where conflicts of interest do arise they can be dealt with in the normal way as in situations which do not involve close family members. Reference should be made to the Governing Body's standard conflicts policy.

However to ensure the fullest possible compliance with the Nolan Principles it is LDBE's policy that the default position is not to allow this. Permitted exceptions to this are **only as a last resort and only as a temporary measure** and in all cases details should be provided to LDBE along with an explanation of why an exception should be allowed.

Therefore, LDBE will **not** approve the appointment of Foundation Governors where a close familial relationship on the Governing Body exists. If Governors wish for the DBE to make an exception, the case needs to be made in writing for the DBE to consider.