Cardiff Academy

POLICY /// GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE

Freedom of Speech, Academic Freedom and External Speakers Policy

Cardiff Academy's commitment to lawful free speech and academic freedom, balanced with its duties to protect students from harassment and radicalisation, and the procedure for approving external speakers and events.

REFERENCE	**CA-GOV-09**	VERSION	**1.0 (Approved)**
POLICY OWNER	**Principal**	APPROVED BY	**Board of Governors**
ISSUE DATE	**October 2026**	APPROVAL DATE	**October 2026**
REVIEW CYCLE	**Annual**	NEXT REVIEW DUE	**October 2027**
APPLIES TO	**All staff, students, visiting speakers and event organisers**	PUBLISHED	**Website; Student Handbook; staff portal**

RELATED POLICIES CA-WEL-02 Prevent Duty; CA-WEL-05 Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct; CA-WEL-06 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; CA-HSE-04 Site Security and Visitors; CA-INF-03 Online Safety and Acceptable Use

LEGAL ENTITY Cardiff Education Group Ltd, trading as Cardiff Academy (Company No. 14569122). Registered office: 168 City Road, Cardiff CF24 3JE. Teaching premises: 8 Drake Walk, Cardiff CF10 4LG

1 Policy statement

Free speech and the open exchange of ideas are essential to education. Cardiff Academy prepares students for university, where they will be expected to engage with challenging, controversial and unfamiliar ideas. We will therefore protect the right of students, staff and visiting speakers to express lawful views, including views that others may find offensive or shocking, within the law.

Freedom of speech is not unlimited. It does not include speech that is unlawful, such as incitement to violence or hatred, harassment, threats, encouragement of terrorism or unlawful discrimination.

2 Academic freedom

Teaching staff have freedom, within the law and the requirements of the curriculum, to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves at risk of losing their jobs or privileges. Staff are expected to present contested issues in a balanced way and to encourage students to evaluate evidence and arguments for themselves.

3 Balancing duties

The Academy has legal duties that must be considered alongside free speech, including:

- the duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism (CA-WEL-02)
- the duty to protect students and staff from harassment and discrimination (CA-WEL-05, CA-WEL-06)
- safeguarding duties towards students under 18 (CA-WEL-01)
- health and safety and public order

Where these duties apply, the Academy will look first for ways to allow lawful speech to go ahead safely, for example by requiring a chair, an opportunity for challenge, or additional security, rather than cancelling an event.

4 Fundamental British values and political balance

The Academy actively promotes democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Staff must not promote partisan political views in teaching, and where political issues are discussed students will be offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

5 External speakers and events

5.1 What needs approval

Approval is required for any event on Academy premises or online on Academy platforms, or any event organised, funded or branded by the Academy, that involves a speaker or contributor from outside the Academy. This includes guest lectures, university visits, student society events, faith or cultural events, and recruitment or careers events.

University admissions staff visiting under a partnership agreement, and accredited examiners or inspectors, do not need to go through this procedure but must sign in under CA-HSE-04.

5.2 Procedure

1. The organiser completes the **External Speaker and Event Request Form** at least **10 working days** before the event (20 for events open to the public). It includes the speaker's name, organisation, topic, audience, format and any promotional material.

2. The Principal (or a nominated senior manager) carries out a proportionate check, including an internet search on the speaker, and consults the DSL as Prevent lead where there are any indicators of risk.
3. The Principal decides to approve, approve with conditions, or refuse. Refusal will be rare and only where there is a real risk of unlawful speech, a risk to safety that cannot be mitigated, or the event conflicts with legal duties. Reasons are recorded.
4. Conditions may include: an independent chair; a balanced panel or opportunity for questions; advance sight of slides; restricting attendance to Academy students; additional staff or security; recording the event.
5. The organiser briefs the speaker on this policy and the Academy's expectations, and the speaker signs the **Speaker Agreement**.
6. A member of staff attends every external speaker event and may stop it if the speaker breaks the law or the agreed conditions.

5.3 Appeal

An organiser may ask the CEO to review a refusal or condition. The CEO will respond within five working days.

6 Students under 18

Where an event audience includes students under 18, additional safeguarding considerations apply (for example suitability of content, supervision and DBS status of speakers who will have unsupervised contact).

7 Online content and research

Students and staff researching sensitive or extremist material for legitimate academic purposes must follow CA-INF-03 and notify their teacher, so that filtering alerts can be interpreted correctly.

8 Complaints

Concerns that this policy has not been followed, including concerns that lawful speech has been restricted, can be raised under CA-WEL-08 Student Complaints Policy or the staff grievance procedure.

9 Records and review

The Principal keeps a log of all external speaker requests and decisions and reports annually to the Board. This policy is reviewed annually.

Compliance mapping

This policy has been written to meet, and to evidence, the following external requirements. Inspectors and university partners can use this table to locate the relevant provisions.

ISI Educational Oversight (PFE) standards	Standard 12 (teaching does not undermine fundamental British values); Standard 13 (respect for protected characteristics); Section 4 criteria on protecting learners from radicalisation and extremism
British Council Accreditation UK criteria	W3 (policies to promote tolerance and respect)
University partner due diligence	Partner due diligence – freedom of speech and academic freedom policy; external speaker procedures consistent with partner policies
Legislation and statutory guidance	Human Rights Act 1998 (Articles 9, 10 and 11); Education (No. 2) Act 1986, s.43 (applies to FE and HE institutions in the public sector; followed here as good practice); Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, s.26 and s.31; Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales (2023); Equality Act 2010; Public Order Act 1986. Note: the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 applies to registered higher education providers in England and does not apply directly to the Academy

Document control

Version	Date	Author / reviewer	Summary of changes
0.9	Pre-2026	Various	No equivalent Cardiff Academy policy
1.0	October 2026	Principal	New policy written for university partnerships, ISI Educational Oversight and British Council Accreditation UK. Supersedes all previous versions.

APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD	SIGNATURE	DATE
Chair of the Board of Governors		