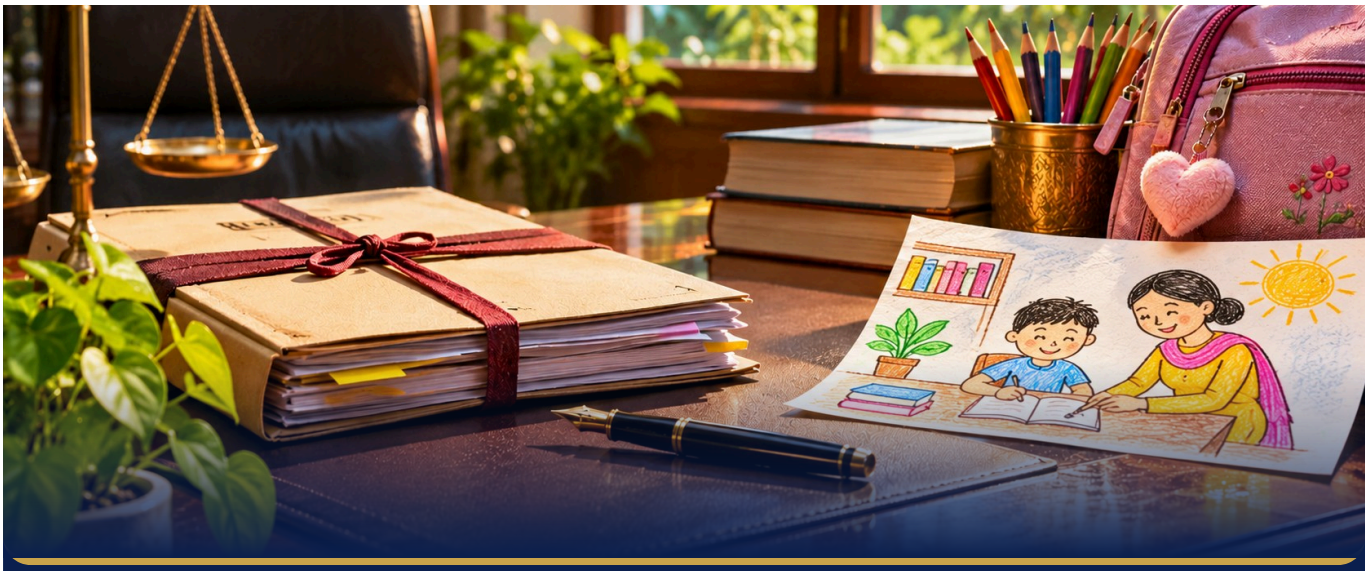


MAINS MASTERY 2026 · GS PAPER IV · QUESTION 6(A) · STUDENT EDITION

Empathy, Rules and a Transfer Stopped on Request

THE QUESTION, AS SET IN UPSC CSE MAINS 2026

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

Directive: Discuss | 10 marks | 150 words | Ethics: empathy, impartiality

1 **PYQ Deep Decode**
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2 **PYQ Intelligence**
2015 to 2026: conflict of interest, empathy

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7 **Quick recall**
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8 **Write it yourself**
A seven-point self-check

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On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

1 PYQ Deep Decode

Read the question the way the examiner set it: the demand, the hidden demand, the structure that follows from both, and how the answer should be presented, opened and closed.

1.1 The demand

The question gives a compressed case and asks you to **discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules** "in this context". First, settle whose daughter it is. The English "his daughter" can be read two ways, but the **Hindi version printed in the same official paper** removes the doubt: in translation, the teacher "teaches the learning-disabled daughter of this Personal Assistant". So the facts are: the **PA's daughter** has a learning disability; her tutor is a **schoolteacher** due for transfer; the **PA asks** the DM to stop it, and the **DM does**. The answer must weigh what empathy genuinely asks here against what the rules ask, and show where they meet.

Words in the question	What they ask you to do	What goes wrong if you miss them
On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA)	A subordinate with a personal stake asks his superior for a decision that benefits his family. The question does not say whether a written application, recorded reasons or a policy provision existed: examine these, do not assume them absent.	Missing that the PA is both the parent and an interested public employee.
the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer	Use of public authority on a routine administrative matter; whether the DM is even the competent authority for teacher transfers depends on the state's policy.	Treating it as a private kindness with no public effect.
a schoolteacher who takes private tuition	A second compliance question: Section 28 of the RTE Act, 2009 bars private tuition by teachers covered by the Act (elementary education); others fall under their service rules.	Assuming an automatic statutory breach from the word "schoolteacher".
for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability	The human side: the child has a diagnosed learning disability. The RPwD Act, 2016 recognises specific learning disabilities in its Schedule, but the question gives neither the precise diagnosis nor any certification status.	Misidentifying the child, or dismissing her need.
discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules	Both sides, examined fairly, then a reasoned reconciliation.	A one-line verdict, or a sermon on rules alone.

THE DEMAND IN ONE LINE

Recognise the genuine empathy owed to the PA's daughter, show how stopping a transfer on a subordinate's personal request strains impartiality, fairness and lawful procedure, and reconcile the two by meeting the child's need through rules rather than through access.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

1.2 The hidden demand

The examiner is testing whether you can tell **empathy** apart from **favouritism through proximity**. The question establishes no material or familial benefit to the DM, which makes the issue subtler than ordinary self-dealing. But the PA's **access to the DM** creates a risk that personal proximity, rather than objective criteria, shapes an administrative decision. Would another parent with the same need and no such access receive equivalent consideration? That is the **central test of impartiality**. Empathy in public office is **impartial and institutional**: it asks whether every similarly placed family could receive the same response. The mature answer is not "rules over feelings" but **compassion through fair procedure**, with the child's support arranged whatever happens to the transfer.

Each point should name an aspect, apply it to the facts, and say what it shows. The last column is where the hidden demand begins.

Aspect	Applied to the facts	What it shows
Empathy	A child with a learning disability may depend on a trusted tutor for continuity.	The need is real; the response must still be fair.
Compliance	The DM stopped the transfer after the PA's request; the question does not establish whether the decision was independently justified under a policy.	Personal access creates an appearance of favouritism; whether criteria were breached must be examined.

WEAK

The DM showed empathy for the PA, but rules are also important, so he should balance both and follow the rules.

STRONG

The PA's daughter deserves concern, but a transfer cannot be halted merely because her father works beside the DM; a fair officer records the request, seeks an independent, reasoned decision under the policy or lawfully delegated discretion, and secures the child's support under the RPwD Act regardless.

1.3 The structure

A "discuss ... versus ..." question in a case setting needs **both sides applied to the facts**, then a **short reconciliation**. The shares are of the body between the introduction and the conclusion; they are a teaching guide, not a UPSC rule.

Introduction	1. Aspects of empathy about a quarter	2. Aspects of compliance about two-fifths	3. Reconciling them about a third	Conclusion

Parts 1 and 2 **The two sides, applied** **about two-thirds**

Empathy	The child's need for continuity; the PA's anxiety as a parent; responsiveness as a service value; care ethics' case for attention to the particular.
Compliance	Impartiality and merit; authority under the transfer policy; fairness to other teachers, pupils and families; the legal position on private tuition; precedent of influence through personal staff.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

Part 3 **Reconciling them** about a third

Process	Record the request and the PA's interest; let the competent authority apply the policy; any exception only through the applicable policy or lawfully authorised discretion, supported by recorded reasons and fair treatment.
Care	Arrange school-based support under Sections 16 and 17 of the RPwD Act, whether or not the transfer proceeds.

1.4 How to present it

The form follows the question. **Three headed blocks** (empathy, compliance, reconciliation) work best because the question names two aspects and implies a resolution. A two-column table (empathy and compliance) is a good alternative if you write tables quickly; keep the reconciliation as prose beneath it.

Form	Fit here	Reason
Three headed blocks	**Best**	Mirrors the question; leaves room for the hidden demand.
Two-column table	Good	Sets the two aspects side by side; needs a line of synthesis.
Full case-study format	Weak here	Stakeholder and options tables eat words in a 150-word answer.

1.5 The introduction and the conclusion

The introduction serves the whole question. It sets empathy and rules side by side and names the test: whether compassion, prompted by a subordinate's request, is being exercised fairly.

The conclusion settles the demand. It states the principle: empathy should shape fair administration, not replace it, so that every child like this one is helped through rules, not through proximity.

2 PYQ Intelligence 2015 to 2026

The question's context, its place in a long line of GS IV questions on conflict of interest, empathy and rules, and what to prepare next.

2.1 Why the subject was topical

Teacher transfers, private tuition and disability rights have all been in public discussion. UPSC never states why it sets a question, so treat this as **context, not cause**.

When	What happened	Why it matters for this question
22 June 2026	The Haryana Cabinet approved a Teachers Transfer Policy 2026 and a Model Online Transfer Policy 2026: online transfers ranked on a revised 120-point composite framework, with greater weight for special factors such as genuine hardship.	An illustration of hardship written into published criteria; not a rule governing the UPSC case.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

When	What happened	Why it matters for this question
31 March 2021	In Farooq Ahmed v. UT of J&K, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court held that a circular banning private tuition under Section 28 of the RTE Act was valid for teachers imparting elementary education; teachers of higher classes were instead governed by Rule 10 of the state's employees' conduct rules.	Whether the tuition is unlawful depends on the teacher's level and service rules.
8 October 2018	A DoPT office memorandum lets a central government employee who is the caregiver of a dependant with a specified disability, certified as a benchmark disability, be considered for exemption from routine or rotational transfer, subject to administrative constraints.	Empathy written into a rule, for everyone equally; it concerns the caregiver's own transfer, never someone else's.
2026 paper	The same paper asked how an administrator should balance rules with children's educational rights (Q5(a)) and how a Collector should balance fiscal probity with empathy (Q10(a)); GS Paper I asked how to understand disability (Q9).	Empathy versus rules was a theme of the year.

2.2 The skill UPSC keeps testing

UPSC has asked about conflict of interest and about empathy many times; this question joins the two in a subtler form. Questions are verbatim.

Year	The question as UPSC set it	What it asked of you	What changed in 2026
2015 GS IV · Q8	Public servants are likely to confront with the issues of 'Conflict of Interest'. What do you understand by the term 'Conflict of Interest' and how does it manifest in the decision making by public servants? If faced with the conflict of interest situation, how would you resolve it? Explain with the help of examples.	Define, show how it arises, resolve it.	The stake is a subordinate's: the risk is favouritism through proximity, not the officer's own gain.
2017 GS IV · Q1	Conflict of interest in the public sector arises when (a) official duties, (b) public interest, and (c) personal interest are taking priority one above the other. How can this conflict in administration be resolved ? Describe with an example.	Ordering duty, public and personal interest.	The PA's interest is his daughter's welfare; concern for a subordinate's child must not become unequal treatment through access.
2018 GS IV · Q3(a)	What is meant by conflict of interest ? Illustrate with examples, the difference between the actual and potential conflicts of interest.	Actual versus potential conflicts.	The PA's personal stake is clear; the DM's risk is favouritism, which must be distinguished from a personal conflict the facts do not establish.
2022 GS IV · Q1(b)	Apart from intellectual competency and moral qualities, empathy and compassion are some of the other vital attributes that facilitate the civil servants to be more competent in tackling the	Empathy as a strength.	Now the limits of empathy: when it is routed through personal access.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

Year	The question as UPSC set it	What it asked of you	What changed in 2026
	crucial issues or taking critical decisions. Explain with suitable illustrations.		
2023 GS IV · Q5(a)	Is conscience a more reliable guide when compared to laws, rules and regulations in the context of ethical decision-making ? Discuss.	Inner guide versus external rules.	A kind impulse that needs a fair procedure to be just.
2026 GS IV · Q10(a)	(a) What are the options open to Vikas? How should he balance fiscal probity with empathy towards the designated beneficiaries?	From a case on biometric failures in the public distribution system: probity versus empathy for the poor.	Empathy towards vulnerable beneficiaries there, towards a subordinate's vulnerable child here; both must be delivered through fair, lawful procedures.

Also related, verbatim: 2019 GS IV Q1(a): "What are the basic principles of public life ? Illustrate any three of these with suitable examples." 2022 GS IV Q5(b), short notes in 30 words each, including "(ii) Conflict of interest". 2026 GS IV Q5(a), in the same paper: "Usually schools, working in remote areas, do not fully comply with government regulations. However, if the rules are enforced strictly, it would lead to most schools closing down. How should an administrator strike a balance between enforcement of rules and educational rights of children?" 2026 GS I Q9: "How do you understand disability? Substantiate the need for inclusive policy framework in India in this regard."

CARRY THIS METHOD TO ANY "EMPATHY VERSUS RULES" QUESTION

1. **Read both language versions** when a pronoun or fact is unclear.
2. **Name whose need** it is, and take it seriously.
3. **Ask who holds the stake** and who holds the power.
4. **Apply the access test**: would a person with no proximity get the same?
5. **Find the lawful channel** that meets the need, and record reasons.

2.3 What to prepare next

THE RULES

AIS (Conduct) Rules, Rule 3(1A)	Inserted in 2014: merit, fairness and impartiality; accountability and transparency; responsiveness to the weaker sections. Applies if the DM is an All India Services officer, as DMs usually are.
Rule 3(2B)	Also 2014: decisions solely in public interest (iv); declare private interests and resolve conflicts (v); merit alone (viii); fairness and impartiality (ix); comply with law, rules and established practices (x).
Rule 3(3)	Directions from superiors ordinarily in writing; oral directions to be confirmed in writing.
RTE Act, 2009	Section 28: "No teacher shall engage himself or herself in private tuition or private teaching activity." The Act covers elementary education (classes 1 to 8); Section 24(1)(d) asks teachers to assess each child's learning ability and supplement instruction.

DISABILITY LAW AND ETHICS

RPwD Act, 2016	Lists specific learning disabilities in its Schedule (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, developmental aphasia).
Sections 16 and 17	Section 16: inclusive education, reasonable accommodation, early detection of specific learning disabilities. Section 17: trained teachers and staff, resource centres, free learning materials for benchmark disabilities, examination accommodations such as extra time and a scribe.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

Nolan principles (1995)	Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership.
2nd ARC, 4th Report	"Ethics in Governance" (January 2007): a Code of Ethics for civil servants, distinct from conduct rules.

3 Additional information

Everything needed to answer this question well. Tier 1 holds what the demand needs; Tier 2 places it within wider debates on care, justice and impartial office.

TIER 1 · ESSENTIAL: BOTH ASPECTS AND THE RECONCILIATION

ONE FEELING, TWO ROADS: EMPATHY THROUGH ACCESS OR THROUGH FAIR ADMINISTRATION

Starting point: the PA's genuine concern for his daughter, who has a learning disability

ROAD A: EMPATHY THROUGH PERSONAL ACCESS (what happened)

The PA asks → A subordinate with a personal stake seeks to keep his daughter's tutor

Access at work → Close working ties give the PA direct access; a lawful justification is unestablished

Transfer stopped → One teacher held back after the request

Questions raised → Impartiality, authority, criteria, and families with no such access

ROAD B: EMPATHY THROUGH FAIR ADMINISTRATION (what was owed)

Record the request → Note the PA's interest and the child's circumstances on file

Policy decides → The competent authority applies the transfer policy

Exception only if lawful → Policy or authorised discretion, recorded reasons, consistent with like cases

Support the child → RPwD Act sections 16 and 17: accommodation, trained staff, resource centres

The test: would a parent with no access to the DM receive the same response, through the same rules?

Subject	What it is	Why it matters for the answer
ASPECTS OF EMPATHY		
The child's need	A specific learning disability affects reading, writing, spelling or calculation; children benefit from consistent, trained support and a trusted relationship.	Shows the concern is genuine, not a pretext.
The PA as a parent	Any parent would fear losing a tutor the child trusts. A good officer notices the distress of his own staff.	Empathy for the PA is legitimate.
Empathy as a value	Responsiveness to the public, particularly the weaker sections, is a listed value in AIS (Conduct) Rule 3(1A).	Empathy belongs in administration.
Its limit here	The request reached the DM because the child's father works beside him. Families with the same need and no such access may never be heard.	Empathy routed through access risks partiality.
ASPECTS OF COMPLIANCE WITH RULES		

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

Subject	What it is	Why it matters for the answer
Impartiality	The PA has a direct personal interest in the decision; the DM's intervention raises a risk of favouritism, undue influence and impaired objectivity. A direct personal conflict of interest for the DM is not established by the facts.	The precise ethical charge.
Merit and authority	If the DM is an IAS officer, Rule 3(2B)(iv), (viii), (ix) and (x) apply: public interest, merit alone, fairness, and compliance with rules and established practice. Whether the DM is the competent authority for the transfer must be checked.	A decision can be kind and still be ultra vires.
The tuition	If the teacher teaches elementary classes, Section 28 of the RTE Act bars private tuition; otherwise the applicable state service rules, which often require sanction for private work, decide.	A second compliance question, not an assumed breach.
Fairness to others	An unjustified stoppage may disadvantage teachers awaiting consideration, disrupt staffing at the intended posting and affect pupils there. These are risks to weigh, not facts given.	Empathy for one can cost many.
The precedent	Granting an inadequately justified request through personal staff may encourage similar approaches, create perceptions of privileged access and weaken confidence in ordinary administrative channels.	Process matters as much as outcome.
RECONCILING THEM		
Record and route	Record the request, the PA's interest and the child's circumstances; let the competent authority apply the policy independently; the DM steps back if his impartiality is in doubt.	Transparency turns a favour into a case.
Exception only if lawful	A transfer may be deferred only where the applicable law, transfer policy or lawfully delegated discretion permits it, on relevant grounds, with recorded reasons, consistency with comparable cases and regard to public interest. Published hardship criteria are preferable because they reduce arbitrariness, but they are not the only source of lawful discretion.	Properly exercised discretion can itself express empathy.
Meet the need lawfully	A school-level assessment and reasonable accommodation under Section 16 of the RPwD Act; trained staff, resource centres and examination accommodations under Section 17. Any private tutor must be lawfully permitted to tutor.	The child is served whatever happens to the transfer.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

Why is this not simply "rules over feelings"? The legal framework already provides ways to respond compassionately: the RPwD Act sets duties on inclusive education, while caregiver exemptions and transfer-hardship provisions permit conditional accommodation. None is an entitlement to stop another employee's transfer. The real question is whether a **lawful, fair and reasoned accommodation** is available.

What could the DM legitimately have done? Listened with care, asked the PA to apply in writing, forwarded the request to the competent authority with the facts, and asked the education officers to arrange support for the child. Every step is **open, recorded and available to any parent**.

TIER 2 · EXTENDED UNDERSTANDING: THE WHOLE TOPIC AROUND IT

Words to keep distinct

1. **Sympathy:** feeling for another's distress.
2. **Empathy:** understanding it from the inside.
3. **Compassion:** empathy that moves to help, guided by reason.
4. **Favouritism:** preference shaped by proximity or ties, not by criteria.
5. **Undue influence:** pressure that bends a decision through access rather than merit.
6. **Conflict of interest:** a situation in which an official's private interests could improperly influence the performance of official duties. The PA has a personal interest in the transfer; whether it becomes a conflict in his own role depends on how he used that role. For the DM, the risk is favouritism and impaired impartiality, not an established private conflict.

Lenses an examiner looks for

1. **Kant:** could every officer suspend transfers merely because a personal subordinate asks? A favour that cannot be justified as a general rule fails the test; a reasoned accommodation open to all similar cases passes it.
2. **Rawls:** choose transfer rules not knowing whether you are the PA, another parent, the transferred teacher or a pupil at the receiving school; you would choose fair, public hardship provisions.
3. **Ethics of care:** it rightly values the daughter's particular vulnerability and a trusted relationship; justice asks that the response be authorised, proportionate and open to others on similar grounds.
4. **Weber:** the ideal official acts impersonally, without favour; personal loyalty is the mark of patrimonial, not rational, administration.

Two debates worth knowing

Is empathy a reliable guide for public decisions?

The psychologist Paul Bloom, in Against Empathy (2016), argues that empathy is biased towards the near, the similar and the identifiable, and favours "rational compassion". The PA's nearness to the DM shows how the bias could operate. Care ethicists answer that attention to the particular is what makes help humane. The balanced reading: **empathy should open the officer's eyes, and fair criteria should decide**.

Should transfer rules bend for hardship?

Yes, through published criteria where they exist (the DoPT caregiver exemption, special-factor points in state policies) or through lawfully delegated discretion exercised with recorded reasons and consistency across like cases. Unreasoned exceptions reward access. The balanced reading: **flexibility within the law, never around it**.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

4 Pitfalls and variations

The mistakes that cost marks here, the claims never to make, and how the answer changes when the question changes.

4.1 Six pitfalls, each with its correction

Misreading "his daughter"

~~The DM protected his own daughter's tutor.~~

The Hindi version names the PA's daughter.

Uncritical praise

~~The DM showed exemplary empathy for his PA.~~

The need deserves recognition; the act needs scrutiny for fairness and authority.

Dismissing the need

~~A learning disability is a private matter.~~

It is recognised in law; the state owes support.

Assuming the breach

~~The teacher has violated Section 28.~~

Only if he teaches elementary classes; otherwise his service rules decide.

Rules without flexibility

~~Rules should never admit compassion.~~

Lawful discretion and published hardship provisions serve the vulnerable with equality.

Inventing facts

~~The decision bypassed every file.~~

Say what must be examined; do not assert what the question omits.

4.2 Never write these

- "The DM stopped the transfer for his own daughter."
  The official Hindi version identifies the PA's daughter.
- "The DM's act is corruption under the Prevention of Corruption Act."
  The facts do not establish an offence; call it a risk of favouritism and a lapse in impartiality.
- "The RPwD Act recognises 7 disabilities."
  It lists 21 specified disabilities; the 1995 Act had 7.
- "Learning disability is a form of mental illness."
  The RPwD Act lists specific learning disabilities under intellectual disability, separate from mental illness.
- "The 2018 DoPT exemption allows stopping a tutor's transfer."
  It concerns a certified caregiver's own transfer, subject to administrative constraints.

4.3 If the question changes

If it asks	The structure becomes	What must change
What should the DM do?	Options with merits and demerits, then the chosen course	Record, refer to the competent authority, support the child.
The child is **the DM's** rather than the PA's	A direct personal conflict of interest	Disclose the interest, step away from the decision, let the competent authority apply the policy; arrange the child's support lawfully.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

If it asks	The structure becomes	What must change
The same case as a **20-mark case study**	Stakeholders, ethical issues, options, course of action	Add the PA's conduct as a public employee and the teacher's tuition as separate issues.
Conflict of interest only	Define, actual versus potential, resolution	Locate the stake with the PA; the DM's duty is impartiality.

5 The model answer

One model answer, written to the 150-word limit, in the form this question calls for: aspects of empathy, aspects of compliance, then their reconciliation. The introduction covers the whole question; the conclusion settles its demand.

Model answer **Two aspects, then compassion through fair procedure** **152 words**

Empathy humanises administration; compliance protects equality. Stopping a transfer at the PA's request tests whether compassion is exercised fairly.

Aspects of empathy: The PA's daughter has a diagnosed learning disability; the RPwD Act expressly recognises specific learning disabilities. Losing a familiar tutor may disrupt her progress; this deserves concern.

Aspects of compliance: A transfer cannot be halted merely because the requester works beside the DM. It must rest on the applicable policy, the DM's competence, recorded reasons and fairness to other teachers and pupils; otherwise it signals privileged access. Private tuition is barred by RTE Act Section 28 for elementary teachers; otherwise service rules govern.

Reconciliation: Record the request, seek an independent, reasoned policy decision, and secure the child's support through her school under RPwD Act Sections 16 and 17, whatever the outcome.

Empathy should inform lawful discretion, not replace it: compassion is fair only when anyone similarly placed could receive it.

DEMAND
Both aspects applied to the facts, then reconciled

HIDDEN DEMAND
Empathy routed through a subordinate's access becomes favouritism; meet the need through rules

STRUCTURE
Empathy, compliance (larger), then reconciliation

BALANCE
Introduction 19 words, conclusion 19 words; 152 words in all

Why it works: the introduction names compassion and fairness together and the turn between them; the empathy block takes the PA's daughter's need seriously; the compliance block states what a lawful decision must rest on (policy, competence, recorded reasons, fairness) without asserting facts the question omits, and treats the tuition conditionally, as the law requires; the reconciliation offers an independently decided outcome and lawful support for the child; the conclusion answers "empathy versus compliance" with a principle, not a verdict on the officer.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

6 Other ways to write it

The model answer above remains the answer. These outlines show how a different, equally valid answer could be built, and when each choice works.

Approach	How it is built	When it works
Two-column table	Empathy and compliance side by side, four rows each; reconciliation in two lines below.	When you write tables quickly.
Stakeholder-led	The PA and his daughter, the DM, the schoolteacher, teachers affected by transfers, pupils at the intended posting, the competent authority, the public: each one's legitimate interests and possible harms.	When you want to show the cost to unseen people.
Lens-led	Care ethics for empathy; Kant's universality and Rawls's fairness for rules; then the resolution.	When you want philosophical depth.
Test-led	Three tests (whose stake, would a family without access get the same, is there a lawful channel), each applied to the case.	When you want a crisp, original frame.

7 Quick recall and Prelims crossover

Facts for rapid revision and Prelims.

1. **RTE Act, Section 28**: no teacher shall engage in private tuition or private teaching activity (teachers covered by the Act).
2. **Farooq Ahmed v. UT of J&K** (31 March 2021): Section 28 ban valid for elementary teachers; higher classes under conduct rules.
3. **RTE Act, Section 24(1)(d)**: teachers assess each child's learning ability and supplement instruction.
4. **RPwD Act, 2016**: **21** specified disabilities.
5. **Specific learning disabilities**: dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, developmental aphasia.
6. **RPwD Section 16**: early detection of specific learning disabilities; **Section 17**: exam accommodations, resource centres.
7. **AIS (Conduct) Rules, 1968**: Rules 3(1A) and 3(2B) inserted in **2014**.
8. **Rule 3(2B)(v)**: declare private interests; resolve conflicts in the public interest.
9. **Rule 3(2B)(viii)**: choices and decisions on merit alone.
10. **Rule 3(3)**: oral directions from superiors to be confirmed in writing.
11. **Nolan principles**: seven, set out in **1995**.
12. **2nd ARC, 4th Report**: Ethics in Governance, **January 2007**.
13. **T.S.R. Subramanian** (31 October 2013): Civil Services Boards, fixed tenure, oral instructions on record.
14. **Gobardhan Lal** (2004): transfer is an incident of service; courts intervene for mala fides or statutory breach.
15. **DoPT OM, 8 October 2018**: caregivers of dependants with certified benchmark disabilities may be considered for exemption from routine transfer.
16. **CCS (Conduct) Rules, Rule 15**: restricts private trade or employment by central government servants; state teachers follow state rules.

On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

THE ONE SENTENCE TO CARRY OUT OF THIS DOCUMENT

Empathy notices the particular need; fair administration answers it through criteria open to all. Compassion becomes favouritism when access takes the place of a rule.

8 Write it yourself

Write the answer in 150 words without looking back, then check it against each line below.

	Check	Yes / No
1	Have I identified the child correctly as the **PA's daughter**?	
2	Is the child's **need taken seriously**, with the RPwD Act?	
3	Have I located the **PA's personal stake** and tested the DM's decision for favouritism and impartiality, without inventing a personal conflict for the DM?	
4	Is the **private tuition** addressed, with Section 28's dependence on the teacher's level?	
5	Are **authority, other teachers and pupils** weighed as risks, not invented facts?	
6	Is there a **reconciliation** (record, competent authority, lawful support), and a conclusion of about the introduction's length?	
7	Is it **150 words or a little over**, with no claim from section 4.2?	

Sources

- UPSC, Civil Services (Main) Examination 2026, General Studies Paper IV, bilingual question paper, Question 6(a), printed page 4 (the Hindi version identifies the Personal Assistant's daughter).
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- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, Sections 16 and 17, and the Schedule.
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- Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Fourth Report, "Ethics in Governance", January 2007.
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On the request of his Personal Assistant (PA), the District Magistrate (DM) stops the transfer of a schoolteacher who takes private tuition for his daughter diagnosed with learning disability. In this context, discuss the aspects of empathy versus compliance with rules.

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Guranchal Ma'am
Founder, UPSC Gurus

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