

## Expenses Policy

This policy (and the procedure outlined within) applies across all partner schools in the Stephen Sutton Multi-Academy Trust (SSMAT). It is available on the SSMAT website and is accessible from our schools' websites.

### **POLICY APPROVAL and REVIEW**

Review date: **Oct '20**

Approval needed by: **Finance, Audit and Risk Committee**

Adopted: **April '18**

Next review date: **Apr. '22**

## **1. Introduction / Overview**

- 1.1 This policy provides a framework for a fair and consistent approach to the payment of expenses throughout Stephen Sutton Multi-Academy Trust (SSMAT), such that the Trust complies with its legal and tax-related obligations.
- 1.2 The policy applies to governors, directors, trustees, members of committees, full and part-time members of staff, agency staff working for the Trust, other temporary staff, and volunteers.
- 1.3 The claims procedure in place ensures that the Trust manages this aspect of its financial transactions with due diligence. The policy and procedure are mandatory for all staff and other people associated with the Trust, as listed above. Guidance is provided regarding claiming reimbursement for travel, subsistence or other expenses incurred in connection with Trust business.
- 1.4 There are situations where an employee may be entitled to (non-financial) benefits, in addition to their salary and this policy sets out the relevant provisions in this regard.

## **2. Principles**

- 2.1 The following key principles are applied consistently throughout the Trust:
  - colleagues are reimbursed on a timely basis for all reasonable expenses incurred wholly, necessarily and exclusively, in the course of the Trust's business; and
  - colleagues do not gain any personal financial benefit through their employment with the Trust, other than through their agreed salary. [Any breach of this principle may lead to disciplinary action].
- 2.2 In addition to the requirement that the Trust has a rigorous, effective and transparent policy in place for the payment of expenses, it is also important that no misleading or unfortunate impression is created in the application of this policy. Accordingly, the Internal auditors carry out periodic reviews of the application of this policy

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 3.1 The Executive Headteacher of the Trust is the Accounting Officer and is therefore accountable to Parliament for the 'regularity compliance' of the Trust, i.e. ensuring that public funds are used for their intended purpose. The Executive Headteacher is therefore responsible for the application of this policy and is responsible for delegation of authoritative responsibility in respect of this policy

#### **4. Authorisation, Claim and Payment Procedures**

- 4.1 Colleagues claim for personal expenditure (mileage, subsistence etc.) using a 'Travel and Expenses Claim Form'. This form is not used to reclaim the costs of equipment, which should be ordered using the requisition / purchase ordering system and paid by the school's finance staff, in relation to an invoice.
- 4.2 Expenses require prior authorization, in order that they may be paid. Senior / Finance staff (with delegated authority, as determined by the Executive Headteacher) approve claims relating to school staff / governors. The Business Manager authorises all claims. Claims that are not authorised in compliance with these procedures are not be processed and are returned unpaid.
- 4.3 Supporting documentation (e.g. receipts, proof of stay, and other relevant information) must be attached to the Travel and Expenses Claim Form.
- 4.4 Payment is normally made through payroll.
- 4.5 If there is reason to believe that a colleague has attempted to submit a false claim, then this is treated as a serious offence that may lead to disciplinary action and a referral to the police.

#### **5. Travel Claims**

- 5.1 Colleagues must seek prior authority to use their own private car on Trust business. They should ensure that their insurance cover extends to business use. As car insurance cover is not provided for colleagues using their own vehicles, staff are required to confirm that they have taken out personal car insurance, with an appropriate extension to cover use in connection with school business. No tax or National Insurance liability arises in respect of mileage claimed for the use of an employee's own car, under the above rules, and details need not be reported in personal tax returns.
- 5.2 Before travelling, colleagues should compare standard class public transport costs, and, if cheaper and practical, should opt for train, bus or car share (when making the same journey as other colleagues). For all rail journeys, staff travel standard class. [Staff may, of course, choose to travel first class public transport if they wish, but they will only be reimbursed for the cost of standard class travel.] The school is only liable for the costs relating to the colleague's authorized travel - any accompanying persons are responsible for their own costs.
- 5.3 The Trust policy is to reimburse all mileage at 45p per mile. This is reviewed every two years. The mileage rate payable includes an element to defray the cost of insurance, as well as vehicle depreciation, fuel etc.
- 5.4 Mileage claims are paid on the basis of journeys to the destination that start and end at school. If travelling directly from/to home, the normal mileage that would

have been travelled from/to home to school is deducted from the total mileage claim for the journey.

- 5.5 Where a hire vehicle is used for Trust business, the cost of the fuel should be entered on the Travel and Expenses Claim Form (under travel), unless the vehicle has been fueled by a colleague who has a school credit card.
- 5.6 For all journeys, full details, including the date, reason for the journey, starting point and Destination, should be given on the Travel and Expenses Claim Form. Where staff use public transport, reimbursement is on a receipts basis, provided the expenses are reasonable.
- 5.7 Parking costs incurred in the course of Trust business travel may be claimed via the petty cash system or the expenses system.
- 5.8 Under no circumstances are parking or speeding fines reimbursed.

## 6. Subsistence Allowances

- 6.1 Where staff travel on school business, and an overnight stay is necessary, an overnight subsistence allowance may be claimed. The school will reimburse the reasonable costs of accommodation, food and drink, when supported by receipts.
- 6.2 The school will only bear the cost of accommodation required for business purposes and will not meet the costs of any extensions to a stay for personal reasons, or for accommodation provided to a spouse, or other family members.
- 6.3 Subsistence covers accommodation, food and drink, where an overnight stay is involved, up to the limits shown below. Any other expenses incurred in the course of a stay (that are not directly related to Trust business, with explicit authorisation) should be deducted from any bills submitted for reimbursement. Claims must reflect the actual costs incurred, up to maximum limits of:

Overnight Stay (including Breakfast)	£80
Lunch	£7.50
Dinner	£15

## 7. Entertaining

- 7.1 The general principle regarding the reimbursement of 'entertainment expenditure' is that colleagues are reimbursed reasonable entertaining costs for themselves and guests, where: guests are present for a professional purpose; their presence is

considered to be beneficial to the school; and where prior approval has been granted by the Executive Headteacher. Where there is any doubt about the suitability and/or proportionality of the 'entertainment expenses' that may be incurred, then the Head of School should consult the Executive Headteacher for guidance.

- 7.2 Expenses for entertaining are only reimbursed for staff who have a valid (authorised) reason for being present. Appropriate costs for entertaining are considered to be:

Lunch	£15
Dinner	£25

- 7.3 No reimbursement of entertaining expenses is made unless the above guidelines are followed and under no circumstances will the school contribute to the cost of entertaining, when only members of staff are involved. The following information should be included on/with expense claim forms for 'entertaining' expenditure:

- names of attendees
- the organization(s) they represent
- the purpose of the entertainment (e.g. negotiation of contract)
- appropriate receipts.

## **8. Residential Trips and Visits with Students (e.g. Ski Trips, Cultural Trips, Foreign Exchange Visits)**

- 8.1 Modest additional expenses incurred on a residential visit (e.g. for tea, coffee, etc.) should be included in the cost of the trip so that the trip leader has funds on which to draw.
- 8.2 For exchange visits, when a colleague stays with a foreign family, or at the home of a member of staff employed by the partner school, then up to £20 may be spent on a gift. Again, this cost should be included in the costing of the trip.

## **9. School Journeys Undertaken in One Day**

- 9.1 In general, there is no subsistence entitlement for colleagues who attend events during the school day.
- 9.2 Where an authorised meeting, or other event, takes place during the weekend or school holiday period, then a claim (with receipts) may be submitted for lunch and dinner, up to the amounts shown in 6.2. Furthermore, a claim of up to £10 (no receipts required) may be submitted for other expenses (tea / coffee, etc.).

- 9.3 For non-residential supervised trips and visits (involving students), a small amount (up to £10 per member of staff) may be included in the costings to pay for staff refreshments through the day.

## **10. Telephone Calls and IT-Related Expenses**

- 10.1 Where circumstances occur such that colleagues need to make a business call on their home or mobile telephone, they need to attach the appropriate bill to the Travel and Expenses Claim Form, with the relevant business calls highlighted, so that reimbursement can be made for these calls. 'Top up cards' for Pay as you Go mobile phone services will not be provided, as HM Revenue and Customs rules cannot be met.
- 10.2 Similarly, colleagues are not reimbursed for the business use of home broadband / internet connections. Where it is an absolute necessity for staff to work from home, this can be done using a dedicated 3G or 4G internet dongle, following approval by the Head of School or Business Manager.

## **11. Interview Expenses**

- 11.1 Expenses incurred by the successful candidate (and only the successful candidate) are reimbursed in their first month's salary, unless requested otherwise.
- 11.2 For candidates travelling from abroad, travel expenses are only paid from the first point of arrival in England. Mileage is claimable at 45p per mile.
- 11.3 As required, bed and breakfast accommodation is claimable (up to a maximum limit of £80).

## **12. Staff Benefits**

- 12.1 There are certain staff benefits, which have been agreed by the Trust Board, namely:
- Free breakfast and/or lunch for working on in-service training days, when the school is closed to students;
  - Free tea and coffee in the staff room;
  - Free buffet for staff working after school hours on parents' consultation evenings.

## **13. Cash Advances**

- 13.1 Colleagues who are about to do extended work and/or or to embark on extended travel, on behalf of the Trust, and who will incur expenditure while on the trip, or

doing business for the Trust, may claim a 'cash advance', with the authorization of the Head of School or Business Manager.

13.2 Requests for cash advances should be made well in advance of the work or travel (usually five working days), to allow time for the arrangements to be made for payment before the travel/work date. Claimants must state:

- that it is a 'cash advance' request;
- how much is required;
- the purpose for which this cash is required; and
- the planned dates of travel/work.

13.3 The requirements for authorising a cash advance are the same as those for other expenses claims. Within 21 days of returning from the travel, or completing the work, claimants must complete a Travel and Expenses Claim Form (with receipts etc.), documenting how the cash was spent, and return it to the Finance Office. Any cash not spent / accounted for must be returned.

#### **14. Spectacles for Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Users**

14.1 Members of staff who are required to operate Display Screen Equipment, in order to carry out their contractual duties, receive appropriate training. In some circumstances, the Trust may also pay an amount towards the cost of an eye test and the provision of spectacles.

14.2 In order to make a claim, the claimant must obtain a certificate from the Trust's nominated Occupational Health Service, specifying the need. In these circumstances, the Trust will cover any costs associated with the test and may make a payment of up to £75 towards the cost of frames or lenses, in so far as their requirement relates to the use of Display Screen Equipment. A payment of this type to the same colleague will not generally be made more frequently than once every two years. Claims must be authorised by the appropriate line manager and should be made using the Travel and Expenses Claim Form.

#### **15. Professional Subscriptions and Membership of Professional Bodies**

15.1 Generally, personal professional subscriptions are the personal responsibility of individual members of staff. Reimbursement is normally not provided for such costs, although individual staff members may be able to claim tax relief, either through their tax code or on their own tax self-assessment returns.