

Travel, Expenses and Governor Allowances Policy Trust Policy

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<i>Trust/school-mandatory policies</i>	Finance and Procurement Policy
<i>Optional school policies</i>	
<i>External</i>	The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013

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Please note this list may be updated by the responsible officer when change arises in the organisation, without the need for committee meeting review/approval.

1 Policy Statement

The Board of Trustees of Athena-GEP (the “trust”), wish to reimburse staff for all necessary travel and other expenses incurred while engaged on authorised trust business (except normal day to day travel between home and an employee’s designated place of work). This policy outlines the trust’s approach to making such reimbursement.

2 Expectations of Employees

It is the responsibility of the employee to obtain pre-authorisation for any expenditure with their line manager (or the appropriate budget holder).

This policy outlines levels of expenditure that are deemed appropriate and which may only be varied in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), or the Headteacher of the school at which the employee is usually based. Any variation to the policy that applies to a Headteacher or the CFO must be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and any variation applying to the CEO must be agreed with the Chair of Trustees.

The level of reimbursement allowed will be sufficient to provide a standard and quality which adequately meets the needs of staff in comfort and acceptability for the effective conduct of Trust business.

All staff should complete travel and expenses claim forms, obtain a signature from their line manager (or the relevant budget holder) and submit the authorised form to their local school finance department within four weeks of incurring an expense. Where employees incur expenses on an ongoing basis (e.g. claims for regular travel to a location other than their usual place of work), claims should be submitted monthly. Claims which are submitted later than this will be processed at the discretion of the relevant School Business Manager (SBM), or Finance Manager for central staff.

Claims will be paid directly into an employee’s bank account, generally within four weeks of submitting an authorised claim.

It is the employee’s responsibility to ensure that ‘best value’ is obtained, and that all expenses incurred are cost-effective, reasonable and necessary in carrying out trust business. Any abuse by staff may result in disciplinary action and is likely to be treated as gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

Schools may, if appropriate to local circumstance and at the discretion of the Headteacher, apply additional controls or requirements for pre-approval over and above those stated in this document.

Employees are expected to provide evidence to support all claims for expenditure, usually in the form of a valid VAT receipt detailing the item purchased and the cost and date of the transaction. Bank or credit card statements will not usually be accepted as evidence of expenditure, though may be considered by the relevant SBM if there is a valid reason why it was not possible to obtain a receipt.

3 Staff travel

Staff should seek to minimise costs wherever possible, for example by using the cheapest mode of travel, sharing lifts etc. Journeys between an employee’s home and normal place of work cannot be claimed, regardless of the mode of transport.

a) Travelling by Car

Individuals using their own car, bicycle or motorcycle for business travel, can reclaim expenses based on the current HMRC mileage allowances.

Individuals are responsible for ensuring that their vehicle is adequately insured for business use, is maintained in a roadworthy state, that they hold a current MOT certificate and driving license, and (in the case of bicycles / motorcycles) that appropriate safety equipment is worn.

Alternatively, for journeys over 200 miles, employees are able to claim the cost of a modest hire car and fuel costs, provided that this has been agreed in advance with their line manager (or the relevant budget holder).

Necessary toll and parking charges will be reimbursed provided receipts are attached to the claim.

Fines and penalties are the sole responsibility of the employee.

b) Travelling by Taxi

Taxis should only be used when public transport is unavailable or would greatly increase journey time. A receipt should be obtained for submission with an expenses claim form.

c) Travelling by Train

Only standard class rail tickets will be reimbursed (unless first class is less expensive) and these should be booked in advance where possible. Claims must be supported with receipts.

d) Travelling by Plane

Other than as part of an organised school trip, it is envisaged that air travel will only be necessary in exceptional circumstances, and such travel must be agreed with the CFO in advance. Only economy fares will be acceptable (unless alternatives are cheaper) regardless of the flight time or distance.

4 Subsistence

Overnight accommodation may be provided where an employee is working for consecutive days at a location away from home that would result in a planned commute of over 2 hours each way. Overnight accommodation should be approved in advance by the Headteacher, and will be reimbursed at cost, up to the following limits:

- Outside London – £90 per night
- London – £130 per night

Alternatively, where an employee chooses to stay with relatives rather than take up hotel accommodation, an allowance of £30 per night will be paid (but no other costs for accommodation or breakfast will be allowable).

Where staff have stayed in accommodation overnight, meals may be claimed for up to the following values (including non-alcoholic drinks only), where they are not included in accommodation rates or provided at events:

- £6 a day for breakfast
- £10 a day for lunch
- £15 a day for an evening meal (where return to home/work is beyond 8.30 pm)

All claims must be supported by receipts.

5 Communications

Business related telephone calls may be reimbursed, upon receipt of a bill and reasonable justification for the cost incurred. Where possible, the school's telephone system should always be used in preference to a personal phone, and the justification must include an explanation of why use of the school system was not possible.

Telephone line rental or personal call charges are not reimbursable.

6 Working from Home

Staff are able to reclaim expenses incurred as a result of working from home, where the expenses are incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily by employees in the performance of the duties of their employment.

This can include the actual cost of telephone calls (supported by an itemised bill as per Section 5), but does not include the costs of internet connections or any contractual charges for mobile phones or landlines. IT peripherals should not be claimed (requests for additional IT equipment should instead be submitted to the IT budget holder for your school / business unit). Purchasing procedures must be followed, including obtaining line manager / budget holder authorisation prior to the expenditure being incurred.

7 Eye Tests

Employees who use display screen equipment (DSE) daily, for more than an hour at a time, are deemed to be 'DSE users'. DSE users are entitled to an eyesight test either at regular intervals (usually every two years), or if they experience visual difficulties which could be related to DSE use.

Employees should speak with their SBM (or, in the case of the central team, the HR Manager) to request an eye test. They will usually be given a voucher which will entitle them to an eye test at an optician of the trust's choice; alternatively, the SBM may agree to reimburse up to £15 towards the cost of an eye test arranged by the employee.

The trust will reimburse up to £30 towards the cost of glasses where these are prescribed specifically for use with DSE. For avoidance of doubt, glasses for general distance or reading used will not be funded by GEP, as these are considered as necessary for everyday use.

8 Other Expenses

Employees are discouraged from purchasing stationery, printer consumables, books and other sundry items as these can usually be sourced cheaper via the trust. Where it is possible to achieve best value through staff purchasing directly, or in circumstances where this is the only practical method of purchase, schools will be able to reimburse staff for such expenditure.

Employees are responsible for ensuring that expenditure is agreed with the relevant budget holder and approved by the appropriate finance department before expense is incurred; the trust cannot guarantee that reimbursement will be made unless such pre-approval is in place.

9 Candidates Attending Interview

Travel and subsistence expenses for candidates attending interview will not normally be reimbursed, except in exceptional circumstances and with the prior agreement of the relevant school Headteacher.

10 Governors, Trustees and Members

The trust is fortunate to be supported by a large number of volunteers, including governors, trustees and members. The trust is unable to make payments to governors, trustees and members in the form of attendance allowance or reimbursement of loss of earnings, and does not expect individuals to use their positions for financial gain. However, the trust appreciates the support offered by volunteers and seeks to ensure that individuals are not dissuaded from volunteering for governance roles due to their financial circumstances.

Although the trust is a Multi-Academy Trust and is not bound by regulations relating to Maintained Schools, its approach to meeting the costs of governors, trustees and members is in line with The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013. These regulations give Governing Bodies the discretion to pay allowances from the school's annual budget allocation to Governors for certain expenses which they incur in carrying out their duties. The trustees believe that paying governors and trustees allowances, in specific categories as set out below, is important in ensuring equality of opportunity to serve as governors for all members of the community and so is an appropriate use of school funds. The specific items allowable reflect this objective.

Governors, trustees and members within the trust may claim certain expenses, providing the expenditure is incurred in carrying out their duties as a governors, trustees and member within the trust, and that it is agreed by the CFO (for trustees and members) or the relevant SBM (for governors) that they are justified before any reimbursable costs are incurred.

Trustees / governors will be able to claim for the following, where genuinely necessary as considered on a case-by-case basis:

- Childcare or baby-sitting allowances (excluding payments to a current/former spouse or partner);
- Cost of care arrangements for an elderly or dependent relative (excluding payments to a current/former spouse or partner);
- The extra costs they incur in performing their duties either because they have special needs or because English is not their first language;
- The cost of travel relating only to travel to meetings/training courses in line with the specified rates for school personnel;
- Travel and subsistence costs associated with attending national meetings or training events, payable at the applicable current rates used by staff, unless these costs can be claimed from any other source;
- Telephone charges, photocopying, stationery, postage etc in exceptional circumstances where it is not possible for these items to be completed in / supplied by the school directly;
- Any other justifiable expenses.

The trustees acknowledge that:

- Governors may not be paid attendance allowance;
- Governors may not be reimbursed for loss of earnings.

Trustees and governors will be able to claim for reasonable expenses incurred as a response to an emergency situation even if not agreed in advance; in this case the CFO or relevant SBM will approve retrospectively.

Governors wishing to make claims under these arrangements, once prior approval has been sought, should complete a claims form (obtainable from the finance department of any member school), attaching receipts where possible, and return it to the school within two weeks of the date when the allowances were incurred.

Claims will be subject to independent audit and may be investigated by the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee if they appear excessive or inconsistent.

11 Other volunteers

Other volunteers (e.g. school helpers) may claim expenses in line with those allowable to employees provided that such expenditure is agreed in advance with the relevant SBM.