

EQUITAS ACADEMIES TRUST



EQUITAS
— ACADEMIES TRUST —

EXPENSES, GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

Review Date: June 2022

To be Reviewed: June 2024

Agreed: F&GP Committee

Policy Lead: Director of Finance (CFO)

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

1	Policy Statement	3
2	Roles and Responsibilities	3
3	Monitoring and Review	4
4	Core Procedures	4
5	Travel Expenses	6
6	Subsistence Expenses	9
7	Taxable Travel Expenses	10
8	Policy Statement relating to Gifts & Hospitality	11
9	Definition and Scope	11
10	Giving and Accepting Gifts & Favours	12
11	Giving and Accepting Hospitality & Entertainment	13
12	Gifts and Hospitality Register	14
13	Equitas Academies Trust Car Allowance Claim Form	15

EXPENSES, GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

1. Policy Statement

This policy provides details of the principles, rules and procedures relating to travel, accommodation, subsistence, entertainment, hospitality, gifts and other expense claims for all employees of the Trust.

The Academy Trust Handbook states that academy trusts must ensure that:

- i. spending has been for the purpose intended and there is probity in the use of public funds.
- ii. spending decisions represent value for money.

The following must be applied irrespective of the type of expense involved:

- i. staff must be reimbursed only for expenses which they actually and necessarily incur in the course of business.
- ii. only costs which are necessary and additional to normal daily expenditure will be reimbursed.
- iii. only actual cost will be reimbursed (subject to the limits set out in this Policy).
- iv. all claims for expenses must be supported by a receipt, invoice or other appropriate documentation.
- v. reimbursement must be managed by exception rather than by reference to entitlements – i.e. policies should not cover every eventuality (which risk setting precedents that are later difficult to address) but require explanations of out of policy actions for the circumstance of a particular claim.
- vi. claims must include a clear business reason where the cost of travel exceeds that of standard class and the comparable standard class cost must be evidenced within the claim.
- vii. line managers must oversee the frequency of travel and associated expenses of their staff.

1.4 In any cases of doubt as to how the rules apply in a particular case, advice should be obtained from the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) before expenditure is incurred. Any exceptions to the rules set out in this Policy must be agreed in writing with the CFO in advance of the claim. Otherwise any incurred expenses will not be reimbursed.

1.5 Staff will be reimbursed for expenditure wholly and necessarily incurred on travel and subsistence in the course of business. Staff are responsible for ensuring that no unnecessary costs are incurred and that the Trust receives value for money.

1.6 Expenses and travel claims for Trustees, members of committees or local governing bodies and consultants must follow the rules and principles set out in the Trust Board expenses Policy.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Trust to establish a policy and core procedures for travel, accommodation, subsistence, entertainment, hospitality, gifts and other expense claims and to monitor the effects of the procedure.

2.2 It is the responsibility of the CFO to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently and using fair criteria, in particular that the Trust's equal opportunities policies are observed. The CFO is also

Equitas Academies Trust

responsible for ensuring that staff know the details of the policy as appropriate.

2.3 It is the responsibility of all staff to familiarise themselves, and comply with this Policy and core procedures in accordance with relevant professional standards. Some staff may be responsible for implementing the policy as part of their overall responsibilities (eg heads of department and managers).

3. Monitoring and Review

3.1 Senior leaders will report on the operation of the policy to the CFO as appropriate.

3.2 The CFO will report to the Finance & General Purpose Committee on any relevant aspects of the working of the policy as appropriate.

3.3 The policy will be reviewed every two years.

4. Core Procedures

4.1 The Trust is responsible for meeting the cost of travel by its staff on business. Travelling means necessary travel for the purpose of business, including:

- i. attendance at meetings in pursuit of business;
- ii. attendance at training courses; and
- iii. journeys made on recall to duty from annual leave.

4.2 Travelling does not include:

- i. travel between a person's home and normal place of work;
- ii. travelling between home and a second work place; and
- iii. return home at weekends from a detached duty location.

4.3 Staff are responsible for the cost of their daily travel between their home and their normal place of work. If reimbursement of home to office travel expenses has been agreed then this is classed as a taxable benefit and must be settled via the payroll in order that PAYE and National Insurance tax rules may be adhered to.

4.4 It is Government policy and therefore the Trust's preference that, wherever possible, public transport should be used in order to reduce congestion and pollution. Nonetheless, it is still the responsibility of line managers to ensure that their staff use the most efficient and economical means of travel, taking into account the cost of travel, subsistence and savings in staff time. More expensive means of travel may only be authorised when justified as a benefit to the Trust, or to meet the needs of staff with disabilities.

4.5 Under the policy, reimbursement of expenses claimed is on a receipted actual basis. Credit card slips alone are not a substitute or replacement for the full receipt. If a credit card slip is attached to the claim form without the associated receipt, the CFO retains the right to return and refuse to pay the claim.

4.6 Actual accommodation costs above the allowance limits will be reimbursed where, exceptionally, it can be demonstrated that they could not be contained within the published limit. In these circumstances staff will be required to annotate their claim that no suitable accommodation was available within the allowance limit.

4.7 Prior to undertaking any business travel, authorisation must be sought from the relevant line manager. The claimant's line manager or designated alternate must, in all cases, approve the claim. The expectation is that a more senior grade within the claimant's Department/Academy will approve

Equitas Academies Trust

the claim. Where this is not possible alternative arrangements will be put in place subject to the CFO's prior agreement. Claims may be rejected (and payment delayed) if they are not properly authorised.

4.8 The act of approval certifies that claims are accurate, reasonable and ready to process. The CFO accepts no liability for inaccurate claims but will 'spot check' claims on the basis of a statistical sample. Where the CFO finds inaccuracies, missing receipts etc., the claim may be rejected for correction/completion before it is paid. Auditors (Internal, External and HM Revenue & Customs) will have access to these records as and when required.

4.9 Those who drive on Trust business have a responsibility to do so safely and without risk to themselves, other road users or the public. To meet that duty, employees authorised to drive on official duty must demonstrate their competence.

4.10 Employees who drive their own vehicle for work must:

- i. be legally qualified to drive the vehicle on public roads within the UK; and
- ii. Understand their responsibility to ensure that they have a valid driving licence, the vehicle has a valid MOT certificate as appropriate and it is properly insured for appropriate business use, including if applicable for passengers and business equipment.

4.11 Expenses trips

At all times staff must keep in mind that the Trust is responsible for public funds and any expenses incurred are a direct expense to the taxpayer. Therefore, all expenses, entertainment and related expenditure should be kept to a minimum.

Expenses which do not benefit the Trust or which are of a purely personal nature will not be reimbursed. Expenses will only be paid if they are 'wholly and necessarily for the benefit of the business', rather than the individual.

Staff should not make a profit from expenses, neither should they be out of pocket from undertaking Trust business.

The trust is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and therefore business travel should only be taken if essential, and when there is no other reasonable option such as video conferencing or by telephone.

4.12 Claims

Reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses must be made using the claim form attached as an appendix. Claims should be made within one month of the date that the expenditure is incurred. Any claims submitted after three months may be declined for payment and will, in all cases, require an explanation for the delay in submission.

Claimants must keep receipts (or invoices, train tickets, etc.) if they intend to claim, as without them claims may be refused. In the event that a receipt is mislaid or where it has not been possible to obtain a receipt, the claimant must ensure that they clearly state the reason for absence of a receipt within the claim, as this will ensure payment isn't delayed. Payments for claims without receipts may be taxed at source as per HMRC guidelines.

Responsibility for accuracy of claims rests with the claimant and line management. The role of the CFO and Finance Department is to process claims in accordance with the rules and provide management information.

Equitas Academies Trust

4.13 Corporate cards – for travel and subsistence use

Corporate cards may be used for some travel and subsistence expenditure, subject to our Corporate Card Policy.

5. Travel Expenses

5.1 Staff must make use of travel facilities that offer best value for money, for example, timed trains, cheap day returns, booking single tickets where these are more cost effective and/or season tickets. Where staff propose to drive then it may be suitable to use hire cars for journeys over 100 miles. Advice should be sought from the CFO well in advance.

5.2 Where travel arrangements are outside the policies set out below, line manager approval must be obtained before travel.

5.3 Rail Travel

Travel by rail must be standard class, with pre-booked tickets to travel on specific (set time) trains. Open tickets are usually significantly more expensive and may only be purchased if it is difficult to know what time a meeting will finish, which must be justified and evidenced within the claim. In this case a set time ticket should still be purchased for the outward journey where this would reduce the overall cost.

Our approach to travel costs is based on value for money and not on the class of travel. We are aware that some staff travel regularly as part of their work and on long journeys use the time to work, accessing the train's wireless network.

If staff wish to work on the train, first class rail travel may be booked if the first class ticket cost is no more expensive than a standard class ticket for the same journey (comparing against advanced or off-peak depending on time and availability). You should provide a screenshot of the booking screen or other documentation to verify the price comparison; we will be unable to reimburse any costs without this.

If you choose to travel first class and the ticket price is higher than a standard class ticket for the same journey, then we will reimburse an amount equal to the standard class ticket price (comparing against off-peak depending on time). You should provide a screenshot of the booking screen or other documentation to verify the price comparison; we will be unable to reimburse any costs without this.

5.4 Air Travel

Travel by air must be less expensive than travelling by other reasonable means of transport, or a justification given within the claim of why air travel has been used instead. Travel by air should only be used where it more cost effective taking in to account the whole costs in both monetary terms and staff time. For example where air travel means that an employee can travel to and from a business commitment in a day where they otherwise would not have been able to do so by other means of transport, accommodation costs and time have been saved. Travel by air must be economy class and with the lowest cost airline available from the nearest airport.

5.5 Taxi Travel

Use of taxis is not an entitlement and business journeys should, wherever possible, be made by public transport. Only in exceptional cases should taxis be used in London. Taxi fares may be claimed in the following circumstances:

i. where no suitable public transport is available;

Equitas Academies Trust

- ii. where travelling in an unknown locality;
- iii. where public transport is infrequent;
- v. where the saving in time is important;
- v. where the traveller has luggage/equipment/etc. with them that would make use of public transport unreasonable; and
- vi. where there are a number of employees attending the same location and the shared cost of a taxi is less expensive than other modes of transport.

When authorising the claim the line manager must ensure that these conditions are met and that the reason for the use of a taxi is explained within the claim.

Taxi journeys to and from home will not be reimbursed as it is part of the normal home to work and/or work to home travel. In exceptional circumstances (for example, reasonable adjustment cases, welfare reasons) reimbursement may be allowable, however, any such claims are likely to be a taxable benefit.

Taxi fares may also be reimbursed to or from home, to or from the office where alternative methods of public transport are not available, or the requirements of the office are such that a member of staff is performing official duties significantly outside normal working hours, or there are issues surrounding personal safety.

For a taxi journey not to be deemed taxable the following criteria must all be met:

- i. the employee is required to work later than usual;
- ii. the requirement is irregular;
- iii. by the time the employee ceases work either public transport has ceased or it would not be reasonable to expect the employee to use public transport; and
- iv. the transport is by taxi or similar road transport.

When staying at a hotel on business, taxi fares will only be reimbursed for business trips e.g. between the hotel and the temporary workplace or the station. Taxis for personal use will not be reimbursed.

5.6 Sea Travel

Travel by sea should only be used where there is not a reasonable, less expensive alternative, for example, travel to the Isle of Wight. Travel by sea should only be used where it is more cost effective taking in to account the whole costs in both monetary terms and staff time.

5.7 Overseas Trips and Visits

Staff will be reimbursed for travel and subsistence expenditure relating to overseas business trips and visits. The normal rules and principles within this policy apply and all claims must be supported by a receipt, invoice or other appropriate documentation. A supporting bank/credit card statement can be supplied by the member of staff to evidence the sterling (£) amount to be reimbursed. If this is not available the exchange rate on the day that the expenditure was incurred must be used to convert the claim amount to sterling. The following exchange rate website can be used <http://www.xe.com/currencytables/>.

Trustees, members of local governing bodies and consultants are prohibited from claiming expenses for any overseas trips or visits

5.8 Travel Insurance

Insurance cover for travel and personal injury is included within the RPA insurance policy.

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5.9 Hire Cars

Where the total journey exceeds 100 miles then hire cars may be suitable to be used.

5.10 Using a private vehicle for business travel

Payments may be made to allow staff to use their own vehicles under 100 miles provided there is a benefit to the Group and the mileage rate represents the most cost effective means of transport. Staff will only be reimbursed for expenses they actually and necessarily incur in the course of business travel using their own vehicle. Payment of mileage allowances may only be made for business travel as defined in 5.12. The allowance covers the full cost, inclusive of fuel, with a contribution to wear & tear and maintenance embedded within the approved HMRC rates.

In situations where staff choose to use (and this has been approved by their line manager) their own private vehicle for business travel in excess of 100 miles, then they will receive revised mileage allowances as defined in 5.12. Staff will only be reimbursed for expenses they actually and necessarily incur in the course of business travel using their own vehicle. The allowance covers the full cost, inclusive of fuel, with a contribution to wear & tear and maintenance embedded within the approved HMRC rates.

5.11 Mileage limits and allowances

Private Vehicle (for journeys under 100 miles)

Mileage allowances are paid for the actual distance necessarily travelled, in excess of the costs of the staff member's normal home to work return journey. The rates are as follows:

Transport Method	First 10,000 miles	Above 10,000 miles
Cars and vans	45p	25p
Motorcycles	24p	24p
Bikes	20p	20p

In addition there is a passenger supplement of 5p per passenger per business mile for carrying fellow employees in a car or van on journeys.

These rates are subject to review and may be varied without notice taking into consideration the prevailing HMRC statutory guidance.

Private Vehicle (for journeys over 100 miles where hire cars should be used)

Daily Rate at £28.00 per day

Mileage rate for petrol vehicles at 15p per mile

Mileage rate for diesel vehicles at 12p per mile

5.12 Motor Insurance

Mileage allowances will only be paid where staff hold an insurance policy which covers the use of the car in connection with the mileage allowance claimants' business.

It is the line manager's responsibility to verify the insurance status of the claimant. Any material changes to the claimant's insurance provision should be notified to the line manager. The COO will carry out periodic spot checks to ensure that these requirements are being observed.

The insurance arrangements relating to hire cars will be investigated should the need arise and

Equitas Academies Trust

provision will be put in place by the Trust.

5.13 Health and Safety

When opting to drive on business it is important to remember the following health and safety best practice:

- i. on long journeys you should ensure that you take a break of between 15 and 20 minutes every two hours;
- ii. you should ensure that you familiarise yourself with the controls of any hire car before setting off;
- iii. you should not use a mobile telephone whilst driving, switching it off to avoid the possibility of distraction.

5.14 Expenses for Those at Risk of Redundancy

The employee's place of work is responsible for meeting approved travel and subsistence costs including those in relation to costs associated with being at risk of redundancy and redeployment/trial periods. Such costs could include mileage and expenses relating to attendance at an interview or trial period at another workplace.

Travel and subsistence costs in relation to secondments between places of work within and outside the Trust will be covered by a secondment agreement and will normally be met by the receiving place of work during the period of secondment.

5.15 Travel Arrangements Outside Policy

Where travel arrangements, either rail or air, are outside policy, pre-approval is required. This approval should be given by the CFO.

6. Subsistence Expenses

6.1 Meals Whilst Away Overnight

Meal expenses may, with appropriate receipts, be claimed on an actual cost basis within the following limits:

Meal	Limit (including VAT)
Breakfast	£10 or the rate charged by the hotel the employee is staying in (capped at £15)
Dinner	£20

The limits can only be exceeded in exceptional circumstances with prior line manager approval (staff must evidence within their claim the exceptional circumstances and that prior approval has been obtained). Line managers must ensure that amounts claimed are reasonable under the circumstances. The CFO reserves the right to reduce or reject claims deemed unreasonable.

If staying away overnight, breakfast may be included as part of the hotel booking cost. The staff member who books the hotel must ensure that the cost is reasonable prior to booking.

The cost of drinks may only be reimbursed as part of the limits in the table above. There will be no reimbursement for the purchase of alcohol under any circumstances.

Service charges will only be reimbursed if contractual.

6.2 Overnight Expenses

Wherever possible hotel bookings should be made on the corporate card or paid on an invoice. Overnight expenses are paid where staff cannot reasonably be expected to make the return journey

Equitas Academies Trust

to and from a meeting or other detached duty workplace in the same day. Hotel accommodation is only expected to be used if the employee has to travel over 75 miles from home, or where it is more cost effective to stay overnight. Repayment of overnight accommodation is based on actual expenditure, exclusive of VAT, up to a ceiling of:

- i. London - £125.00;
- ii. Elsewhere in the UK - £75.00; and
- iii. the cost is based on the location of the hotel, not the meeting.

Wherever possible overnight accommodation should be booked directly through existing partner hotels offering discounted rates for staff or websites which allow preferential terms to be taken advantage of.

Bookings should only be made through a website or agent where a VAT receipt is available, unless it is still more cost effective to book accommodation without the VAT being reclaimed.

In exceptional cases, where the cost of overnight accommodation exceeds the limits on expenditure, you may claim your actual expenditure. Receipts, together with a note explaining why the limit was exceeded, should be included on your claim.

Where meals are claimed on an actual expenditure basis, and exceed the limits, receipts, together with evidence to support why the limit is exceeded, should be included on your claim. Failure to provide this will result in your claim being capped at the limit.

Accommodation provided within five miles of the workplace will qualify as a taxable benefit. Claims for reimbursement must be submitted via the payroll.

6.3 Accommodation Standards

The subsistence allowances adopted should ensure that all staff can stay in accommodation which meets the following minimum standards:

- i. a single en suite room (with shower and/or bath), television and tea and coffee making facilities;
- ii. space should be adequate and where necessary working facilities (e.g. a desk, internet connection, telephone) should be available;
- iii. personal security and emergency procedures should be adequate; and
- iv. the surrounding area should be safe.

6.4 Miscellaneous Expenses

Incidental expenses incurred, as part of travel – e.g. phone calls, tolls and parking fees – should be accompanied by a receipt wherever possible.

Under normal circumstances miscellaneous office expenses should be purchased under the Trusts standard procurement procedures, but may be claimed through the expenses procedure where it is not practical to do so.

6.5 Long term/permanent Detached Duty

Staff who are to be permanently transferred and have to move home as a result may be eligible for reimbursement of removal expenses. Each case is treated individually as the circumstances of different members of staff vary widely. The COO can advise on this issue. Long term ordinarily means periods in excess of two years (24 months).

7. Taxable Travel Expenses

7.1 If you can answer yes to any of the following questions you may be in receipt of a taxable benefit

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that could affect your personal tax position:

- i. are you claiming expenses for travelling from home to the office?
- ii. do you ever claim expenses for staying at, or close to your normal place of work?
- iii. are you on secondment from another department? If you are on secondment it is unlikely that a taxable benefit will arise if the duration of your secondment is less than 24 months. If the secondment is for more than two years or it is highly likely to be extended, taking it over the two-year threshold, then a taxable benefit may arise and may be retrospective for the whole period
- iv. do you regularly work in more than one location and claim expenses when travelling to the second workplace? Members of staff who regularly carry out the duties of their role at more than one location will be deemed to have two places of work for tax purposes
- v. the attendance has to be regular (although not specified by HMRC this will usually apply if the attendance at one site is at least 40% of availability).
- vi. the work at both locations has to involve the substantive duties of the role (visits to another location to attend a meeting or a seminar would not count but the act of logging on to the computer network would. Any expenses incurred in these cases would not be subject to tax).

7.2 If so please discuss your circumstances with the CFO.

POLICY STATEMENT RELATING TO GIFTS & HOSPITALITY

1. Equitas Academies Trust are committed to raising awareness amongst Trustee's and staff of their responsibility to be honest and act in good faith by not accepting or commissioning an advantage of any kind from those who do business with the Trust.

Trustee's and staff dealing with external organisations or individuals are encouraged to do so sympathetically, efficiently, promptly and without bias to avoid committing a criminal offence.

As part of the Trust's commitment to openness and transparency, an annually updated Gifts & Hospitality Register is to be maintained and made available for public inspection. The Register is designed to protect both local and individual Trust Board members from damaging allegations of corruption and possible punitive actions.

It will be a serious disciplinary offence for any individual to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward, hospitality or other advantage in their capacity as an employee or Trust Board member, which might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgment and integrity.

If an allegation is made it is for the individual to demonstrate that any such reward not been corruptly obtained.

2. DEFINITION AND SCOPE

It is a serious criminal offence for any individual to corruptly receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity.

Equitas Academies Trust

Unlawful giving or accepting of gifts or hospitality that would amount to a criminal offence results from a motive to influence the other party or to create an obligation on the other party to reciprocate the favour.

A gift or form of hospitality may be considered inappropriate where the individual would be embarrassed should the proposed action become public knowledge.

Examples of inappropriate gifts, rewards, fees or loans include:

- Cash or cash equivalents of any amount
- Vouchers or subscriptions
- Alcohol
- Tobacco

Acceptable gifts, rewards, fees or loans include:

- Items of a promotional nature
- Modest articles which can be used in the office or job role e.g. calendars or diaries.

Examples of inappropriate hospitality, entertainment or preferential treatment include:

- Hospitality or entertainment of a value of more than £25
- Any form of hospitality or entertainment which raises a suspicion of granting undue preference in the conduct of the Academy's business to the provider e.g. an invitation to attend a function or event
- Anything not based on the subsistence allowances for staff and Trust Board members which are in force at the time.

Acceptable forms of treatment, hospitality and entertainment include:

- Hospitality or entertainment valued above £25 which has been specifically authorised by the Trust Board and recorded in the Gifts & Hospitality Register
- Lunches and refreshments in the course of the Trust's business
- Invitations to attend charity or fund-raising events as a guest, if considered to be for a good cause and of reciprocal benefit to the Trust.

3. GIVING AND ACCEPTING GIFTS & FAVOURS

Members must never solicit gifts from another individual, school or organisation.

Gifts of a trivial nature or small gifts may be accepted where refusal might offend the person offering the gift. All other gifts as outlined above must be refused.

Where refusal would cause offence, an acceptable alternative is to suggest a donation to the association or to a charity nominated by the Trust.

Trivial or small gifts accepted and not of a personal nature should be pooled and distributed at the Trust Board's discretion.

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Where a Trust Board member receives an unsolicited gift of more than token, which it is impractical to refuse, they must immediately donate it to the Trust via the Executive Headteacher. The Chief Executive Officer will decide, depending on the nature of the gift, whether it is most appropriately used for Trust purposes or donated to a charity chosen by the Trust.

All gifts and what is done with them must be recorded in the Gifts & Hospitality Register even if it has been refused.

Gifts to another individual or school should be made only in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chair of the Trust or Executive Headteacher as appropriate.

4. GIVING AND ACCEPTING HOSPITALITY & ENTERTAINMENT

Members must never solicit hospitality from another individual, school or organisation.

Any hospitality given or received must be recorded in the Gifts & Hospitality Register even if it has been refused.

The cost and the reason why acceptance is considered to be in the Academy's interests should be noted in the Register where extravagant hospitality or entertainment above the token value, whether given or received.

Entertainment or substantial hospitality, may be given from time to time as a courtesy to outside organisations with whom the Trust works, however this should not be a common practice.

Expenditure entitled to staff and Trust Board members will be limited to working lunches, refreshments to visitors and business contacts.

Reviewed and approved by:	Date approved:	Next review date:
Wadim Wesolek, Chair of F&GP Committee	June 2022	June 2024

GIFTS & HOSPITALITY REGISTER

Year: _____

Name of Trust Board Member	Nature of Give/Hospitality	Date of Gift/Hospitality	Giving/Receiving Individual or School	Estimated Value (£)	Reason for Offer/Acceptance <small>Note: Where an offer is made state if approval was received, from whom and when</small>	Signature of Trustee

EQUITAS ACADEMIES TRUST CAR ALLOWANCE CLAIM FORM

EQUITAS ACADEMIES TRUST				Name		Payroll Number/...../.....		
School Name				Job Title		Period Ending 20		
Nat Insurance No		Home Address				I DECLARE that the journeys claimed were necessary for the discharge of official duties and were made in accordance with the regulations.		
Make and type of vehicle*		Authorised cc		Reg No				
Normal Administration Centre i.e School		APPROVED/ CASUAL						
Signature of Claimant.								
Day	Purpose and details of journey	Name of passengers	Mileometer readings		Miles	Parking	PLEASE REMEMBER TO ATTACH A VALID VAT RECEIPT FOR PETROL	
			Start	Finish				
Signature of Manager checking calculations								
.....								
I CERTIFY that the journeys claimed were necessary in the discharge of official duties and that the mileage claimed appears reasonable.								
Signature of Certifying Manager								
.....								

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The vehicle being used is insured for 'business use' purposes The vehicle is maintained in a roadworthy condition.

The vehicle has a current MOT certificate or an MOT certificate is not yet required.

I have a valid driving license for the vehicle

I have no medical condition that prevents me from driving.

THIS DECLARATION MUST BE COMPLETED IN FULL
