Southern Education Trust

Charge Card Policy

Next review: December 2027

Contents:

1. Scope

This policy applied to all employees who are issued with a charge card in their own name or who are permitted to use one. It also applied to employees who have the right to approve the use of a charge card for their team members.

2. Employee charge card agreement

By agreeing to have a charge card in your own name, or by using one, you acknowledge that the charge card belongs to The Southern Education Trust and must only be used for allowable business expenses as described in this policy.

Improper use of the charge card will be dealt with under the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

The Trust has the right to withdraw and cancel a charge card at any point.

3. Allowable business expenses

Charge cards have been introduced so staff do not have to use their own funds and then be reimbursed expenditure required in relation to their daily job. They are not intended to be used for the purchase of goods or services required in school.

Cards will be issued to those staff responsible for taking groups of students out of school where expenditure is likely to be required, and to those who need to make regular, low value, purchases which are difficult to accurately plan for – for example groceries.

Only the following types of expenditure are permitted:

- Planned trips out with students if it is not possible or efficient to pay in advance or for finance colleagues to purchase on the day
- Refreshments for students when out of school if appropriate
- Parking when on school business such as trips
- Grocery supplies for teaching and staff use
- Low value unplanned and incidental expenses

The purchase of goods, such as educational resources and equipment is not permitted on charge cards. The purchase of such goods should be made via the Trust's financial ordering software, PS Purchasing, and will be processed and ordered by the Trust's financial team.

Exceptions:

Finance colleagues may use their charge card to purchase goods where the order has been placed through PS Purchasing when the supplier will not accept bank payments.

4. Non-allowable expenses

Under no circumstances should charge cards be used for the following:

- Personal expenses
- Alcohol under any circumstances

5. Limits

Every charge card will have a monthly spend limit. These limits will depend on the level of expenditure likely to be required by the individual.

The monthly spend limit is a limit, not an allowance. It should only be spent where there is an absolute need.

If you need to request a change to your monthly spend limit, please speak to the School Business/Operations Manager in your school.

6. Your responsibilities

If you have a charge card, we expect you to:

- **Upload receipts for all expenditure via your Webexpenses Account by the deadline set by your school.** The charge card transactions will automatically be uploaded to your Webexpenses account. Upload your receipts to these transactions and complete the required fields. Make sure these are submitted on a monthly basis by the deadline set by your school.
- **Protect it to the best of your ability**. Don't leave it unattended or give it to unauthorised people (e.g. friends, family, colleagues) even just to hold.
- **Never share the pin number**
- **Report it stolen or lost as soon as possible.** Please let the School Business/Operations Manager know as soon as possible and email accounts@southerneducationtrust.com so the card can be cancelled.
- **Use it only for approved reasons**. Follow the instructions in this policy, and don't use the card for personal or unauthorised expenses, even if you intend to compensate the charges later.

When you are using the charge card, you must:

- Confirm that the particular expenditure is allowed under this policy
- Keep in mind your monthly spend limit so you can continue to carry out your job role effectively
- Keep the card number and physical card secure
- Use the card sensibly and avoid unnecessary expenditure, even if it is allowed under this policy
- Keep all receipts until you have successfully uploaded them to your Webexpenses account

7. Responsibilities of School finance staff

The school Business/Operations Manager or designate is responsible for the following:

- Requesting charge cards for new employees where there is a defined need within the job role. Requests should be sent to the central finance team at accounts@southerneducationtrust.com
- Notifying the central finance team when a cardholder is due to leave their employment to ensure timely cancellation
- Notifying the central finance team when a cardholder is likely to be absent for a period of time of 4 weeks or more to ensure that their charge card is deactivated until their return
- Implementing local procedures to process the transactions on Webexpenses, reconcile the monthly statements and post onto the accounting system

Finance Charge Cards

In each school there will be at least one charge card designated as the finance charge card. A member of the finance team will usually hold this card. These charge cards are only to be used to pay for orders where it is not possible for the supplier to issue an invoice. A requisition must be entered on PS Purchasing and authorised before the spend occurs.

Items paid for via the finance charge card will not go onto Webexpenses as the audit evidence will be visible and retained on PS Purchasing, a module of the Trusts finance system.

8. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an 3 yearly basis by the Trust.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2027. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all stakeholders.