

Corporate Charge Card Policy



Education is for improving lives and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.

Approved by the Board of Directors on: March 2022

Review date: March 2024

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1. Introduction

Community Academies Trust (CAT) is committed to ensuring that its systems of financial governance conform to the requirements of both propriety and sound financial management.

This includes making sure that there are adequate controls in place over the use of the corporate charge cards. These enable the schools in the trust to purchase goods/services where the company being used provides the best value but an invoice cannot be raised, or a credit account cannot be set up. They are particularly useful for making purchases over the internet.

The corporate charge cards are provided by our bankers, Lloyds Bank. They are not a credit card as academy trusts are unable to borrow under ESFA regulations but are a payment card which are paid in full each month. Purchases are charged to the budget and must be authorised in accordance with the Scheme of Financial Delegation.

This policy provides guidance and assistance in the correct and responsible use of the business charge cards.

2. Eligibility

Executive Directors and Head Teachers are eligible to apply for cards with a £500 limit, all other CAT staff applications are available after recommendation by their Head Teacher. The maximum credit available is £5,000 per cardholder and limited to a maximum £12,500 total per secondary school and £2,500 for primary schools, Institute of Education and CAT Central, including the Head Teacher's card limit. It is recommended that each school has at least two different cardholders. The cardholder's limit will be set during the application and may vary to the suggested limit, below, within their school limit.

Limits to spend per month are suggested:

Secondary school Business Manager/Finance Officer	£5,000
Primary school Office/Business Manager	£1,000
Headteacher	£500
Executive Director	£500
Facilities Manager/Caretaker	£500

Variations to these amounts should be explained during application.

Should an emergency arise which requires the card limit to be exceeded, a temporary increase can be agreed by the Trust Accountant in exceptional circumstances, this is after all other payment methods have been investigated. An email must be sent to finance@catschools.uk explaining the reason for the overspend and contact details, after discussions with the Trust Accountant. The temporary increase will last for the current month and then the card limit will revert to the cardholder pre-agreed limit.

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Each card issued will be in the name of the individual on behalf of the school the member of staff is attached to, or to the trust if they are linked to the central team. Each card will have an identification number.

Each member of staff who has a card issued to them is to be made aware of the limit of their individual card and keep within this limit. They must sign an agreement which states they understand the conditions of issue.

Any staff member who has been issued with a card and subsequently terminates their employment with Community Academies Trust must return their card which will be destroyed on receipt. The Headteacher or Business Manager of the school must inform the central team by email to finance@catschools.uk, that the member of staff will be or has left employment, confirming whether the card has been destroyed. CAT central will cancel the card with the bank, either immediately or before the member of staff departs from CAT employment.

Members of staff found to be breaching the terms and conditions for use of their card will have the card cancelled and disciplinary action may also be taken.

3. Restrictions

Limits for authorising expenditure, at order stage, are as detailed in the trust's Scheme of Financial Delegation. Use of the card by a cardholder who is not the budget holder should only be made on receipt of an order signed by the authorised budget holder.

The Corporate Charge Card must not be used for any non-business or personal expense. Selected merchant/retailer types may be restricted by the card issuer to prevent expenditure on non-approved items.

The Corporate Charge Card must not be used for regular payments, e.g., Direct debits, standing orders and subscriptions.

The Corporate Charge Card must not be used to obtain cash from an automatic transaction machine (ATM).

The Corporate Charge Card should not be used to obtain goods/services which can be procured via a normal credit account.

The school/academy Corporate Charge Card should not be used to purchase fuel while travelling in a personally owned or leased vehicle. Reimbursement of this expenditure must be made via the travel expense claims process. The card may be used to purchase fuel for the school minibus and may also be used to purchase train tickets or toll road fees for business use as covered by the Staff Expenses Policy.

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Only secure sites should be used to make online purchases (for example the website shows the padlock symbol). If there is any doubt as to whether it is a secure site, the purchase should not be made.

Corporate charge card insurance and/or subscriptions for card protection services must not be purchased.

Any costs/charges incurred arising as a result of a card being misused will be charged to the person responsible.

4. Record keeping, reconciliation and payment

Receipts/invoices are required to support every item of expenditure and a VAT receipt/invoice obtained if any purchases contain any VAT charges.

Statements will be issued by the bank which must be reconciled with receipts and signed off in accordance with the Scheme of Financial Delegation. The total statement each month must be authorised using the corporate card expense claim form, signed by the cardholder and approved by the cardholder's line manager or, in the case of the headteacher, by the Trust Accountant. Claims by the Executive Director (Education) and the Executive Director (Finance and Operations) must be authorised by the Accounting Officer. Claims by the Accounting Officer must be authorised by the Executive Director (Finance and Operations) and reported to the Directors termly.

In the event of there being any expenditure on the statement that has not been authorised by the cardholder, the cardholder must contact Lloyds bank immediately and the matter investigated with the bank. Then the central team should be alerted as soon as possible, either by email to finance@catschools.uk or telephone, confirming Lloyds have been informed and whether investigations are on-going.

Authorised statements and supporting documents must be kept locally for a period of six years plus the current financial year so that they can be produced if an audit is undertaken.

All Corporate Charge Cards will be paid off in full monthly within 10 working days after monthly statements are produced.

5. Security

The Corporate Charge Card must be signed on receipt and activated as per the instructions for new card users, ensuring that personal details are updated through the online portal, particularly contact details. These will be used during security checks when using the card to ensure SCA (Strong Customer Authentication)

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The Corporate Charge Card must be always kept secure and either held personally or stored in a locked drawer or filing cabinet.

PIN numbers must be secure and must not be written down nor disclosed to anyone.

Lost or stolen cards must be reported immediately to the Lloyds Bank helpline and then the Central Finance Team by email to finance@catschools.uk.

The cardholder must adhere to all the terms and conditions, including updates, of Lloyds Bank. The Corporate Charge Card must not be used by anyone other than the card holder.

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