

Date: 25 September 2015
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To: Headteachers and Chairs of
Governors of all Maintained Schools
and PRUs

**LMS Document
No. 2015/24**

Dear Colleagues

Finance Regulations: reimbursements towards the cost of vision tests and glasses

Audit Services have recently carried out an investigation into expense claims for vision tests and glasses, their scope included reimbursements made to school staff. The audit identified that there was a lack of clarity on whether schools should be following SCC guidance and that SCC guidance is not easily accessible to school staff.

I am writing today to inform you that the Local Authority has now published Finance Regulations to cover reimbursements for vision tests and glasses for school staff. The Regulations are available on Suffolk Learning and include the School Employee Vision Examination Form which staff must ask their optician to complete if they wish to claim a reimbursement. The Form is also available separately:

- Finance Regulations:
[Suffolk Learning | SAT | Finance Regulations](#)
- School Employee Vision Examination Form:
[Suffolk Learning | SAT | Fin Management | Fin Administration](#).

It is important that schools read the Regulations; the main points are set out below:

Responsibility for reimbursements towards the cost of vision tests and glasses

The Health and Safety Executive states that the legal responsibility (and thus accountability) for health and safety lies with the employer. Who the employer is depends on the type of school:

Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools/Maintained PRUs:

- The LA retains primary responsibility as the employer for health and safety for community and voluntary controlled schools and maintained PRUs and therefore requires Headteachers, staff and governors of these categories of schools to comply with the Regulations.

Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools:

- The governing body is the employer for foundation and voluntary aided schools and is legally accountable for health and safety; Suffolk County Council is not responsible. However, the LA recommends that governing bodies of foundation/VA schools implement the regulations set out below in line with community and voluntary controlled schools.
- The governing body of any foundation/VA school wishing to adopt alternative regulations must agree a school policy for the reimbursement of vision tests and glasses.

Entitlement to claim

'DSE* Users' are school staff that are required to regularly use display screen equipment such as computers and laptops as a significant part of their normal work in the school (daily, for continuous periods for an hour or more, several times each day, most days of the week).

- *DSE Users* may submit claims.
- School staff that are only required to use DSE infrequently or for short periods of time are not entitled to claim.

* *DSE: display screen equipment*

Limits to claims

Vision Tests

- Maximum school contribution £30
- Refunds for vision tests should not be given more than once in 12 months in normal circumstances.

Spectacles/Contact Lenses

- No school contribution towards the cost of 'normal' corrective appliances (i.e. spectacles/contact lenses prescribed for any other purpose than display screen use).
- Maximum school contribution £50 towards the cost of a basic pair of spectacles prescribed to correct vision defects at the viewing distance or distances used specifically for the display screen work concerned. If the employee chooses to have glasses or contact lenses of a higher specification then the employee is responsible for any additional cost.

Claims: Employee Responsibilities

The employee must ensure that:

- the Optician has completed the appropriate section of the School Employee Vision Examination Form
- VAT receipts have been supplied
- They have completed and signed the declaration before submitting the claim to the school

Claims: School Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of the Headteacher (or their designated representative) to confirm that the claimant is a 'DSE User' and to verify the validity of the claim.
- The form and receipt must be sent to the school's payroll provider for payment, payment must not be made locally.
- The school must retain a copy of both the completed form and the receipt for audit purposes.

[LMS Document 2015/11](#) provides details on the Health and Safety responsibilities of schools.

The Schools' Accountancy Team should be contacted for any queries regarding compliance with the Finance Regulations.

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Yours sincerely

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