**Sperrinview Special School**

**Hospitality Policy for Schools**

The Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer, is primarily responsible for ensuring that the Education Authority’s (EA) approach to the use of public funds is appropriate, prudent and used for the purposes intended.

The Department of Education (DE) has directed that the Board of Governors for each school should agree a policy for hospitality and related areas. Such expenditure must be necessary, appropriate to the occasion, represent an effective use of school funds and be of a reasonable amount.

This Model Hospitality policy provided applies to all controlled and maintained schools (nursery/primary/post-primary/special) in the EA area.

The guidelines contained in the policy provide advice on the provision of hospitality in connection with official school business and on other activities that promote the school to the public. It is intended to help schools ensure that expenditure on hospitality complies with government standards on propriety and is consistent with the mission of the school.

Government Accounting Northern Ireland defines propriety as ‘the requirement that expenditure and receipts should be dealt with in accordance with Parliament’s intentions and the principles of Parliamentary control’.

**Guidelines on Allowable Expenses and Occasions**

Expenditure on hospitality and related areas must be directly related to, or associated with, the active conduct of official school business.  When the school spends public money on hospitality or related areas, the occasion must, in the best judgement of the Governors, produce a clear benefit for the school with no personal benefit for staff or Governors.

When determining whether such expenditure will produce a benefit for the school the Governors must evaluate the importance of the event in terms of the costs involved, the availability of funds and any alternatives that would effectively serve the same purpose.

Hospitality in this context includes meals, snacks, refreshments and beverages such as tea or coffee.  Staff should not be provided with hospitality except when work sessions extend over meals times or beyond normal working hours.  The Principal’s discretion and due regard for economy will be the guide on such occasions and in ensuring that hospitality is not offered to close colleagues working together on a regular basis.

Tea/coffee and biscuits may be provided at meetings with visitors to the school e.g. parents, staff from other schools, inspectors and other officials.

Public funds may not be used to provide hospitality, floral tributes, small gifts or other tokens of appreciation for events such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, retirement or farewell gatherings, except where specific approval from the EA is obtained.

In exceptional circumstances a school may wish to acknowledge long service or exemplary performance.  Hospitality may be provided to the main guest, the official host (Principal or Chair of Board of Governors), to Governors and visiting dignitaries.  Hospitality at such events shall not be extravagant and should normally be provided on school premises, using the in-house services whenever possible.  If in-house facilities are not appropriate then as a general rule expenditure per head should not exceed the current rates of EA subsistence.  Except in the case of the principal guest, parents, spouses or partners should not be provided with hospitality.  Public funds may not be used to provide floral tributes, gifts or other tokens of appreciation at such events.

The school may choose to use the School Fund rather than the delegated budget for hospitality.  The Governors must ensure that in the case of school funds such use is permissible having regard to the purposes for which the funds were provided to the school. Further advice on the administration of School Funds is provided in Chapter 6 Section 2 of the Local Management Financial Procedures, a copy of which should be held by the School Principal.

**Authority**

The EA is responsible for regulating and controlling funds provided by the Department of Education in accordance with the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.  Under the LMS scheme schools must comply with the financial regulations and systems determined by the EA.