

This policy forms part of the Trust's Financial Handbook and is approved by the Trust annually. Last reviewed February 2020.

29 Charging & Remissions

29.1 Under the terms of the Education Act 1996, the Trust Board has a policy on charging students to participate in school activities.

By law, children in school years R to year 11, may not be charged for activities that take place during the school day. Parents may be asked for voluntary contributions, but if they do not pay their child cannot be prevented from participating, should the activity go ahead. In any request for voluntary payments, it must be clear from the terms in which it is made that:

- a) There is no obligation to make any contribution; and that students will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have made a contribution.
- b) Whilst this is the case, activities may not proceed if the school determines an activity to be financially unviable.

29.2 Scope:

29.2.1 The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring compliance with School's and Trust's policies and procedures. This procedure applies to all Trust staff.

29.2.2 For reference: the school day means registration time to normal end of the school day, normally Monday to Friday. Days classified as school days are set annually and are available to all stakeholders through the school's website.

29.3 Procedures:

29.3.1 School Admissions – No charge shall be made in respect of admission.

29.3.2 Provision of Education and Activity – No charge shall be made in relation to the education of registered students where education is provided during school hours. Where education or activities are provided outside of school hours, no charge shall be made provided it is required as part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination or part of the National Curriculum. Activities can include before and after school clubs.

29.3.3 Community Education & Lettings – The school has the right to charge any user for the right of access to community education/lettings activities and facilities used for this purpose.

29.3.4 The school may also charge registered students for:

- a) Musical Instrument Tuition – A School may charge for practical instrumental lessons held during the school day which are provided individually unless they are required under the syllabus.

- b) Practical Subjects – In practical subjects, so that students may experience a wide range of activities and develop essential basic skills, a number of items will be made either to take home and keep or consume on the premises. Therefore, a letter will be sent to all parents at the beginning of the school year, and to parents of students admitted during the school year, asking them to make a voluntary contribution for materials and equipment used in this way.
- c) Examinations – No charge shall be made in respect of the entry of a registered student at the School for a prescribed public examination for which the student has been prepared at the School unless the student fails without good reason to meet any examination requirement for that syllabus. If a student has not regularly attended the lessons for a particular examination subject, the examination fee may be requested, refundable if the student attends for examination. There may be a charge for examination entry where there is a request from the parent for additional subject entries to be made which are not supported by a School.
- d) Incidental Charges – No charges shall be made in respect of the supply of any materials, books, instruments, or other equipment (not including clothing) provided for the provision of education, or examination.
- e) Student Resources – The school provides a limited supply of supplementary learning resources including revision guides and some school uniform items. The school or any trading subsidiary is permitted to charge for these items.

29.4 School Visits:

- 29.4.1 Visits during the school day – Parents cannot be asked for a compulsory payment for any visit that is taking place during a normal “school” day. Voluntary payments (including full staff costs) can be requested, but if the visit proceeds, students wishing to go but whose parents are not prepared to pay, must be allowed to attend. They cannot be subsidised by other parents. This will likely mean that insufficient funds will be available. The member of staff involved will seek additional funding from the Headteacher. If this is not possible, the trip must be cancelled.
- 29.4.2 Optional extra visits out of school time or as part of extra-curricular activity – These are visits where a large part of the trip is outside of the normal school day. Here, parents can be asked to meet the full cost of the trip. Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made. This compulsory payment cannot include subsidising students unable to pay.
- 29.4.3 Residential visits including study visits abroad – Where the work undertaken is not an integral part of the examination course, the trip can be classified as optional. As an optional trip, the cost of board and lodging for the student can be passed on to parents. The cost of staff accommodation, insurance and transport must be obtained by voluntary payments (normally from parents) or from the educational visit company if applicable, if the trip is to go ahead.
- 29.4.4 Balances on school trips – Once a school trip has taken place and the finances have been reconciled, any balance over £10.00 (per student) will be returned as soon as possible. Any balances below £10.00 (per student) will be retained by the school to assist families with the costs of future school trips where parental contributions are difficult.

29.4.5 The school will not issue refunds to parents for school visits (deposits or other contributions) with the exception:

- Where trip is cancelled by school for any reason.
- Where child is withdrawn from trip with sufficient prior notice to avoid cancellation charges where they are applied by the visit tour operator or is replaced by another student who pays up before issuing refund
- For illness or other unavoidable reason such as compassionate leave and a refund is payable from the educational visit company/agent.
- Where school excludes child from school (and therefore visit) for relevant period the school may give refund at discretion of Headteacher.

29.5 Other:

29.5.1 Recovery of sums payable by parents – Any sums payable by parents – for wasted examination fees, for optional extras to which they have agreed are recoverable as a civil debt.

29.5.2 Schools may decide to chase any debt through licenced debt recovery organisations and the courts and follow best practice to gather funds and support the debtor in this process.

29.5.3 Breakages and fines – Parents may be charged for the cost of replacing damaged or lost equipment where appropriate, for example, smashed windows, vandalized IT items or non-returned team kit.

29.5.4 Transport – Often required for school sporting fixtures where the school's own transport is unavailable. It is reasonable for the School to request voluntary donations towards the cost of transport to and from the venue. This is regardless of whether the fixture is within the school day or not.

29.5.5 Transport to alternative locations for the school day – it is at the discretion of the Headteacher to determine whether parents should be assisted with the costs of transport to alternative locations for the normal school day.

29.5.6 Visit charges may include subsidiary costs including insurance, postage, travel, transaction fees and absent staff cover (where necessary) and agreed by the headteacher. In some cases, if a visit cost can be reduced by leaving in term time (but attracting cover costs) versus not leaving in term time and not attracting these costs, the headteacher has the authority to include or not include costs as appropriate.

29.5.7 The Trust is sympathetic to families who are unable to afford the cost of additional activities and/or extra-curricular activities, and has a limited amount of money set aside to assist parents in particularly difficult financial circumstances. Approaches for such assistance may be made to a member of staff, who will then consult the Headteacher for a decision.

29.5.8 Donations made by Parents, ex-pupils or friends of schools in the Trust are to be encouraged. All monies received will be ring fenced for improvements to the school and the educational needs of the students at the school.

29.5.9 All charges for income of any nature must be made through the Finance teams. Likewise, all monies received for such income must be directed to the Finance Department.

29.6 Finance

29.6.1 In all instances where a charge is levied the manager responsible for the charge is required to raise an invoice.

29.6.2 All invoices will be produced by the finance department and payment duly chased by the finance department also.

29.6.3 It is expected that the manager that raised the initial invoice should receive updates on the charges levied and assist the finance department in the collection of payments as appropriate.