



CHARGING AND REMISSIONS POLICY

Approved by The STAR Multi Academy Trust Board: June 2020

For Review: June 2022

Introduction

STAR Multi Academy Trust recognises the valuable contribution that the wide range of additional activities, including trips, clubs and residential experiences can make towards pupils' education. The Trust aims to promote and provide such activities both as part of a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and as additional optional activities. However, due to the limited funds, the Trust reserves the right to make a charge in the following circumstances for activities organised by its academies.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Trust's Resources committee and will be adjusted in line with any subsequent guidelines from the DfE.

Aims

This policy sets out STAR MAT's attitude towards charging and remissions, describes each activity that will be charged for and explains when charges or remissions will be made.

Principles

We endorse the principles on charging and remissions within the 1996 Education Act and DfE guidelines.

The policy is intended to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1996 (which can be viewed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>)

We accordingly recognise that the education that takes place within school hours, and that forms part of a prescribed examination syllabus or is required to fulfil National Curriculum requirements, will be offered free of charge. School hours are those when the academy is actually in session and do not include the break in the middle of the school day.

An academy may invite parents and others from time to time to make a voluntary contribution towards any part of the academy's work, and to permit the provision of activities which might not otherwise be possible. Planned activities may be cancelled if financial support is not forthcoming.

No pupil will be left out of any activity provided in school time because his/her parents cannot or will not make a voluntary contribution.

Practice

Activities Academies CANNOT Charge For

The following list of activities cannot be charged for by Academies:

- a) an admission application to any Academy within the STAR Multi Academy Trust;
- b) education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books,

instruments or other equipment; sports activities such as swimming lessons and professional coaching; author visits);

c) education provided outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;

d) tuition for pupils learning to play musical instruments if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;

e) entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school; and

f) examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the Academy.

Activities Academies CAN Charge For

Academies can charge for the following:

a) Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him/her to own them, i.e. a charge can be made to cover the cost of materials or ingredients required for design or food technology subjects where parents have indicated in advance that they would like their child to bring home the finished product.

b) Music and vocal tuition. Music lessons are the exception to the rule that all education provided during school hours must be free. New regulations came into force in September 2007 to give pupils greater access to vocal and instrumental tuition.

Charges can be made for teaching either an individual group or groups of an appropriate size to play a musical instrument or sing if the teaching is not an essential part of either the National Curriculum or a public examination syllabus being followed by the pupil(s), or the first access to the Key Stage 2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme (Wider Opportunities).

c) Information Published Under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Scheme. Charges made by the school for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on the website will be provided free of charge. Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by law.

Charges will be made to cover:

- Photocopying
- Postage and Packaging
- The costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Single copies of information requested which are covered by the publication scheme will be provided free unless otherwise stated within the scheme. If the request involved a large amount of photocopying, printing or postage, then this may be at a cost. If this is the case we will let you know as well as let you know the cost before fulfilling your request.

d) Participation in optional extra activity is a matter of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement is a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made. Charges may be made where:

- Education that is not part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for, or part of religious education is provided outside of school time;
- Examination entry fee(s) are incurred for a registered pupil who has not been prepared for the examination at the Academy or where the examination is not on the set list but the school arranges for the pupil to sit it or if a pupil fails without good reason to complete the requirements of any public examination where the governing body or LA paid or agreed to pay the entry fee;
- Transport is required other than that required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the local authority/governing body has arranged for the pupil to be provided with education; and
- Board and lodging is required for a pupil on a residential visit.

In calculating the cost of optional extras an amount may be included in relation to:

- Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra;
- Non-teaching staff;
- Teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra (including supply teachers) but not the costs of supply
- teachers contracted to cover for teachers who are away from school as they are seen to be providing education during school time, not an optional extra; and
- The costs, or a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, where the tuition is an optional extra.

The charge per pupil should not:

- Exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra divided equally by the number of pupils participating;
- Include any form of subsidy for other pupils wishing to participate whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge;
- Include the cost of any alternative provision for other pupils not wishing to participate in the optional extra where a small proportion of the optional extra takes place during school hours

Where an activity takes place partly during and partly outside school hours, a charge can only be made for the activity outside school hours if it is not part of the National Curriculum, not part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the Academy and not part of religious education.

If at least 50% of the non-residential activity is spent during school hours then it is deemed to take place during school hours. Travelling time is included when it too takes place during school hours.

For less than 50%, the activity is deemed to take place outside of school hours, i.e. where an excursion to a theatre production involves the pupils leaving school an hour before the end of the school day but the activity does not finish until late in the evening.

In the case of a residential visit if the number of school sessions taken up by the visit is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on the visit it is deemed to have taken place during school hours – even if some activities take place late in the evening. Whatever the start and finish times of the school day, Regulations require that the school day is divided into two sessions. A “half day” means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

Example: Pupils are away from noon Wednesday to 9pm Sunday. This counts as 9 half days including 5 school sessions. The 5 school sessions are more than 50% of the number of half days spent on the visit therefore the visit is deemed to have taken place during school hours.

Example: Pupils are away from noon Thursday to 9pm Sunday. This counts as 7 half days including 3 school sessions. The 3 school sessions are less than 50% of the number of half days spent on the visit therefore the visit is deemed to take place outside school hours.

Voluntary Contributions

A school can request voluntary contributions for any school activity.

The Academy should, from the outset, make clear to parents:

- If an activity is reliant upon voluntary contributions;
- That there is no obligation to make a contribution as it is voluntary, not compulsory;
- That the activity will be cancelled if insufficient contributions are received to fund it;
- and
- The Academy policy for allocating places on school visits, if one exists

A child should not be excluded from an activity if his/her parents are unwilling or unable to pay. Academies should not send direct debit or standing order mandates when requesting contributions.

Para 1.93 of the School Admissions Code (revised February 2009) rules out practices that can lead to covert selection such as asking parents for a financial contribution as

a condition of entry.

Residential Visits

Academies cannot charge for:

- a) Education provided on any visit that takes place during school hours;
- b) Education provided on any visit that takes place outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education; and

Academies can charge for board and lodging but the charge must not exceed the actual cost.

Eligibility for Remission for Residential Visits

Section 200 of the Education Act 2002 outlines the eligibility to entitlement for board and lodging costs for residential visits. When a school informs parents about a forthcoming trip, they should make it clear that parents who can prove that they are in receipt of the benefits shown below will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging:

- Income Support (IS);
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA);
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; or
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income, as assessed by the Inland Revenue that does not exceed £16,190 (amount for 2012/13);
- Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit;
- An income related employment and support allowance that was introduced on 27 October 2008.

Transport

Schools cannot charge for:

- a) Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the LA has a statutory obligation to provide transport;
- b) Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing body or LA has arranged for pupils to be educated;
- c) Transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when he/she has been prepared for that examination at the school; and

d) Transport provided in connection with an educational visit.
However, schools can request a voluntary contribution towards transport costs where it is provided during school hours.

Debt Recovery

Debt may be regarded as uncollectable where:

1. Uneconomic To Collect - The debt is uneconomic to collect, i.e. the cost of collection is greater than the value of the debt.
2. Statute Barred - The debt is time barred, where the statute of limitation applies. Generally this means that if a period of six years has elapsed since the debt was last demanded, the debt cannot be enforced by legal action.
3. Unable to Trace - The debtor cannot be found or communicated with despite all reasonable attempts to trace.
4. Deceased - The debtor is deceased and there is no likely settlement from the estate or next of kin and where there is written confirmation from the Receiver.
5. Hardship - where permitted, on the grounds that recovery of the debt is likely to cause the debtor serious financial difficulty.
6. Official Receiver or Administrator.

Good practice dictates that, when all methods of debt recovery have been exhausted, any debts that remain irrecoverable are written off promptly in accordance with the below framework.

Debt Write Off

Arears of charges may be written off in accordance with the below authorities:

- a) Up to £100, the approval of the Head teacher.
- b) £100 and up to £25,000, the approval of the CEO, CFO and the MAT Finance Committee
- c) £25,000 or above, the approval of the MAT Board of Trustees.

The CFO shall keep a record of all such sums written off.