

Charging and Financial Assistance Policy

**Approved by Governor Sub-committee:
Finance and Audit**

**Date to be reviewed:
June 2019**

**Responsibility of:
Director of Finance and Operations**

**Date ratified by Governing Board:
14th July 2016**

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to explain the Academy's approach to making charges to students and their parents/carers. It also explains the circumstances where it may be possible to offer financial assistance.

This document has been produced in accordance with the DfE guidance document: *Charging for school activities October 2014*

Policy Statement

- a) The Governing Board recognises the valuable contribution that the wide range of additional activities, including clubs, out of school trips, residential and experiences of other environments, can make towards students' all round educational experience and their personal and social development.
- b) The Academy provides a free education to all students. Any activity/trip/visit considered to be a required element of the curriculum will be provided without compulsory charge, although the Governing Board reserves the right to request voluntary donations. However the Academy also provides a number of additional services and activities, which are not a requirement of the curriculum, and for which charges may be made.
- c) The Academy is committed to the belief that no student should be at a disadvantage if their parents or carers are in receipt of benefits or are on very low incomes i.e. usually those with incomes of less than £20,000 per annum.
- d) The Academy reserves the right to change any financial assistance offered as it sees fit, having given parents advance written notice.
- e) The Academy reserves the right to reclaim any benefits that are overpaid as a result of any financial misinformation received.

Who does the policy apply to?

All Academy students and parents.

Who is responsible for carrying out this policy?

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the governors of the Academy and remain under constant review by the Director of Finance and Operations.

In what circumstances will the Academy make a charge?

The Governing Board reserves the right to make a charge in the following circumstances for activities organised by the Academy:

1. **School trips and residential:** the full cost, including any incidental costs, where the trip/residential is not considered to be a required element of the curriculum, but as an optional extra. Where such an activity is provided to fulfil any requirements specified by a public examination syllabus, or to fulfil statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum or to Religious Education, then it is not regarded as an 'optional extra' and only board and lodging charges may be made.
2. **Materials:** the cost of materials or ingredients for design and technology and food technology where the student is offered the ownership of the final product. The cost of purchase or hire of instruments, materials, equipment or clothing for activities which take place outside school hours and which are purely voluntary and optional.
3. **Acts of vandalism, recklessness and negligence including poor behaviour resulting in the student not being able to attend a trip or visit:** the Governing Board reserves the right to recover part, or the whole cost, of damage to buildings or equipment which is the result of vandalism, recklessness or negligence by a student. Persistent disregard or carelessness following specific warning will be considered to be included. This is also the case where a student's' poor behaviour means that they can no longer attend a trip. In these cases, the Academy will try and refund money that has been returned from the third parties (ticket sellers, accommodation etc). If non-refundable payments have been made by the Academy and then it will not be possible to refund the money .

Examination fees:

- a) 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 the examination and achieves a result, in line with or better, than that consistent with expected attendance;
- b) If, without a medical certificate explaining the reason, a student fails to complete examination requirements for any public examination for which the Academy has paid an entry fee, the Governing Board will seek to recover the fee;
- c) There may be a charge for examination entry where there is a request from the parent for additional subject entries to be made that are not supported by the Academy;
- d) Examination re-sits will be chargeable. Any student achieving an improved grade will be eligible for a fee refund for that examination.

Music Tuition

There is a charge for individual tuition in the playing of a musical instrument whether in or out of school hours, unless it is provided as part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination or is required by the National Curriculum.

Community Users

The academy may arrange to let its premises and facilities to members of the local community, other organisations with the Local Authority, businesses, charities and sports clubs.

Financial assistance

Financial assistance, except in the case of free school meals, should not provide for more than 75% of the cost. Other than defined schemes, such as free school meals and the music bursary scheme, general assistance is only likely to be offered in exceptional circumstances. Students, and their parents or carers, should always retain some responsibility towards the cost for which the financial assistance is sought.

Where the Academy is able to offer a subsidy this will be available to parents or carers of students who qualify for free school meals (note - the criteria for who qualifies for free school meals may change from year to year) or who are considered to be on low incomes, normally less than £20,000 p.a. The Governing Board reserves the right to set the criteria at whatever level it sees fit for any particular trip/visit/activity.

Claiming Free School Meals

The process for claiming is as follows:

- a) A claim form available from the Academy Office should be completed;
- b) This form should then be returned to the Student Services Manager with proof of eligibility to benefits;
- c) The Student Services Manager will then arrange for the student to be coded for free meals and other benefits;
- d) For the standard lunch subsidy:
 - A standard lunch (or agreed alternative) will be available in the dining room each day
 - Extras, such as food at break-times, drinks, extra dessert, etc. over and above the credit issued, will need to be paid for by parents or carers
 - The initial period of assistance is granted for the Academy year. At the end of this period you will be contacted by student services and asked to provide further confirmation that you are still in receipt of benefits should you wish to continue with your claim for the following Academy year.

Parents/carers will be expected to notify the Academy immediately if they are no longer eligible for free meals. The Academy reserves the right to request a refund where any services have been given based on inaccurate or fraudulent information.

Procedure for claiming assistance – Music Tuition

There is a specific claim form and procedure for Music Tuition bursaries.

Procedure for claiming assistance – Other

Some trip/visits/activities may have their own procedure. This may include an appeal to the Academy's charitable Foundation, particularly in regards to trips overseas. In other cases parents/carers should:

- a) Pay any deposit requested in order to reserve a place, subject to a request for assistance. If a request is submitted and refused then the deposit will be refunded;
- b) Write to the Director of Finance and Operations, making sure to include the following information:
 - The name of the student;
 - The name of the trip/visit/activity;
 - An explanation of how the student will benefit;
 - The family financial circumstances;
 - Proof of eligibility for benefits or evidence of annual income.
- c) The Director of Finance and Operations will consult with the appropriate staff members before determining whether financial assistance can be justified
- d) The Director of Finance will contact parents with the outcome within 10 working days of receipt of their request.

Parents/carers will be expected to notify the Academy immediately if they are no longer eligible for free meals. The Academy reserves the right to request a refund where any payments have been given based on inaccurate or fraudulent information

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years as part of the Academy's internal review process.