



Charging & Remissions Policy

June 2019

Date of next review: June 2021

Introduction

The Mercian Trust (the Trust) is required by law to adopt a policy on charging and remission arrangements for activities for the school within the Trust.

The Trust wishes to provide for all students the best possible educational opportunities available within the funds allocated by the Education & Skills Funding Agency. The law states very clearly that education during normal school hours is to be free of any compulsory charge to parents/carers, and the Trust is committed to uphold the legal requirements.

However, educationally valuable activities have been and will continue to be dependent on financial contributions in whole or in part from parents/carers. The Trust's concern is to keep financial contributions to a reasonable minimum, and to ensure as far as possible that all students are able to take part, irrespective of their circumstances. The trust also recognises where contributions are only permitted on a voluntary basis that parents will be advised accordingly.

The law recognises that charges may be made to parents/carers in certain defined circumstances - provided that the Trust and its schools have identified the activities for which charges will be made, and have explained the basis on which charges may be reduced or waived for certain students.

The agreed policy is below.

1. Admissions

There is no charge for admissions. For the selective schools within the Trust, there is no charge to sit the schools' entrance tests.

2. School meals

There is no charge for students who are entitled to free school meals or infant free school meals up to a maximum value per day as determined by Principal/Headteacher of the relevant school. Students who are not entitled to free school meals will be charged as per the displayed prices within each of the schools in the Trust. These may vary from school to school, depending on the individual schools' catering arrangements.

3. Public examinations

There is no charge for examinations that are part of the curriculum and on the schools' set examinations list, where students have been prepared for the examinations by any of the schools within the Trust.

However, if the student fails without good reason to meet an examination requirement, the School concerned may recover the fee incurred from that student's parents. There is no charge for examinations that are not on the set list, but have been arranged by the school.

There is a charge of the examination entry fee(s) if the registered student has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school or if the student elects to resit an examination (see Optional extras under section 5)

4. Activities that take place during school hours (this does not include the break in the middle of the school day)

There is no charge for activities during school hours with the exception of music tuition (section 8).

There is no charge for transport during school hours to school-organised activities.

The school may charge for:

- books and materials that the parent wishes the child to keep (the cost will be made clear to the parents before charge)
- optional extras (section 5)
- music or vocal tuition (section 8).

5. Activities that take place outside of school hours (non-residential)

There is no charge for activities that take place outside of school hours when they are:

- part of the set curriculum, including sports matches against other schools
- part of the syllabus for a public examination that the student is being prepared for by the school
- part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education.

Optional extras

The school will charge for optional extras. Optional extras are:

- education provided outside of school time that is not:
 - a) part of the National Curriculum
 - b) part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the student is being prepared for at the school
 - c) part of religious education
- examination entry fee(s) if the registered student has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school or the student has elected to resit an examination.
- transport that is not taking the student to a school or to other premises where the local authority or governing body has arranged for the student to be provided with education.
- board and lodging for a student on a residential visit.
- Overseas trip costs.

The cost of optional extras

The Principal/Headteacher will decide when it is necessary to charge for optional activities, and the levels of charge will be set annually by the Principal/Headteacher on the recommendation of the Local Governing Body.

Any charge made in respect of individual students will not exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of students participating. In no circumstances will there be an element of subsidy required for any students wishing to

participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge (section 12).

When 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
- the cost of buildings and accommodation
- non-teaching staff
- teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra, including supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra
- the cost, 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.
- An administration charge of up to a maximum of 5% of the total optional extra cost (as set by the Principal/Headteacher and approved by the local governing body) will be included to off-set the school's costs.
- Where the School's online payment system is used the cost of the card fee may also be charged to contribute towards the cost charged by the operator. This percentage is typically around 1% of the cost of the payment.

Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to pay the charges. The school will need to have the agreement of parents before organising the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

6. Activities that take place partly during school hours either on or off site

Where the majority of a non-residential activity takes place during school hours the charging of the activity will be the same as is outlined in section 4. Travelling time is included in time spent on activity.

In cases where the majority of a non-residential activity takes place outside of school hours the charge cannot include the cost of alternative provision for those students who do not wish to participate. So no charge can be made for supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from the school accompanying students on a visit.

In this case the charging of the activity will be the same as is outlined in section 5.

7. Residential activities

The school will not charge for:

- education provided on any visit that takes place during school hours
- 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 student is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education
- supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from the school accompanying students on a residential visit
- travel costs where the residential activity is classed as being within school hours, except for all overseas trips which are optional extras)
- residential activities that take place during school hours.

The school will charge for:

Board and lodging

When any visit has been organised by the school where there may be a cost for board and lodging, parents will be informed of this before the visit takes place. We will charge anything up to the full cost of board and lodging on residential visits, whether it is classified as taking place during school hours or not. The charge will not exceed the actual cost. Parents who are in receipt of certain benefits, or whose child is eligible for pupil premium or free school meals may be eligible for a contribution towards costs (see section 11 for more guidance on remissions).

Travel

Travel charges may apply when the residential activity takes place outside of school hours. The amount charged will be calculated to cover the unit cost per student. These charges may not apply to those students entitled to remissions, but no other students will be charged extra to cover those costs.

Activities

The school may charge for residential activities that fall outside of school hours (section 5).

8. Overseas trips

All overseas trips are optional extras. The costs of overseas trips will be chargeable in full to all parents whose children participate in the trip. Most overseas trips are booked through reputable tour operators and both they and the trust require staff to accompany pupils on the trip. The cost of the trip, board and lodging of such staff is included in the costs of the tour.

We will not charge for:

- the staff cost of teachers accompanying the trip
- the cost of supply teachers for lessons normally taken by those teachers accompanying the trip (however, there may be a charge towards the cost of *support staff* used to cover lessons for teachers involved in the trip)

9. Music tuition within school hours

The Trust follows government legislation that states that all education provided during school hours must be free; however, music lessons are an exception to this rule.

Charges will be made if the teaching is not an essential part of either the National Curriculum or a public examination syllabus being followed by the student(s), or the first access to the Key Stage 2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme (Wider Opportunities).

The school may charge for teaching requested by parents and delivered by specialist tutors given to either an individual student or groups of any appropriate size (provided that the size of the group is based on sound pedagogical principles) to play a musical instrument or to sing. The cost of these lessons may depend on the size and duration of the class as well as the type of instrument.

The cost of music lessons is determined at a school level by the Principal/Headteacher and approved by the local governing body and is defined in the specific school annex at the end of this document.

The school will not charge if the music tuition is part of the National Curriculum or public examination syllabus being followed by the student. This includes instruments, music books and exam fees.

There is no charge for vocal or instrumental tuition for children in care. This includes instruments, music books and exam fees.

10. Extended services

The Trust is dedicated to providing a well-rounded and extensive education for our students which includes a wide range of extra-curricular activities (extended services). Extended services enable our school to provide:

- high-quality learning opportunities either side of the school day
- ways of intervening early when students are at risk of poor outcomes, e.g. by providing access to study support, parenting support or to more specialist services (such as health, social care or special educational needs services)
- ways of increasing student engagement
- ways of improving outcomes and narrowing gaps in outcomes between different groups of students.
- Breakfast and homework / extended hours clubs which sometimes include providing meals.

The total charge will not exceed the cost of providing the activity and no parent will be asked to subsidise others.

11. Damage to property and breakages

Where school property has been wilfully damaged by a student or parent the school will charge those responsible for some or all of the cost of repair or replacement. Where property belonging to a third party has been damaged by a student, and the school has been charged, the school will charge some or all of the cost to those responsible.

The amount to be charged will be determined by the Principal/Headteacher taking into consideration the full circumstances of the damage.

12. Remissions and concessions

We will give consideration to the remission of charges to parents or carers whose children are in receipt of pupil premium or free school meals.

Subject to receiving satisfactory evidence, we will consider parents or carers in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income based Job-seekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (where the person is not receiving Working Tax Credit as well)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
- Income related employment and support allowance

Children of families who receive these payments are also entitled to free school meals.

Parents who are eligible for the remission of charges will be dealt with confidentially.

The Principal/Headteacher will authorise the remission of charges.

The school may choose to subsidise part or all of the payment of some charges for certain activities and students, and this will be determined by the Local Governing Body and Principal/Headteacher.

13. Voluntary contributions

The Trust may ask for voluntary contributions to the school for general funds and/or to fund activities that will enrich our students' education.

In any case where an activity cannot be afforded without voluntary funding, this will be made clear to the parents by the school. If the activity is cancelled all monies paid will be returned to parents.

There is no obligation for a parent or carer to make any contribution and the school will in no way pressure parents to make a contribution.

14. Inability or unwillingness to pay

The Trust is committed to ensuring fair access and treatment of all students, and this means ensuring that no student is excluded from an activity because the parents or carers of that student are unwilling or unable to pay. If there is insufficient funding for an activity, then it will be cancelled.

The identity of the students or parents of the student who did not want to make the payment, or could not make the payment, will not be disclosed under any circumstances.