



Fylde Coast Academy Trust

FCAT Charging & Remissions Policy

Scope

The Fylde Coast Academy Trust (The trust) is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all students, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established the following policy and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against by our offering of school trips, activities and educational extras.

We are committed to adhering to legal requirements regarding charging for school activities and meeting all statutory guidance.

As a trust we try:

- To make activities accessible to all students regardless of family income
- To encourage and promote external activities which give added value to the curriculum
- To respond to the wide variations in family income while not placing additional unexpected burdens on an Academy's budget

This Policy applies to all academies within the Fylde Coast Academy Trust

Legislation and guidance

Under the terms of the Education Act 1996 the trust must have a policy on charging students to participate in academy activities.

Academies are required to comply with this Act through their funding agreements.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions will be used:

- Charge: a fee payable for specifically defined activities.
- Remission: the cancellation of a charge, partly or wholly, which would normally be payable

For the purposes of this document, 'Parent' is taken to include any parent, carer or person with parental responsibility for a student.

Roles and responsibilities

The board of trustees has overall responsibility for approving the charging and remissions policy but can delegate this to a committee or the trust SLT. The board of trustees also has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

Responsibility for approving the charging and remissions policy has been delegated to the trust SLT.

Headteachers are responsible for ensuring staff are familiar with the charging and remissions policy, and that it is being applied consistently.

Staff are responsible for:

- Implementing the charging and remissions policy consistently
- Notifying the Headteacher of any specific circumstances that they are unsure about or where they are not certain of the policy applies

Parents/carers are expected to notify staff or the headteacher of any concerns or queries regarding the charging and remissions policy.

The policy

Where charges cannot be made

Education provided during academy hours must be free – the definition of education includes materials, equipment and transport provided in academy hours by the Trust to carry students between the academy and an activity. By law, students may not be charged for activities that form part of the normal academy day, but the Trust may invite parents and others from time-to-time to make a voluntary contribution to the Trust's work, to allow us to offer activities or experiences which otherwise might not be possible. This might include a voluntary contribution to activities taking place in academy time, activities which form part of the Curriculum or an examination syllabus, or those which form part of each Academy's religious education curriculum. However, the child of any parent who is unable to contribute will not be prevented from participating in an activity which takes place during academy time if the activity goes ahead.

General principles of the policy

We will not charge parents for:

- Admission applications
- Education provided during academy hours
- Education provided outside school hours (if it is part of the national curriculum, part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the student is being prepared for by the academy, or part of religious education)
- Entry for a prescribed public examination (if the student has been prepared for it at the academy)
- Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local authority (LA) has a statutory obligation to provide transport
- Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing body or LA has arranged for pupils to be educated
- Transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when they have been prepared for the examination at the school
- Transport provided in connection with an educational visit

We may charge parents for the following:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment (where they desire their child to own them), for example mathematical equipment
- Wilful damage to academy property, equipment and furniture
- Lost or damaged text or exercise books, lost locker keys and badges, planners etc.
- Ingredients and materials for practical subjects (including design technology, food technology etc.)
- Use of community facilities
- Certain early years provision

Revision aids

From time to time the Academy will provide students with the opportunity to obtain selected revision guides to assist them with the preparation towards examinations. These additional guides can only be provided if the student or his/her parents meet the cost.

Music tuition

There is an exception to the rule about not charging for activities in Academy hours. The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 allow for charges to be made for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually or to groups of any size – if the tuition is at the request of the student's parents / carers.

The charges will not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff providing the tuition. For those lessons that are chargeable each academy will determine whether to arrange individual or group lessons. Payment can be made for lessons via the academy online payments system. If you have any problems with this, please contact the Finance Office. Lessons will not normally commence until payment is received.

Charges cannot be made:

- If the teaching is an essential part of the National Curriculum.
- If the teaching is provided under the first access to the Key Stage 2 instrumental and vocal tuition programme
- For a pupil who is looked after by the local authority

Residential visits

Where at least half of the time away from home is not normal academy time, where the trip involves an overnight stay or where the work undertaken is not an integral part of the curriculum or examination course, the trip is classed as optional and parents can be expected to meet the full cost of residential courses in academy time. If the visit is deemed to have taken place during the academy day, or is part of the required curriculum, or is preparation for a public examination, then only the cost of board and lodging will be passed onto parents and this cannot exceed the actual cost.

Any charge in respect of an optional extra requires parental agreement and willingness to meet the charges. Parents should be aware that the activity may be cancelled if insufficient contributions are received.

If a student is unable to go on a trip after the initial deposit has been paid (unless this is because of ill-health, for which a doctors' note will be required), parents will still be required to meet the full cost of the trip, unless another student can be found to take up the place.

Parents who can prove they are in receipt of certain benefits may be exempt from paying this cost and should contact the academy to discuss.

Visits during the academy day

A voluntary charge will be made to cover the cost of educational visits and other activities. However, charges will not be enforced where this forms part of the curriculum. Where the level of non-payment renders a trip financially unviable, consideration will be given to cancellation. The Academy providing the activities will decide whether to make a charge. Details of such charges will be advised to relevant parties.

Examination fees

No charge will be made in respect of the entry of a registered student at an academy for an examination for which the academy agrees the student should be entered.

Charges will be applied for the entry of a student for an examination for which s/he has not been prepared by an academy, or for entry to an examination against the advice of that academy.

Charges will not be made for any cost associated with preparing a student for an examination. Charging is allowed for tuition and other costs if a student is prepared outside academy hours for an examination that is not set out in regulations. Where a student fails to attend for an examination for which they have been entered (unless this is because of ill-health, for which a doctors' note will be required), parents may be expected to meet the cost of the examination entry.

If the Academy deems it to be in its own interest and/or the interest of former students to seek a remarking of certain examination papers then it can do so. The Academy will pay the appropriate remarking fee from the Academy budget. In some instances however, where examination results may not vary from expected performance, parents might deem it to be in the best interests of the child to have individual papers re-marked. If the Academy agrees to arrange for this to happen, then the Academy is acting as an agent for the parent in obtaining an additional service from the awards body, and the parent is responsible for any fees involved.

The Headteacher's decision in this respect is final.

Extended day services

Parents will be charged for extended day services offered to pupils, for example: breakfast and after school clubs.

Payment must be made via the academy on line payments system, bank card or through childcare vouchers in advance of each session.

School meals

No charge for school meals will be made for pupils who are entitled to free school meals or infant free school meals.

Pupils who are not entitled to free school meals will not be charged at more than the total cost incurred by the school.

Loss or damage

Parents will be expected to meet the cost of repairing or replacing any Trust property damaged or destroyed by a student, or any fines to be paid by the Trust as a result of the actions of a student. A charge will also apply for loss or damage of Trust property (including books or equipment) placed under the care of the student.

Remission of charges

Whilst the Academy cannot charge for Academy-time activities, there may be occasions when it is necessary to invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions towards the benefit of the academy or academy activities. All requests to parents for contributions will make it quite clear that the contributions would be voluntary. Children of parents who do not contribute will not be treated any differently.

If a particular activity cannot take place without some help from parents, this will be explained to them at the planning stage. Where there are not enough voluntary contributions to make the activity possible, and there is no way to make up the shortfall, then the activity will be cancelled. No student will be left out of an activity because his or her parents cannot or will not make a contribution of any kind.

The Academy will in the first instance decide which class or group of students is to benefit from the activity and then look for voluntary contributions, either for that activity or by general fund-raising.

The Trust believes that all students should have the opportunity to gain fully from the experiences the Trust has to offer and recognises the real and persistent difficulties faced by families on low incomes in meeting the cost of educational activities for their children. Parents who find themselves in financial difficulties and who have students at one of our academies in receipt of Free School Meals may apply in confidence to that Academy for financial support with optional activities.

Remission of charges in part or in full will be authorised by the Headteacher in discussion with the Finance Department.

References and further reading

Department of Education charging for school activities

Academy debt policy