

Charging and Remissions Policy

#FI1

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**Statement of intent**

Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, 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.

In addition, we are committed to adhering to legal requirements regarding charging for school activities, and meeting all statutory guidance provided by the DfE.

TCAT will:

* Never charge for education provided during school hours
* Inform parents on low incomes and in receipt of relevant benefits of the support available to them when asking for contributions towards the costs of school visits

# Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

* Education Act 1996
* Children Act 1989
* The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007
* The Education (Prescribed Public Examinations) (England) Regulations 2010
* Freedom of Information Act 2000
* DfE (2018) ‘Charging for school activities’
* DfE (2020) ‘Governance handbook’
* The trust’s Funding Agreement
* ESFA (2023) ‘Academy trust handbook 2023’ (ATH)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following TCAT policies:

* Complaints Procedures Policy
* Debt Recovery Policy
* Freedom of Information Policy
* Freedom of Information Publication Scheme
* Finance Policy

# Charging for education

TCAT will not charge for:

* Admission applications
* Education provided during school hours, including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment
* Education provided outside school hours if it is part of the national curriculum, part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for by the school, or part of RE
* Instrumental or vocal tuition, for pupils learning individually or in groups, unless provided at the request of the pupil’s parent
* Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at school
* Examination resits, if the pupil is being prepared for the resits at a TCAT school

TCAT may charge for:

* Materials, books, instruments or equipment, where the child’s parent wishes their child to own them
* Optional extras
* Music tuition (in certain circumstances)
* Certain early years provision
* The use of community facilities and other commercial activities
* Provision of information within the scope of freedom of information

TCAT will make it clear that, in the following circumstances, it will propose to remit (wholly or partly) any charge which would otherwise be payable to TCAT:

* A valid contribution to recreational activity for Pupil Premium recipients in line with TCAT policy

# Optional extras

TCAT may charge for the following optional extras:

* Education provided outside of school time that is not:
  + Part of the national curriculum
  + Part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
  + Part of RE
* Examination entry fees where the pupil has not been prepared for the examinations as part of a school timetable
* Transport, other than that required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where TCAT has arranged for the pupil to be provided with education
* Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit
* Extended day services offered to pupils, e.g. breakfast or out-of-school provision

When calculating the cost of optional extras, an amount may be included in relation to the following:

* Materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in relation to the optional extra
* Buildings and accommodation
* Non-teaching staff, including TAs
* Teaching staff under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra
* The cost, or an appropriate proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide vocal tuition or tuition in playing a musical instrument, where the tuition is an optional extra

TCAT will not charge in excess of the actual cost of providing the optional extra divided by the number of participating pupils. A subsidy will not be charged for any pupils wishing to participate but whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge. In cases where a small proportion of the activity takes place during school hours, TCAT will not charge for the cost of alternative provision for those not participating.

TCAT will not charge for supply teachers to cover for teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit.

Participation in any optional activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges; therefore, parental agreement is a prerequisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

If a charge is to be made for a particular activity, such as optional extras, parents will be informed of how the charge will be calculated.

# Examination fees and resits

TCAT may charge for examination fees if:

* The examination is on the set list (which includes SATs, GCSEs and A-levels), but the pupil was not prepared for it within a school
* The examination is not on the set list, but TCAT arranged for the pupil to take it
* A pupil fails, without good reason, to complete the requirements of any public examination, including non-attendance without good reason, where TCAT originally paid or agreed to pay the entry fee

If a pupil or their parent consider it to be in the best interests of the pupil to request that an examination is re-marked, any fees involved will be covered by the pupil or their parent. If the awarding body changes the overall grade of the result, TCAT will not be charged by the awarding body and the parent or pupil will have their fees refunded.

# Voluntary contributions

TCAT may, from time-to-time, ask for voluntary contributions towards the benefit school activities. If an activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, TCAT will make this clear to parents at the outset. TCAT will make it clear to parents that there will be no obligation for parents to make any contribution. Parents will be notified regarding whether assistance is available.

No pupil will be excluded from an activity simply because their parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child will still be given an equal opportunity to take part in the activity and TCAT will set out how places will be allocated from the outset. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund an activity, and TCAT cannot fund it via another source, the activity will be cancelled, and this will be made clear to parents.

TCAT will strive to ensure that parents do not feel pressurised into making voluntary contributions. Measures which may make parents feel pressured, such as colour coded letters and direct debit or standing order mandates, will not be sent when TCAT requests contributions.

# Music tuition

Instrumental and vocal music tuition is an exception to the rule that all education provided during school hours must be free. 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 – provided that the tuition is at the request of the pupil’s parents. The charges will not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff providing the tuition.

Charging will not be made if the teaching is an essential part of the national curriculum.

Charging will also not be made if the teaching is provided under the first access to the KS2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme.

No charge for music tuition will be made in respect of pupils who are LAC.

# Transport

TCAT will not charge for:

* Transporting registered pupils to or from TCAT premises, where the LA has a statutory obligation to provide the transport
* Transporting registered pupils to other premises where TCAT has arranged for pupils to be educated
* Transporting pupils to meet an examination requirement when they have been prepared for the examination at a school
* Transport provided for an educational visit

# Education partly during school hours

If 50 percent or more of the time spent on an activity occurs during school hours (including time spent travelling if the travel occurs during school hours), it will be deemed to take place during school hours and no charge will be made.

Whatever the start and finish times of the school day, regulations require that the school day is divided into two sessions. School hours will not include the break in the middle of the day.

If less than 50 percent of the time spent on an activity occurs during school hours, it will be deemed to have taken place outside school hours and TCAT may charge for the activity; however, TCAT will not charge if the activity is part of the national curriculum, part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of RE.

The remission of charges for board and lodging payments is the responsibility of TCAT. These costs will be borne by TCAT.

Any charges for extended day services will be optional.

# Residential visits

TCAT 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, part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of RE
* Supply teachers to cover for teachers accompanying pupils on visits

TCAT may charge for board and lodging. Parents will be exempt from some or all board and lodging costs if they can prove that they are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:

* Income Support
* Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
* Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
* Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
* The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
* Child Tax Credit, provided that they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
* Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
* Universal Credit – if they apply on or after 1 April 2018, their household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits they receive)

TCAT will provide a form for parents to submit and provide proof of receipt of one of the above benefit payments in order to be eligible for any exemption.

If the number of school sessions covered by the visit is equal to or greater than 50 percent of the number of half days (any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day) spent on the visit, TCAT will not charge for the activity.

# Damaged or lost items

TCAT may charge for the cost of replacing items that are damaged or lost due to the negligence or poor behaviour of pupils or their parents. Parents will only be charged the replacement cost to purchase the same or equivalent item. TCAT will consider waiving costs in exceptional circumstances, e.g. financial hardship.

# Remissions

TCAT may set aside funding to enable parents in financial difficulty to send their children on visits and activities. The funding will be limited and there is no guarantee that all requests can be met. Assistance will be allocated on a needs basis, and if the full cost of the trip or activity cannot be met through assistance funding and voluntary contributions, the trip or activity will be cancelled.

Parents in receipt of any of the following benefits may request assistance with the costs of activities:

* Income Support
* Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
* Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
* Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
* The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
* Child Tax Credit, provided that they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and they have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
* Working Tax Credit run on – paid for four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit.
* Universal Credit – if they apply on or after 1 April 2018, their household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits they receive)

To request assistance, parents should contact their Headteacher or Head of School who will pass the request to the appropriate staff at TCAT.

# School trip refunds

All initial deposits for school trips will be non-refundable. Parents will be informed of this when they are provided with initial information about the trip.

In the event that TCAT or the school has to cancel a trip due to foreseen circumstances, parental contributions will be refunded. In the event that a school trip is cancelled by a party other than TCAT or the school due to unforeseen circumstances, it is at the TCAT’s discretion as to whether a refund is given to parents.

In the event that a pupil or their parents cancel the pupil’s place on a trip, it will be at TCAT’s discretion as to whether a refund is given. TCAT will take into account the reason for cancellation, whether TCAT will be reimbursed for the pupil’s place on the trip, and whether the place on the trip can be offered to another pupil.

Where a pupil or their parents have previously cancelled a place on a trip and received a full refund, TCAT will have the right to refuse to allow the pupil to attend future trips and visits.

In the event that a pupil cannot attend a trip at the last minute, e.g. due to illness, it will be at the TCAT’s discretion as to whether a refund is given. TCAT will take into account whether TCAT will be reimbursed for the pupil’s place on the trip and whether the place on the trip can be offered to another pupil.

In the event that a school trip is postponed due to unforeseen circumstances, it will be at TCAT’s discretion as to what happens with the parental contributions for the trip. TCAT will consider its options, which could include carrying forward the money until the trip takes place, transferring the money to another trip, or refunding parents.

In the event that the decision is made to postpone a trip due to foreseen circumstances, it will be at TCAT’s discretion as to what happens with the parental contributions for the trip. TCAT will consider its options, which could include carrying forward the money until the trip takes place, transferring the money to another trip, or refunding parents.

TCAT will deal with cancellations and refunds on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that all pupils and their families are treated equally.

If a parent wishes to make a complaint about refunds, they will be able to do so via the TCAT Complaints Procedures Policy.

# Income generation

In line with the ESFA’s Academy Trust Handbook, TCAT will set fees for chargeable services at full cost and reserves the right to apply an additional rate of return when in a commercial environment.

# Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme

TCAT’s Freedom of Information Policy and Freedom of Information Publication Scheme will set out where fees may be charged for the provision of information.

# Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the published schedule at the front of this document and at any point material changes require it by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and Chief Finance Officer in conjunction with the Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies. Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to all members of staff.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2026.

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| Signed by: | | | |
|  | Executive Headteacher/CEO | Date: |  |
|  | Chair of Trust Board | Date: |  |