

Three Counties Academy Trust



Charging and Remissions Policy

#A7

Last updated: 01 September 2022

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Statement of intent

Three Counties Academy Trust 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.

We promise:

- Not to charge for education provided during school hours
- To inform parents on low incomes and in receipt of relevant benefits of the support available to them when asking for contributions

Please note that while this policy may be more or less generous than the LA's, we have ensured it meets the requirements of the law.

1. Legal framework

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

- Education Act 1996
- The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Prescribed Public Examinations) (England) Regulations 2010
- DfE (2018) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2020) 'Governance handbook'
- The trust's Funding Agreement

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Trust policies:

- Complaints Policy and Procedures
- Debt Recovery Policy

2. Charging for education

Parents will not be charged for:

- Admission applications
- Education provided during school 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 pupil is being prepared for by the school, or part of Religious Education
- Instrumental or vocal tuition, unless provided at the request of the pupil's parent/carer
- Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school
- Examination resits if the pupil is being prepared for the resits at the school

We may charge parents for the following:

- Materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where they desire their child to own them
- Optional extras
- Music tuition (in certain circumstances)
- Vocational tuition (in certain circumstances)
- Use of community facilities

3. Optional extras

We may charge parents 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
 - Religious Education

- Examination entry fees where the pupil has not been prepared for the examinations at the school
- Transport, other than that arranged by the LA for the pupil to be provided with education
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit
- Extended day services offered to pupils

When calculating the cost of optional extras, the Trust will only consider the cost, or an appropriate proportion of the cost, of the following:

- Materials, books, instruments, or equipment provided in relation to the optional extra
- Buildings and accommodation
- Employment of non-teaching staff
- Teaching staff (including TAs) under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra
- Teaching staff employed to provide vocal tuition or tuition in playing a musical instrument

We 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. If a proportion of the activity takes place during school hours, the school will not charge for the cost of alternative provision for those not participating.

We 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 a charge will be levied.

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

4. Examination fees and resits

We may charge for examination fees if:

- The examination is on the prescribed list (which includes SATs, GCSEs, and A-levels), but the pupil was not prepared for it at a Trust school
- The examination is not on the prescribed list, but we arranged for the pupil to take it.
- A pupil fails, without good reason, to complete the requirements of any public examination where the Trust Board or LA originally paid or agreed to pay the fee

Where a pupil is entered for a second or subsequent attempt at an examination, we will pay the fee. Once pupils have left the school, resits must be taken at the school.

If a pupil or their parent/carer consider it to be in the best interests of the pupil to request that an examination is re-marked, any fees involved must be covered by the pupil or their

parent/carer. If the awarding body changes the overall grade of the result, the Trust will not be charged by the awarding body and the parent/carer or pupil will have their fees refunded.

5. Voluntary contributions

The Trust may, from time-to-time, ask for voluntary contributions towards the benefit of the Trust or Trust activities. If an activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, we will make this clear to parents/carers at the outset. There is no obligation for parents/carers to contribute and parents/carers will be notified regarding whether assistance is available.

No pupil will be excluded from an activity simply because their parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay. If a parent/carer is unwilling or unable to pay, their child will still be given an equal opportunity to take part in the activity. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund an activity, and we cannot fund it via another source, the activity will be cancelled.

We will strive to ensure that parents/carers do not feel pressurised into making voluntary contributions.

6. Music tuition

Music tuition is the only 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/carers. The charges will not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff providing the tuition.

7. Transport

Three Counties Academy Trust will not charge for:

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

8. Residential visits

We 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 Religious Education
- Supply teachers to cover for teachers accompanying pupils on visits

We may charge for board and lodging, but the charge will not exceed the actual cost. Parents/carers will be exempt from 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 State 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)

9. Education partly during school hours

If 50% 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 is deemed to take place during school hours and no charge will be made.

If less than 50% of the time spent on an activity occurs during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours and the Trust may charge for the activity; however, the Trust 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 Religious Education.

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

The remission of charges for board and lodging payments is the responsibility of the Trust. These costs will be borne by the Trust's contingency funds.

10. Damaged or lost items

The Trust may charge parents/carers for the cost of replacing items broken, damaged or lost due to their child's behaviour. Parents/carers will not be taken to court for failure to pay such costs.

11. Remissions

The Trust has set aside a small fund to enable parents/carers in financial difficulty to send their children on visits and activities. The funding is limited and there is no guarantee that all requests can be met. Assistance will be allocated on a need's 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/carers 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/carers should contact the Chief Finance Officer, Mrs D Wiles at Queen Elizabeth High School.

12. School trip refunds

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

In the event that the Trust 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 the Trust due to unforeseen circumstances, it is at the Chief Finance Officer's discretion as to whether a refund is given to parents/carers. The Chief Finance Officer will consult the Executive Headteacher on the matter, considering the cost to the Trust, including alternative provision cost.

In the event that a pupil or their parents/carers cancel the pupil's place on a trip, it is at the Chief Finance Officer's discretion as to whether a refund is given. The Chief Finance Officer will consult the Executive Headteacher on the matter, considering the reason for cancellation, whether the Trust 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/carers have previously cancelled a place on a trip without good reason, and received a full refund, the Trust has 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 is at the Chief Finance Officer's discretion as to whether a refund is given. The Chief Finance Officer will consult the Executive Headteacher on the matter, considering whether the Trust 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 is at the Chief Finance Officer's discretion as to what happens with the parental contributions for the trip. The Executive Headteacher will discuss options with the Trust Board, which could include

carrying forward the money until the trip takes place, transferring the money to another trip, or refunding parents/carers.

In the event that the decision is made to postpone a trip due to foreseen circumstances, it is at the Chief Finance Officer's discretion as to what happens with the parental contributions for the trip. The Chief Finance Officer will discuss options with the Executive Headteacher, which could include carrying forward the money until the trip takes place, transferring the money to another trip, or refunding parents.

Once trip arrangements have been booked and confirmed, if contributions exceed the total cost of the trip, a refund will be given where the excess is greater than £1 per pupil. If the excess is less than £1 per pupil, this will be paid into the Trust's account. Excess expenditure will be subsidised by Trust reserves.

We 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/carer wishes to make a complaint about refunds, they can do so via the Complaints Policy and Procedures.

13. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust Board and Executive Headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2023.

Signed by:

_____	Executive Headteacher	Date: _____
_____	Chair of Trustees	Date: _____