



Stephen Sutton
Multi-Academy Trust

Charging and Remissions Policy

This policy (and the procedure outlined within) applies across all partner schools in the Stephen Sutton Multi-Academy Trust (SSMAT). It is available on the SSMAT website and is accessible from our schools' websites.

POLICY APPROVAL and REVIEW

Review date: **March '21**

Approval needed by: **Trust Audit and Risk Committee**

Adopted: **May '17**

Next review date: **March '23**

1. Introduction

1.1 Charging for school activities is regulated by the Education Act 1996 and is explained in the DfE guidance document, 'Charging for School Activities' (2018). The guidance explains that:

- School governing bodies, subject to limited exceptions, cannot charge for education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments, or other equipment);
- Schools must ensure that they inform parents on low incomes, and in receipt of certain benefits, of the support available to them when being asked for contributions towards the cost of school visits. The relevant support payments are: 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, where the parent is not entitled to Working Tax Credit and whose annual income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)) does not exceed the current threshold; Working Tax Credit run-off (paid for four weeks after qualification for when Working Tax Credit finishes); and Universal Credit.

1.2 This policy outlines the Trust's approach to charging for school activities, in the context of the regulatory framework. A summary of key principles and procedures is included in the Staff Handbook (as in Appendix 1).

2. Payment

2.1 The Trust's policy is for all payments by parents/carers to be made through the school's online payment system. Any exceptions to this must be referred to the Finance Team.

2.2 Any outstanding sums payable by parents are recoverable as a civil debt.

3. Educational Visits

3.1 Schools cannot charge for:

- education provided on any visit that takes place during school hours;
- education provided on any visit that takes place outside school hours that is part of the national curriculum, part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the student is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- the cost incurred by employing supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying students on a residential visit.



- 3.2 Schools can charge for board and lodgings during school trips,. Board, lodging and travel costs are generally charged on residential trips, although the charge will not exceed the actual cost
- 3.3 Schools can ask for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any planned school activities. If the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, the school should make this clear to parents at the outset. Where insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a visit, and the school cannot fund it from some other source, then the trip must be cancelled.
- 3.4 When a Trust school 'collapses the timetable' and offers a range of activities (some of which may be off-site) at a range of costs, including free activities, those activities that are mainly during school hours and for which the school incurs a cost are classed as 'optional extras', i.e. they are not integral to the curriculum.
- 3.5 Where an educational visit is to take place mainly during school hours and would contribute substantively to the requirements of a course, parents receive a letter including the following wording (or similar):
- As this visit takes place wholly (or mainly) in school time, it is necessary to ask for a voluntary contribution of £.... per student. There is no obligation to contribute and no student will be omitted from the visit on the basis that they do not pay, or do not pay in full. However, the visit cannot go ahead if the school does not receive sufficient contributions by (date).*
- 3.6 Where a family is in receipt of certain benefits, as listed in the DfE guidance, the charges made for a trip may be reduced or waived on application. Any agreement to reduce or waive charges is agreed by the Office / Finance Team, in consultation with senior staff.

4. Music Tuition

- 4.1 Charges may be made for vocal or instrumental tuition, provided that the tuition is provided at the request of the student's parent/carer and is not an essential part of the curriculum. Charges may not be made for students who are in care.
- 4.2 Prior written consent is obtained by the school, confirming that parents/carers are willing to pay the charge. Non-payment of the invoice within 28 days results in the cancellation lessons until the invoice is paid.

5. 16 – 19 Bursary Fund

- 5.1 The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to sixth form students to help them to overcome barriers to participation in education. There are two types of 16 – 19 bursaries:

- a bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable students groups; and
- a discretionary bursary that schools award to meet individual needs, e.g. to support with transport, meals, books and equipment, trips and visits.

5.2 The level of support that a school can offer is dependent on the funding received from the Education and Skill Funding Agency (ESFA).

5.3 In order to be eligible for one of the bursaries, eligible students must be under 19 on 31 August and enrolled on a non-fee-paying full time course at the school.

5.4 Applications for financial assistance from the bursary are generally made by the student through on an application form. A decision is made by Head of Post-16, with the Headteacher authorising any amounts over £100.

6. Examination Fees

6.1 The cost of examination entries for courses taught at the school will normally be met by the school. An examination entry fee may be charged to parents if the student:

- was not prepared for the examination at the school; or
- fails, without good reason, to complete the requirements of any public examination, where the school paid, or agreed to pay, the entry fee.

Where a charge is to be made, prior written confirmation from the parent will be obtained that he/she is willing to pay the charge. This applies to both initial examination fees and re-sits.

6.2 Where a parent requests that an examination is re-marked and/or wishes to be sent a copy of the examination script, the full amount will be invoiced. On occasions, the schools will make its own decision to have papers returned or, with the consent of students/parents, have papers re-marked. In these circumstances, the cost will be borne by the school.

7. Other Charges

7.1_Schools cannot charge for education provided during school hours (including the supply of materials and equipment). However, a charge can be made for materials and equipment, where the student's parent/carer wishes him/her to own them.

7.2 In practical subjects, such as Art and Design and Technology, parents may be asked for the full or partial cost of materials or ingredients. The charge only covers the actual costs and, where appropriate, an administration fee and VAT. Parents are

notified in writing in these cases. Where parents have difficulty meeting these costs, and are in receipt of certain benefits, the school will provide support.

- 7.3 Other items (school photographs, leavers' books and hoodies etc.) may be sold in school. Charges only cover the actual cost and, where appropriate, and administration fee and VAT.
- 7.4 Charges may be made for the late return, loss or damage of resources and equipment (e.g. library books).
- 7.5 A refundable deposit may be charged for lockers.
- 7.6 Parents/carers are asked to pay the cost of any damage (e.g. broken windows, damaged resources etc.), where this is a result of a student's inappropriate behaviour.

8. Lettings

- 8.1 Charges for the letting of the school's facilities are reviewed annually. These costs cover the cost to the academy of opening, heating, cleaning and supervising the buildings.

Stuart Jones / Sharon Thorp; reviewed March '21

Appendix 1 – Advice to Staff on the Trust’s Charging and Remissions Policy (reproduced in the Staff Handbook)

Other than in exceptional circumstances, payments by parents are made online, through the school’s on-line payments system. Any exceptions are referred to the office / finance staff.

Departments may charge for materials and equipment, only where a student will own the item. The charge must only cover the actual costs and, where appropriate, an administration fee and VAT. Furthermore:

- A charge can only be made for textbooks, where they are supplementary to the main texts and become the property of the student.
- An intention to charge is registered with the Finance Team and the appropriate senior member of staff. Details of the item for which a charge will be made are sent to the Office / Finance Team, who set the information up on for online payment.
- When organising a visit, colleagues follow the guidance in the Educational Trips and Visits Policy. Visits are approved by the Educational Visits Co-ordinator (through ‘Evolve’).
- When the Office / Finance Team confirm that the online payment set-up is complete, students and parents/carers are informed that payments can be made online.
- Details of which parents have paid for each item are available through the Office / Finance Team.
- Financial transactions are open to audit checking; correct procedures must be followed.