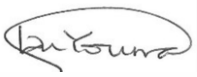
The Sycamore Church of England Trust

Grow together, Learn forever

Charging and Remissions Policy

Applicable to:	All Trust Schools
Adopted By:	Trust Lead
Date Adopted:	December 2022
Authorised Signatory:	
Mr Ian Young – Trust Leader and CEO	
Mark Granby – Chair of Trustees	
Review Period:	Annually
Next Review:	September 2027

Record of Policy Changes and Reviews

Date	Details	Reason for Review / Change
August 2022	Policy reviewed against the Academy Trust Handbook 2022 - no changes were required other than a reference in the 'Legal framework' section. A minor change has also been made to the 'Damaged and lost items' section.	Annual Review, Updated guidance
January 2024	Change of reference from Local Academy Committee to Local Governing Board and from Partners to Governors changed as per Trust Board decision Policy reviewed this policy against the 'Academy trust handbook 2023' and other relevant guidance. Minor changes have been made to the 'Voluntary contributions' and 'Residential visits' section.	Annual Review, Updated guidance
November 2024	Annual Review – No changes	N/A
September 2026	Annual review – No changes	N/A

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Statement of Intent
We are 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 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.

The school 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.

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
- 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 (2024) 'Academy Trust Handbook 2024'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedure Policy
- Debt Recovery Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme
- The Trust's Scheme of Delegation
- Finance Policy

2. Charging for Education

We will not charge parent/carers for:

- Admissions 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 religious education.
- Instrumental or vocal tuition, for pupils learning individually or in groups, 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 re-sits, if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sits at the school.

We may charge parents/carers for the following:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment, where a parent/carer desires their child to own them.
- Optional extras
- Music and vocational tuition (in certain circumstances)
- Certain Early Years provision.
- Use of community facilities and other commercial activities.
- Provision of information within the scope of Freedom of Information.

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

3. Optional Extras

We can charge parents/carers for the following optional extras such as but not limited to:

- Education provided outside 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 school.
    - Part of Religious Education
- Examination entry fees where the pupil has not been prepared for the examinations at school.
- Transport, other than that required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the Trust Board has arranged for the pupil to be provided with education.
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit
- Childcare provision provided in addition to a parent/carer's funded entitlement.
- School meals where a parent/carer does not have a free entitlement.
- School milk where a parent/carer does not have a free entitlement.
- 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:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in relation to the optional extra
- The cost of buildings and accommodation
- The employment of non-teaching staff (including TA's).
- The cost of 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.

The school 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/carers 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.

The school 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 parent/carer choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Therefore, a parent/carer agreement is a prerequisite for the provision of an optional extra.

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

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

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, the school will not be charged by the awarding body and the parent or pupil will have their fees refunded.

5. Voluntary Contributions

We may ask for voluntary contributions towards the benefit of the school or school activities. If an activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, we will make this clear to parents/carers at the outset. We will also make it clear that there is no obligation for parents/carers to make a contribution and notify parents/carers whether assistance may be 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 and school will set out how many places will be allocated from the outset. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund an activity, and the school cannot fund it via another source, the activity will be cancelled and this will be made clear to parents.

We will strive to ensure that parents/carers 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 the school requests contributions.

6. 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.

7. Transport

We will not charge for:

- Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the LA has a statutory obligation to provide the transport.
- Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing 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. 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 the school may charge for the activity; however, the school 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 the school. These costs will be borne by the school.

Any charges for extended day services will be optional.

9. 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 can charge for board and lodgings – but the charge will not exceed the actual cost. Parents/carers will be exempt from board and lodgings 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 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)

The school 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 the 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, the school will not charge for the activity.

10. Damaged or Lost Items

The school 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. The school will consider waiving costs in exceptional circumstances, e.g. financial hardship.

11. Remissions

The school will set aside a fund 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 the school office in the first instance.

12. School Trip Refunds

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

In the event that the school has to cancel a trip due to unforeseen circumstances, parent/carer contributions will be refunded. In the event that a school trip is cancelled by a party other than the school due to unforeseen circumstances, it is at the schools' discretion as to whether refund is given to parents/carers.

In the event that a pupil or their parent/carer cancel the pupil's place on a trip, it is at the schools' discretion as to whether a refund is given. The school will take into account the reason for the cancellation, whether the school 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 parent/carer have previously cancelled a place on a trip and received a full refund, the school 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 schools' discretion as to whether a refund is given. The school will take into account whether the school 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 the school trip is postponed due to unforeseen circumstances, it is at the school's discretion as to what happens with the parent/carer contributions for the trip. The school will consider its' options, which could include carrying forward the money until the trip takes place, transferring the money to another trip or refunding the parent/carer.

In the event that the decision is made to postpone a trip due to foreseen circumstances, it is at the schools' discretion as to what happens with the parent/carer contributions for the trip. The school 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/carers.

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.

The school 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 Procedures Policy.

13. Swimming Lessons

The school organises swimming lessons for all children in KS2. These take place in school time and are part of the National Curriculum. We make no charge for this activity, but we may ask for a voluntary contribution from parents/carers to cover the cost of transport. We inform parents/carers when these lessons are to take place, and we seek the written permission of parents/carers for their children to take part.

14. Use of Community Facilities/Lettings

We will charge for hire of the school facilities in line with our Lettings Policy.

15. Income Generation

In line with the ESFA's ATH, the trust 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.

16. Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme

The school's Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme sets out where fees may be charged for the provision of information.

17. Monitoring

This policy will be monitored on an annual basis by the Trust Finance Committee.