



Charging and Remissions Policy

Policy Statement

Acer Trust is committed to the principle of free education and recognises the valuable contribution that a wide range of activities, including school visits and residential experiences, can make towards all aspects of our pupils' education. We also believe that all our pupils should have an equal opportunity to benefit from school activities and visits (curricular and extracurricular) independent of their parent's financial means.

The Trust recognises its responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances. To this end we will try to adhere to the following guidelines:

- where possible, we shall publish a list of visits (and their approximate cost) at the beginning of the school year so that parents can plan ahead;
- we have established a system for parents to pay in instalments where appropriate;
- when an opportunity for a trip arises at short notice, we will endeavour to arrange to pay by instalments beyond the date of the trip;
- we acknowledge that offering opportunities on a 'first pay, first served' basis discriminates against pupils from families on lower incomes and we will avoid that method of selection.

Background

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education and the Education Act 1996, which requires all schools to have a policy on charging and remissions for school activities.

The policy identifies activities run by Trust schools for which:

- voluntary contributions may be requested;
- charges will be made;
- charges will not be made;
- charges may be waived.

Definitions

This policy operates the following definitions:

- **Charge:** a fee payable for specifically defined activities
- **Remission:** the cancellation of a charge which would normally be payable

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- **Voluntary contribution:** a payment made on a voluntary basis, whereby activities, participation or service will not be withheld as a result of non-payment

School hours

For the purpose of this policy, school hours are defined as usual, timetabled school sessions. Where activities span both school hours and non-school hours, the activity will be classified as within school hours if the majority of the activity takes place during usual school time. Where the majority of the activity takes place outside of school time (such as evenings or weekends) the activity will be classified as outside of school hours for the purpose of this policy.

Voluntary contributions

Separately from the matter of charging, schools may always seek voluntary contributions in order to offer a wide variety of experiences to pupils. All requests for voluntary contributions will emphasise their voluntary nature.

The Law states:

- if the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions the school will make this clear to parents from the outset;
- no child will be excluded from an activity because his or her parents are unable or unwilling to pay;
- if insufficient contributions are received, the trip or activity may have to be cancelled;
- if a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child will still be given an equal opportunity to go on the visit.

One-to-one devices

Where the school operates a one-to-one device scheme, families may commit to making voluntary contributions towards the device. In such cases, the family will own the item at the end of the scheme in question. Families may opt not to make contributions and therefore may borrow the device from the school for the duration of the scheme, but they will not own it at the end.

When charges will not be made

Charges will not be made for the following:

Education

- an admission application;
- 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 at the school, or part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education;
- tuition for pupils learning to play musical instruments (or singing) if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school;
- examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school. However, if a pupil fails, without good reason, to meet any examination requirement for a syllabus a charge will be made;

Residential visits

- education provided on any trip that takes place during school hours;
- provision of education on any trip that takes place outside school hours, 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 the school's basic curriculum for religious education;
- supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential trip;

Transport

- transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport;
- transporting registered pupils to other premises where the school or local authority has arranged for pupils to be educated;
- transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when he or she has been prepared for that examination at the school;
- transport provided in connection with an educational trip.

Charges will be made

The Trust reserves the right to make a charge for certain activities and provision which may from time to time be organised by the school. The circumstances in which charges may be made are outlined below:

Education

- Any materials, books, instruments or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him or her to own them;
- Optional extras (see below);
- Music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances (see below);
- Certain early years provision;
- Community facilities;
- Examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school and the pupil fails, without good reason, to meet any examination requirement for a syllabus.

Optional extras

We may charge for activities known as 'optional extras'. In these cases, we may charge for providing materials, books, instruments or equipment. The following are optional extras:

- Education provided outside of school time that is not part of:
 - The National Curriculum;
 - A syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school; or
 - Religious education.
- Examination entry fee(s) if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school;
- Transport other than transport that is required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the local authority or governing board has arranged for the pupil to be provided with education. This includes costs incurred by the school in providing home to school transport for pupils who live outside of the school's designated catchment area;

- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit;
- Extended day services offered to pupils (such as breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions).

Any charge for a particular activity will be dependent upon the type of activity and its cost and the number of participants. This charge will not exceed the actual cost of providing the activity, divided equally by the number of pupils willing to participate. The cost of other pupils participating in the visit will not be included in the charge. When calculating the cost of optional extras, we will take into account:

- The cost of any materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra;
- The cost of buildings, travel and accommodation;
- The cost of engaging non-teaching staff to support the activity;
- The cost of engaging teaching staff solely to provide an optional extra (including supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra);
- The cost, or an appropriate proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, or vocal tuition, where the tuition is an optional extra;
- entrance fees to museums, castles, theatres, etc.;
- insurance costs.

Any charge made in respect of individual pupils will not be greater than the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating.

Any charge will not include an element of subsidy for any other pupils who wish to take part in the activity 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, the charge cannot include the cost of alternative provision for those pupils who do not wish to participate.

Parental agreement is necessary for the provision of an optional extra which is to be charged for.

Music tuition

We will not charge for music tuition where the teaching is an essential part of the National Curriculum or provided under the first access to the Key Stage 2 instrumental and vocal tuition programme. However, we may charge for vocal or instrumental tuition provided at the request of the pupil's parent, whether delivered individually or to groups of pupils.

We will not charge for music tuition provided for pupils who are looked after by a local authority.

Residential visits

We may charge for board and lodging on residential visits, but the charge will not exceed the actual cost. Parental consent will be obtained for their children's participation in any such activities for which a charge may be made. However, pupils whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits (see remissions policy below) may not be charged for board and lodging costs.

Whether or not a trip is considered to take place during school hours will depend upon whether more than 50% of the trip takes place during usual school time. For residential trips, time will be assessed in relation to the number of school sessions taking place on the school trip, as compared with the number of half days spent on the trip. If the number of school sessions on a residential trip is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on the trip it is deemed to have taken place during school hours (even if

some activities take place late in the evening). Whatever the starting and finishing times of the school day, regulations require that the school day is divided into 2 sessions. A "half day" means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

Fines

In rare circumstances, pupils and students may deliberately undertake actions that cause damage to school property or operation. In such circumstances, where there is a clear breach of behaviour expectations and demonstrable damage is caused to property or the operation of the school, a fine may be levied. The school will clearly communicate to parents and students the circumstances under which fines may be levied, along with indicative amounts for fine associated with common infractions.

Remissions

In order to remove financial barriers from disadvantaged pupils, the Trust has agreed that some activities and visits where charges can legally be made will be offered at no charge or a reduced charge to parents in particular circumstances. This remissions policy sets out the circumstances in which such charges will be waived.

Families will qualify for remission or help with charges if they are in receipt of:

- Income Support;
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance;
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- Child Tax Credit – provided you're 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 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit;
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit;
- Universal Credit – if you apply on or after 1 April 2018, your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Additional categories of parents may claim help with some costs in the following circumstances:

- specific individual circumstances that have caused temporary hardship;
- recently moved into hardship but not yet receiving the benefits mentioned above;
- made a specific request to the Headteacher for any other justifiable reason. The remission is at the Headteacher's discretion in these circumstances based on any evidence provided.