



Charging & Remissions Policy 2024

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Department of Education (DfE). All Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors of the company as well as Trustees of the exempt charity; the term 'Trustee' used in this Policy also means Director. This Policy applies to all academies within the Link Academy Trust.

Introduction

We believe that all our pupils should have an equal opportunity to benefit from school activities and visits (curricular and extra-curricular) independent of their parents' or carers' financial means. This charging and remissions policy describes how we will do our best to ensure a good range of visits and activities is offered and, at the same time, try to minimise the financial barriers which may prevent some pupils taking full advantage of the opportunities.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that there is clarity over those items:

- which will be provided free of charge;
- where there may be a charge;
- where charges may be waived.

Separately from the matter of charging, schools may seek voluntary contributions to offer a wide variety of experiences to pupils. This is also explained in the Charging and Remissions policy.

This policy has been informed by the Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

Definition

A typical school day is 9.00am to 3.30pm with the midday break not forming part of the total hours, timings may vary by school.

Responsibilities

The Executive/Academy Heads (E/AHs) will ensure that staff are familiar with, and correctly apply the policy.

Activities during the school day

During the school day all activities that are a necessary part of the National Curriculum or religious education will be provided free of charge, although voluntary contributions may be requested to cover costs of transportation and the fees of any third-party provider.

However, this excludes the teaching of a musical instrument (see below).

From time to time, a school within the Trust may invite a non-school based organisation such as a visiting drama group or storyteller to arrange an activity during the school day. Such organisations may wish to charge parents, who may, if they wish, ask the E/AH to agree to their child being excused for that session. When organising school trips or visits during the school day which enrich the curriculum and educational experience of the children, schools

will invite parents to contribute to the cost of the trip through a voluntary contribution (see below).

The following is a non-exhaustive list of additional activities that may be organised by schools during the school day, for which voluntary contributions will be invited from parents:

- visits to museums;
- sporting activities which require transport expenses;
- outdoor adventure activities;
- visits to the theatre;
- school trips;
- musical events.

Activities partly during the school day

If an activity happens partly inside the school day and partly outside of it, there will be no charge if most of the time to be spent on the activity falls within the school day. Conversely, if the greater proportion of time spent on the activity falls outside of the normal school day, charges will be made. When such activities are arranged parents will be told how the charges were calculated.

Optional activities outside of the school day

Schools may charge for optional, extra activities provided outside of the school day, for example; football club, theatre visit, after school club or breakfast club. Such activities are not part of the National Curriculum or religious education nor are they part of an examination syllabus.

Where a school wishes to charge for an optional activity, parents will be informed in advance. Where specific funding has been received to support activities, the school will subsidise the charge to the extent permitted by the funding.

Participation in any optional extra activity will be based on parental choice and agreement and a willingness to meet the charges.

Residential trips - Essential

If the school organises a residential visit in school time or mainly in school time, which is to provide education directly related to the National Curriculum, or religious education or that forms an essential part of the syllabus for an approved examination, no charge is made for the education element of the trip. However, a charge will be made to cover the costs of board and lodging.

Voluntary contributions will be sought to fund the cost of the trip.

Residential trips – Non-essential

For residential trips which are not essential to the National Curriculum, or religious education, or that form an essential part of the syllabus for an approved examination, a charge will be levied up to the full cost of the trip.

Music Tuition

Charges in respect of individual music tuition, and group music tuition up to and including 4 persons will be levied if the teaching is not an essential part of either the National Curriculum or a public examination syllabus being followed by the pupil.

Calculating charges

When charges are made for any activity, whether during or outside of the school day, they will be based on the actual costs incurred, divided by the total number of pupils participating. The principles of best value will be applied when planning activities that incur costs to the school and/or charges to parents.

The E/AHs may decide not to levy charges in respect of a particular activity, if they feel it is reasonable in the circumstances. If any doubt, refer to the Finance Manager.

Damage/Loss to Property

A charge will be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of school property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials), the charge to be the cost of replacement or repair, or such lower cost as the E/AHs may decide.

A charge will be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials) belonging to a third party, where the cost has been recharged to a school. The charge to be the cost of replacement or repair, or such lower cost as the E/AHs may decide.

Other charges

The E/AHs may levy charges for miscellaneous services up to the cost of providing such services e.g. for providing a copy of an OFSTED report.

Voluntary Contributions

The schools may ask parents for voluntary contributions towards the cost of:

- any activity which takes place during school hours;
- school equipment;
- school funds generally.

Where the school cannot levy charges in the circumstances described above, and it is not possible to make additional activities within the resources ordinarily available to the school, the school may request parents to contribute towards the cost of the trip. If a parent wishes their child to take part in a school trip or event but is unwilling or unable to make a voluntary contribution, we do allow the child to participate fully in the trip or activity and the pupil will not be treated differently. However, this can clearly place the school in some difficulty on occasions where a few parents/carers might be in such a position. We will then have to decide whether the school can cover the costs of such an activity from within its budget or by fundraising, or whether the activity must be cancelled for all pupils. Parents have a right to know how each trip is funded. The school provides this information on request.

Remissions

To remove financial barriers from disadvantaged pupils, the Board of Trustees 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 Charging and Remissions Policy sets out the circumstances in which charges will be waived.

Families may qualify for full remission of charges if they are in receipt of:

- Universal Credit (UC)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

This is discretionary and should be discussed with the individual Academy.

Families who may claim help with some of the charges:

- The E/AHs may remit in full, or part, charges in respect of a pupil, if they feel it is reasonable in the circumstances.
- If parents are experiencing financial difficulty, they are invited to write in confidence to the E/AH of their school.
- Support for cases of hardship will come through voluntary contributions and fund raising.

General Considerations

We recognise our 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:

- We shall advise parents at the earliest opportunity of visits and their approximate cost
- We shall have a system for parents to pay in instalments
- When an opportunity for a trip arises at short notice it will be possible to arrange to pay by instalments beyond the date of the trip.

Policy Owner: Finance Manager/DCEO

This Policy is reviewed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee annually.

Approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee: 25th November 2022

Approved by the F&GP Committee: 24th November 2023

Approved by the F&GP Committee: 12th December 2024

Next Review: Autumn 2025