



Three  
Spires  
TRUST

*'Life in all its fullness'*

# Charging & Remissions Policy

Policy owner	Chief Financial Officer
Approved by	Trust Board
Approval date	Spring 2024
Review date	Summer 2025

## Policy Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	Spring 2024	CFO	Original Policy
2.0	28/08/2024	CFO	ATH references. Added section 14 – Damaged or Lost items. Added section 15 – School Trip refunds. Added section 19 – Freedom of Information Policy & Publication Schedule. Added section 21 – Monitoring & Review. Added reference for charging for Early Year provision. Updated voluntary contributions section.

## **Statement of intent**

Three Spires 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.

## **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
- DfE (2018) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2020) 'Governance handbook'
- ESFA Academy Trust Handbook 2024 (ATH)
- The Trust's Funding Agreement

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Policy
- Debt Recovery Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

## **2. Admissions**

There is no charge for admissions.

## **3. School meals**

There is no charge for pupils who are entitled to free school meals as determined from time to time by the Local Authority and communicated in writing to the academies, or to pupils aged 6 and under who are entitled to infant free school meals.

Pupils who are not entitled to free school meals will be charged the advertised price for all food and drink items purchased at the academies.

## **4. Public examinations**

There is no charge for examinations that are part of the curriculum and on the academy's set examinations list, or where children have been prepared for the examinations by the academy.

However, if a pupil fails without good reason to meet an examination requirement, the academy may recover the fee incurred from that pupil's parents. These principles apply equally to re-sits.

## **5. Activities that take place during academy hours**

(n.b. this does not include the break in the middle of the academy day i.e. lunchtime)

There is no charge for education or any activities during academy hours with the exception of music tuition (section 10).

There is no charge for transport during academy hours to academy-organised activities.

## **We may charge for:**

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment that the parent wishes the child to keep (the cost will be made clear to the parents before charge) for example, revision guides and technology ingredients.
- Optional extras (section 7)
- Music or vocal tuition (section 10)
- Certain early years provisions
- The use of community facilities and other commercial activities (section 12)
- Provision of information within the scope of freedom of information

## **6. Activities that take place outside of academy hours (non-residential)**

There is no charge for activities that take place outside of academy hours when they are:

- part of the set curriculum, including sports matches against other institutions
- part of the syllabus for a public examination that the pupil is being prepared for by the academy.
- part of the academy's basic curriculum for religious education.

## **7. Optional extras**

The academy may charge for optional extras.

Optional extras are:

- education provided outside of academy 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 academy
  - › part of religious education
- examination entry fees if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination at the academy.
- transport that is not taking the pupil to academy or to other premises where the local authority or governing body has arranged for the pupil to be provided with education.
- board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit.
- extended day services offered to pupils, for example breakfast clubs.

## **The cost of optional extras**

In each academy the Principal will decide when it is necessary to charge for optional extras. The level of charge will be determined as each case merits and will be clearly communicated to parents. Any charge made in respect of individual pupils will not exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating. Under no circumstances will a subsidy be charged to some pupils' parents to reduce or offset the cost charged to other pupils' parents.

When calculating the cost of optional extras an amount may be included in relation to:

- any materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra
- teaching and non-teaching staff directly and solely engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra
- the cost, or a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, where the tuition is an optional extra
- the costs of buildings and accommodation

Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to pay the charges. The academy will need to have the agreement of parents before organising the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

## **8. Activities that take place partly during academy hours either on or off site**

Where the majority of a non-residential activity takes place during academy hours the charging of the activity will be the same as is outlined in section 4. Travelling time is included in time spent on activity.

In cases where the majority of a non-residential activity takes place outside of academy hours any charge applied will not include the cost of alternative provision for those pupils who do not wish to participate. So, no charge can be made for supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from the academy accompanying pupils on a visit.

## **9. Residential activities**

There will be no charge for:

- education provided on any visit that takes place during academy hours
- education provided on any visit that takes place outside academy hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the academy, or part of religious education
- supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from academy accompanying pupils on a residential visit
- travel costs where the residential activity is classed as being within academy hours
- residential activities that take place during academy hours.

**Charges may be made for:**

### **Board and lodging**

When any visit has been organised by the academy where there may be a cost for board and lodging, parents will be informed of this before the visit takes place. This could be anything up to the full cost of board and lodging on residential visits, whether it is classified as taking place during academy hours or not. The charge per pupil will not exceed the actual cost per pupil. Parents who can prove they are in receipt of certain benefits may be exempt from paying the full cost (see section 13 for more guidance on remissions).

### **Travel**

Travel charges may apply when the residential activity takes place outside of academy hours. The amount charged will be calculated to cover the unit cost per pupil. These charges may not apply to those pupils entitled to remissions, but no other pupils will be charged extra to cover those costs.

### **Activities**

The academy may charge for residential activities that fall outside of academy hours (see section 5).

## **10. Music tuition within Academy hours**

Academies within Three Spires Trust follow government legislation that states that all education provided during academy hours must be free. However, music lessons are an exception to this rule – The Charges for Music Tuition Regulations 2007.

Charges may be made if the teaching is provided at the request of parents and delivered by specialist tutors to either an individual pupil or groups of any appropriate size (provided that the size of the group is based on sound pedagogical principles) to play a musical instrument or to sing. The cost of these lessons may depend on the size and duration of the class as well as the type of instrument.

The academy will not charge if the music tuition is part of the National Curriculum or public examination syllabus being followed by the student. Nor if the child is looked after by a Local Authority.

## **11. Extended Services**

Our academies provide a well rounded and extensive education for our students which includes a wide range of extra-curricular activities (extended services). Extended services enable our academies to provide:

- High quality learning opportunities either side of the school day
- Ways of intervening early when children are at risk of poor outcomes
- Ways of increasing pupil engagement
- Ways of improving outcomes and narrowing gaps in outcomes between different groups of pupils.

The total charge will not exceed the cost of providing the activity and no parent will be asked to subsidise others.

## **12. Community facilities**

Academy Committees are responsible for the setting of charges and conditions of hire for letting out various areas of their academy (e.g. sports pitches, room hire, swimming pool hire). Charges must cover the costs associated with this activity and where appropriate VAT should be charged. Relevant schedules of charges can be found on the individual academy's websites.

## **13. Damage to property and breakages**

Where academy property has been wilfully damaged by a student or parent the academy may charge those responsible for some or all of the cost of repair or replacement.

Where property belonging to a third party has been damaged by a pupil, and the academy has been charged, the academy may charge some or all of the cost to those responsible.

Whether or not these charges will be made will be decided by the Principal and dependent on the situation.

## **14. Damage 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.

## **15. School Trip Refunds**

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

In the event that the school 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 school due to unforeseen circumstances, it is at the school's discretion as to whether a refund is given to parents.

In the event that a pupil or their parents cancel the pupil's place on a trip, it will be at the school's discretion as to whether a refund is given. The school will take into account the reason for 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 parents have previously cancelled a place on a trip and received a full refund, the school will have 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 will be at the school's 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 a school trip is postponed due to unforeseen circumstances, it will be at the school's discretion as to what happens with the parental 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.

In the event that the decision is made to postpone a trip due to foreseen circumstances, it will be at the school's discretion as to what happens with the parental 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.

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 wishes to make a complaint about refunds, they will be able to do so via the Complaints Procedures Policy.

## **16. Remissions and concessions**

The academy will give consideration to the remission of charges to parents or carers whose children receive Free Academy Meals and/or receive the following support payments:

- 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)

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 benefit from the remission.

Three Spires Trust academies will not charge for board and lodging for residential visits for any pupil whose parent(s) meet the FSM criteria outlined above. Parents who are eligible for the remission of charges will be dealt with confidentially. The Principal and chair of governors will authorise the remission of charges.

The academy may choose to subsidise part or all of the payment of some charges for certain activities and pupils, and this will be determined by the governing body and Principal.

## **17. Voluntary contributions**

Academies may, from time-to-time, ask for voluntary contributions towards the benefit of the school or school activities. If an activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, the academy will make this clear to parents at the outset. There is no obligation for parents to make a contribution and parents will be notified regarding whether assistance is available.

No pupil will be excluded from an activity simply because their parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child will still be given an equal opportunity to take part in the activity and the school will set out how places will be allocated from the outset. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund an activity, and the academy cannot fund it via another source, the activity will be cancelled and all monies paid will be returned to parents.

The academy will strive to ensure that parents do not feel pressurised into making voluntary contributions. Measures which may make parents feel pressurised, such as colour coded letters and direct debit or standing order mandates, will not be sent when the school requests contributions.

## **18. Inability or unwillingness to pay**

Three Spires Trust is committed to ensuring fair access and treatment of all pupils, and this means ensuring that no child is excluded from an activity because the parents or carers of that child are unwilling or unable to pay. If there is insufficient funding for an activity, then it will be cancelled. The identity of the child or parents of the child who did not want to make the payment, or could not make the payment, will not be disclosed under any circumstances.

## **19. Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme**

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

## **20. Complaints**

Complaints about the implementation of this policy or any decisions taken in line with the policy will be considered as part of the academy's complaints procedure.

## **21. Monitoring & Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust board. The next scheduled review date for this policy is Summer 2025.