



Charging & Remissions Policy

Forward Education Trust & Schools

Date of Approval:	May 2023
Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Review Date	May 2024

Policy Information:

Date of last review	March 2022	Review period	Annual
Date approved	May 2023	Approved by	Board of Trustees
Policy owner	Director of Finance	Date of next review	May 2024

Updates made since the last review:

Review date	Changes made	By whom
May 2023	Better explains the approach to individual meal pricing 'we aim to cover costs at the level of the individual meal' 2. School meals Refers to School Office Manager rather than Schools Admin 9. Setting up and Managing School Trips	Claire Pooni Claire Pooni

Charging & Remissions Policy

Introduction

The purpose of the Policy is to ensure that there is clarity over those items which the academies in the Trust will provide free of charge and for those items where there may be a charge.

The Trust will ensure that staff are familiar with and correctly apply the policy. The Board of Trustees will review the policy annually to ensure that it meets with current guidance from the Department for Education.

1. Admissions

There is no charge for admission to school.

2. School meals

There is no charge for children who are entitled to free school meals or universal infant free school meals. Pupils who are not entitled to free school meals will be charged a set amount per day, decided by the Trust upon advice from our outsourced catering provider. The cost of a school meal will be reviewed annually, taking into consideration the local average school meal cost and the increases in cost coming from our catering provider.

The Trust will operate a school meal charge that covers operational costs at the level of an individual meal.

3. Public examinations

There is no charge for examinations that are part of the curriculum and on the school's set examinations list, where pupils have been prepared for the examinations by the school. However, if the pupil fails without good reason to meet an examination requirement, the school may recover the fee incurred from that pupil's parents. This includes re-sits.

There is no charge for examinations that are not on the set list but have been arranged by the school.

There **is a charge** of the examination entry fee(s) if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school (**see Optional extras under section 5**)

4. Activities that take place during school hours

This does not include the break in the middle of the school day or School Trips

There is no charge for core curriculum activities during school hours with the exception of music tuition (**section 8**).

There is no charge for transport during school hours to essential school-organised activities such as swimming lessons.

However, the school may charge for transport in relation to organised school trips such as educational visits which are intended to enhance, and are in addition to, core curriculum learning.

We may charge for:

- books and materials or sports or musical instruments that the parent wishes the child to keep (the cost will be made clear to the parents before charge)
- optional extras (**section 5**)
- music or vocal tuition as part of a group or as an individual (**section 8**)
- swimming sessions beyond the statutory requirements outside of curriculum time
- sports coaching
- theatre/performance activities unrelated to the academies

The school will ask for voluntary contributions towards snacks via school fund contributions. The school may also ask for contributions towards cookery ingredients for secondary children.

5. Activities that take place outside of school hours (non-residential)

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

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

6. Optional extras

The school will charge for optional extras.

Optional extras are:

- education provided outside of school time that is **not**:
 - a) part of the National Curriculum
 - b) part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
 - c) part of religious education
- examination entry fee(s) if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school.
- transport that is not taking the pupil to school 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

6.1. The cost of optional extras

The Head Teacher will decide when it is necessary to charge for optional activities including trips and transport.

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. In no circumstances, will there be an element of subsidy required for any pupils wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge (**section 12**).

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
- any additional staff costs incurred for the trip whether non-teaching staff or teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra, including supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra or cover a school trip
- 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.

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

7. Activities that take place *partly* during school hours either on or off site

Where the majority of a non-residential activity takes place during school hours the charging of the activity will be the same as is outlined in **section 4**, however the school may request a voluntary contribution to support the cost of certain activities (see section 12).

Travelling time is included in time spent on activity.

In cases where the majority of a non-residential activity takes place outside of school hours the charge cannot 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 school accompanying pupils on a visit.

In this case the charging of the activity will be the same as is outlined in **section 5**.

8. Residential activities

Our school 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, 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

- supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit
- travel costs where the residential activity is classed as being within school hours
- activities that take place on a Residential Visit, during school hours.

Our schools will charge for:

Board and lodging

When any visit has been organised by the school where there may be a cost for board and lodging, parents will be informed of this before the visit takes place. *We will charge anything up to the full cost of board and lodging on residential visits, whether it is classified as taking place during school hours or not.* The charge will not exceed the actual cost. **Parents who can prove they are in receipt of certain benefits may be exempt from paying this cost** (see **section 11** for more guidance on remissions).

Travel

Travel charges may apply when the residential activity takes place outside of school 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 academies may charge for residential activities that fall **outside** of normal school hours (**see section 5**).

9. Setting up and Managing School Trips

The income and costs of each trip are planned and managed at school level through the School Office Manager, the class teacher and the school Trips Coordinator role (usually a member of SLT) via the MyChildAtSchool portal. The proposed costs of trips are designed to be within the budgets of the majority of pupils. Trips are planned as far in advance as possible so as to allow sufficient time for parents and guardians to respond, consent and make contributions and for the class teacher to assess the funding viability and, where appropriate, to cancel admissions, travel etc with full refunds.

Trips are normally planned at least a term ahead, messages to parents are sent at least 6 weeks before the date of the trip and responses required in full by latest 2 weeks before the date of the trip. Appendix 4 shows a template suggested email/text 'trip' message for parents and guardians.

Where Trips are not fully funded the class teacher will seek advice from the schools Trip Coordinator and may cancel the trip or may apply to the Head Teacher to request funds to support the trip (at the Head Teachers discretion). See section 14 below for remissions and head teacher discretionary decisions.

10. Music tuition within school hours

Our academies follow government legislation that states that all education provided during school hours must be free; however, music lessons (group or individual) are an exception to this rule.

Charges will be made if the teaching is **not** an essential part of either the National Curriculum or a public examination syllabus being followed by the pupil(s).

The school may charge for teaching requested by parents and delivered by specialist tutors given 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 school will not charge if the music tuition is part of the National Curriculum or public examination syllabus being followed by the student. *This includes instruments, music books and exam fees.*

Forward Education Trust is dedicated to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils including access to specialised music tuition, therefore charges made for music tuition within school hours will be remitted for pupils on free school meals.

There is no charge for vocal or instrumental tuition for children in care. This includes instruments, music books and exam fees.

11. Extended services

Forward Education Trust is dedicated to providing 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, *e.g. by providing access to study support, parenting support or to more specialist services (such as health, social care or special educational needs services)*
- 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. Damage to property and breakages

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

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

Whether these charges will be made will be decided by the Head Teacher and dependent on the situation.

13. Remissions and concessions

The school will give consideration to the remission of charges to parents or carers who 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 Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (unless 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 cessation of qualification of Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – subject to application after 1 April 2018 with a household income less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any other benefits)

Children of families who receive these payments are entitled to free school meals. The Trust will authorise the remission of charges subject to the parents' ability to provide evidence of receipt of benefits above.

14. Voluntary contributions

The School may ask parents/carers for voluntary contributions to the school for general funds and/or to fund activities that will enrich the education of all pupils within their child's school. However, there is no obligation for a parent or carer to make any contribution to the school.

In any case, where an activity cannot take place without voluntary funding, parents/carers will be notified by the academy. If the activity is cancelled, all monies paid by parents/carers will be refunded, or transferred to another activity, with the explicit consent of the paying parent/carer.

15. Inability or unwillingness to pay

Forward Education 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, it will be cancelled for all pupils. Payments already received from parents or carers will either be refunded, or allocated to an alternative activity, upon consent from the paying parent or carer.

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.

However, all parents or guardians will be made aware and are encouraged to approach the Head Teacher to enquire whether financial support is available in specific cases where they would like their child to participate in activities but cannot afford the suggested contribution. Any request for, or remission of charges will be approached confidentially.

The Head Teacher will consider internal and externally available funding, for example, Clara Martineau funding for Residential Visits. The Head Teacher may decide to allocate part of their school General Resource budget or to fund from within their Pupil Premium plan to support under-funded educational trips. Ultimately the decision on whether to support some or all of the costs for an individual child or for a trip will be at the Head Teacher's discretion. The central finance team will transfer an amount from the school general resources each month to cover the balance of unfunded trip costs recorded in the accounts.

School Funds spend is managed by the Head Teacher and the Chair of the Local Academy Council in line with any restricted uses attached to donations. The Head may propose to use unrestricted funds to support activities which benefit the pupils outside of the curriculum such as additional equipment, student rewards or celebrations such as a summer fayre.

16. When payment for school meals has not been received

Dinner money debts accumulated over two weeks will result in the suspension of school meals. In such circumstances, parents/carers should provide a packed lunch for their child. If the weekly payment for school meals is not received by Friday of the school meals week, parents/carers will receive a payment reminder. If debt payment is not received within two weeks, the school will write to the parent/carer to inform them that meals are suspended and they must provide a packed lunch for their child.

The school will contact the parent/carer by text or telephone to discuss non-payment and to agree a way forward.

It is important that all parents who believe they may have become eligible for free school meals for their child to inform the school immediately so that their child is not left at risk of having school meals suspended. The school will advise how parents can progress any free school meals application.

17. Consequences of non-payment of school meals

Subject to following all of the initial protocols to chase payment from parents/carers, if payment of the debt is not received within seven days of final reminder, the Trust reserves the right to refer the debt to a debt collection service and parents/carers will be notified in writing if this is the case. If legal action becomes necessary, collection charges will be added to the total amount of the debt.

The Trust will never allow a child to go without a meal during the school day. Where any parent/carer does not provide their child with a packed lunch after being informed of the suspension of school meals due to debt, the school will make arrangements for the child to be provided with a meal. In these circumstances the Trust reserves the right to report this to social care authorities, as part of our safeguarding obligations. A letter (Appendix 3) will be sent to parents/carers reminding them of the need to send a packed lunch and what action could be taken if no packed lunch is provided.

Appendix 1. Non-payment of debt week 1

On headed paper

Name of Parent/Carer

Address of Parent/Carer

Name of Pupil and Class

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL MEALS DINNER MONEY

We have not received any Dinner Money this week for your child. There is an outstanding balance of **£14.40**. Can you please ensure that the outstanding dinner money is paid online via [ParentMail/ MCAS (My Child at School)'] by day and date.

Dinner money is £12.00 per week (£2.40 per day). *The cost varies depends on whether primary or secondary*

Can I remind you that dinner money should be paid every Monday morning. Dinner Money has to be paid in advance and should not be paid late. You can pay weekly, half termly or for the whole term.

Please note that it is important that your child's dinner money is paid on time to ensure that a meal is reserved for them. We are happy for you to pay a full term in advance if it would be more convenient for you.

We look forward to receiving the outstanding balance and if you have any queries or if there is anything you do not understand please call me on the number shown at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

School Administrator

Appendix 2 Non-payment of debt week 2

On headed paper

Name of parent/Carer

Address of parent/Carer

Name of Pupil and class

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL MEALS DINNER MONEY

We have not received any Dinner Money for this week or last week for your child. There is an outstanding balance of **£26.40**. Can you please ensure that the outstanding dinner money is paid via [ParentMail/ MCAS (My Child at School)'] by , day and date.

Dinner money is £12.00 per week (£2.40 per day). *The cost varies depends on whether primary or secondary*

The school is unable to provide credit for school meals. I must remind all parents that it is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly to the school, in advance of meals being taken. **If you are unable to pay the outstanding balance this week please send a packed lunch with your child from next Monday date until the debt is paid in full.**

We look forward to receiving the outstanding balance and if you have any queries or if there is anything you do not understand please call me on the number shown at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

School Administrator

Appendix 3 No Packed Lunch Provided

On headed paper

Name of parent/Carer

Address of parent/Carer

Name of Pupil and class

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL MEALS DINNER MONEY

We wrote to you last week to inform you that as we have not received any Dinner Money for the outstanding balance of **£26.40**, you would be required to provide a packed lunch for your child.

It appears that your child has attended school today without a meal from home. As part of our duty of care to your child the school made arrangements for your child to receive a school meal today and the cost of this meal (**£2.40**) will be added to your outstanding dinner money balance.

If you do not make payment of the outstanding debt today, you will need to send your child to school with a packed lunch. Payments to be made online via 'My Child at School'. If a packed lunch is not provided for your child we reserves the right to report this to safeguarding authorities for further action, as part of our safeguarding obligations

We look forward to receiving the outstanding balance and if you have any queries or if there is anything you do not understand please call me on the number shown at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

School Administrator

Appendix 4 Standard email to parents re proposed trips and suggested contributions.

Standard email/text via Bromcom MyChildAtSchool

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Trip to Ash End House Children's Farm – Thursday 26th May 2022

Our topic this half term is, 'Are Eggs Alive??' and we are planning to visit Ash End House Children's Farm on Thursday 26th May 2022.

We will leave school at around 9.30am and return by 2.30pm. Lunch will be provided for those children who eat a school dinner. This lunch will be sandwiches so if you think your child may not eat them, please send some food they will eat. Educational visits are an excellent way for children to learn and this will be a valuable sensory experience for the children.

The cost for Ash End House Children's Farm will be £6.36 per child. We are asking for a voluntary contribution to cover the cost of this fee. Transport costs will not be charged. This contribution is not a condition of your child attending the visit but if we have insufficient funds we may need to cancel the visit.

Please make any contribution and visit the Consents section through the MCAS (My Child at School)' portal no later than Wednesday 22 April 2022 if you wish your child to attend.

Many thanks for your support,

Yours sincerely,

Emily Sande
Early Years 1
1st April 2022
