Leverhulme
Church of England and Community Trust

Charging and remissions policy

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Version 4

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Document History		
Version	**Date**	**Notes on Revisions**
1.0	**July 2018**	**New Trust wide policy, in line with Academies financial handbook. Reflects current practice.**
2.0	Sept 2022	Reviewed as good practice – no changes proposed. Document branding / logo updated.
2.1	Nov 2023	Reviewed as good practice – no changes.
3.0	October 2024	Reviewed as good practice – no changes proposed
4.0	September 2026	Rewritten following legal and DfE guidance review. Clarifies examinations, visits, optional extras, music tuition, remissions, damage and refunds.

Introduction

Leverhulme Academy Trust (the Trust) is required through its academy funding arrangements to comply with the law on charging for school activities. This policy explains when the Trust and its academies may charge, request voluntary contributions, or remit charges, while protecting pupils' access to education funded by the Department for Education.

Education provided during academy hours must be free, including materials, books, instruments and other equipment needed for that education, except where legislation expressly permits a charge. Education outside academy hours must also be free where it is part of the National Curriculum, religious education, or a syllabus for a prescribed public examination for which the pupil is being prepared at the academy. The Trust may invite voluntary contributions to support activities and experiences that might otherwise be unaffordable.

The Trust will keep charges and requests for contributions reasonable and transparent. A charge will be made only where this policy permits it, will not exceed the permitted cost of provision, and will be accompanied by information about any available remission or financial support. References to parents in this policy include carers and any person with parental responsibility.

The Trust Board is accountable for this policy and may delegate its approval and administration in accordance with the Trust's scheme of delegation. Each academy must apply this policy consistently and make it available to parents and carers.

1. Admissions

No charge or request for a financial contribution will form part of the admissions process.

2. Academy meals

There is no charge for pupils entitled to benefits-based free school meals or universal infant free school meals. Other pupils will be charged the published meal price. Eligibility will be determined under current Department for Education requirements.

3. Public examinations

No charge will be made for entry to a prescribed public examination where the pupil has been prepared for it at the academy, or for a resit where the pupil is being prepared for the resit at the academy, with the exception of pupils who chose to resit Year 13 to seek a higher grade. If, without good reason, a pupil fails to meet an examination requirement for a syllabus, the Trust may recover from the parent the examination fee it paid or agreed to pay.

The Trust may charge the examination entry fee where the examination is not on the prescribed list but the academy arranges the entry.

The Trust may also charge the examination entry fee where a registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination at the academy, including where the examination is prescribed.

4. Activities that take place during academy hours

The academy may request a voluntary contribution towards an educational visit or other activity during academy hours. The request will make clear that there is no obligation to contribute; pupils will not be treated differently or excluded because their parents are unable or unwilling to contribute; and the activity may be cancelled if voluntary contributions and other available funding are insufficient. A contribution requested on this basis is not a charge and will not be enforced.

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

A charge may be made for education provided wholly or mainly outside academy hours only where it is a genuine optional extra and is not part of the National Curriculum, religious education, or a syllabus for a prescribed public examination for which the pupil is being prepared at the academy. Participation must be based on parental choice and written agreement to pay. Where 50% or more of the time spent on a non-residential activity occurs during academy hours, including travel during those hours but excluding the midday break, the activity is treated as taking place during academy hours.

6. Residential activities

No charge will be made for education on a residential visit that takes place during academy hours, or for education outside academy hours where it forms part of the National Curriculum, religious education, or a prescribed public examination syllabus for which the pupil is being prepared. The Trust will not charge for travel connected with such education or for supply cover for staff accompanying the visit. The academy may charge for board and lodging, but no more than the actual cost, and must apply the statutory remission described in this policy. Where a residential visit is a genuine optional extra outside academy hours and does not fall within the protected categories above, the academy may charge the permitted actual cost, subject to parental agreement and this policy.

7. Music tuition within academy hours

Instrumental and vocal tuition provided during academy hours may be charged for only in the circumstances permitted by the Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007.

A charge may be made where the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent, either individually or in a group of any size, and the charge does not exceed the cost of providing the tuition.

The amount charged may reflect the size and duration of the group, the instrument and the reasonable costs of the staff providing the tuition. Group size will be determined on sound educational grounds.

No charge will be made where the tuition is an essential part of the National Curriculum, forms part of a prescribed public examination syllabus for which the pupil is being prepared, or is provided under the first access to Key Stage 2 instrumental and vocal tuition programme.

No charge will be made for instrumental or vocal tuition provided during academy hours to a pupil who is looked after by a local authority. The Trust may also remit music tuition charges wholly or partly under its discretionary hardship arrangements.

8. Materials and products

Materials, books, instruments and equipment required for education provided during academy hours will be supplied free of charge. The academy may charge for materials or ingredients where the pupil will own the finished product.

9. Transport

The Trust will not charge for transport where the local authority has a statutory duty to provide it; transport to premises where the Trust or local authority has arranged for the pupil to receive education; transport needed to meet an examination requirement for which the pupil has been prepared at the academy; or transport provided in connection with an educational visit for which charging is prohibited. A voluntary contribution may be requested where permitted, subject to the safeguards in this policy.

10. Extended services

The 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 academy to provide:

- high-quality learning opportunities either side of the academy 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.
- Breakfast and homework / extended hours clubs which sometimes include providing meals.

Extended day services are optional. Any charge will not exceed the cost of providing the service to the participating pupil, and no parent will be asked to subsidise another pupil.

Participation in an optional extra is based on parental choice. Parental agreement to pay is required before a charge is made. An optional extra may be cancelled if there are insufficient participants or funding, but it must not be described as funded by voluntary contributions where payment is a condition of participation.

The cost of optional extras

The Headteacher may approve a charge for an optional extra within delegated authority. The charge for each pupil will not exceed the actual cost of providing the activity, divided equally by the number of participating pupils. It will not include any element to subsidise pupils whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay.

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

- materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra, and the cost of buildings and accommodation
- non-teaching staff
- teaching staff engaged under contracts for services solely to provide the optional extra, including supply teachers engaged specifically to provide it, but not supply cover for staff accompanying pupils on a residential visit
- the cost, or an appropriate proportion of the cost, of teaching staff employed to provide instrumental or vocal tuition where that tuition is an optional extra. A charge will not include the cost of alternative education for pupils who do not participate.

11. Loss or damage to property and breakages

Following a fair assessment of the circumstances, the Trust may seek a reasonable contribution towards the actual cost of repairing or replacing Trust property deliberately or negligently damaged, destroyed or lost by a pupil. Account will be taken of the pupil's age, individual circumstances and the Trust's behaviour policy.
Any amount sought will be limited to the reasonable repair or replacement cost. The Trust will not impose automatic, punitive or unspecified fines under this policy. Financial hardship and the Trust's remission arrangements will be considered.

12. Fundraising and sponsorship

General fundraising and sponsorship from a variety of sources may be used to allow additional activities to take place. Any fundraising activity will make the purpose of the fundraising clear to those who may wish to contribute.

13. Lettings of the Trust's buildings and land

Charges for the use of Trust facilities by private individuals or external organisations will be determined under the Trust's lettings policy and the Headteacher's delegated authority. Charges will have regard to the full cost, market conditions, tax requirements and the Trust's charitable purposes.

Facilities will be let only when they are not required for education. Hirers must meet the insurance, safeguarding, security, damage and cleaning requirements in the lettings agreement. Any additional charge will reflect the agreement and the reasonable cost incurred by the Trust.

14. Refunding of Charges

Trips and activities

Charges and requested contributions will be based on a reasonable estimate of anticipated costs. Unless parents agree to another clearly stated arrangement, the academy will offer to refund a surplus of £5 or more per contributing pupil. A smaller surplus may be transferred to a Discretionary Fund; otherwise, it will be retained for the stated activity or offered for refund where practicable.

15. Remissions and concessions

Mandatory residential remission. Where a residential visit includes education for which charging is prohibited, the academy will remit the full cost of board and lodging for a pupil whose parent receives a benefit or support prescribed for this purpose. The academy will inform all parents of this entitlement when it communicates about the visit and will verify eligibility confidentially against the statutory criteria and current Department for Education guidance. Eligibility for a free school meal will not be treated as conclusive where legislation applies a different or narrower category.

Discretionary remission. A parent experiencing financial hardship may apply confidentially to the academy for full or partial remission of a permitted charge, including for optional activities or music tuition. Free school meal eligibility may be considered but is not the only evidence of hardship. The Headteacher, in consultation with the Finance Department and within delegated authority, will decide applications consistently, record the decision and protect the family's confidentiality. Any subsidy approved by a local governing body must be within its delegated authority and must not be added to charges paid by other participating pupils.

16. Voluntary contributions

The Trust may ask parents and others for voluntary contributions for the benefit of an academy or to support activities that enrich pupils' education.

There is no obligation to contribute. The academy will not pressure parents, use payment methods or reminders that imply compulsion, or treat a pupil differently because a parent is unable or unwilling to contribute. Pupils will have an equal opportunity to participate in an activity funded through voluntary contributions.

17. Inability or unwillingness to pay

A pupil will not be excluded from an activity funded through voluntary contributions because their parent is unable or unwilling to contribute. If voluntary contributions and other available funding are insufficient, the academy may choose to cancel the activity. A genuine optional extra is different: participation may be conditional on written parental agreement to pay the permitted charge, subject to any remission awarded under this policy.

Information about a family's payment, contribution, benefit status or application for remission will be handled confidentially and shared only where necessary for authorised staff to administer this policy or comply with the law.