

Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust



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Charging and Remissions Policy

Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust Wide Policy

January 2025

Document Control

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Statement of intent

Aspirational Futures Multi Academy 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 Department for Education (DfE).

The trust will:

- Not charge for education provided during school hours.
- Inform parents/carers 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:

- Academies Act 2010
- Children Act 1989
- DfE (2018) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2024) 'Academy trust handbook 2024'
- DfE (2024) 'Academy trust governance guide'
- DfE (2024) 'What academies and further education colleges must or should publish online'
- Education Act 1996
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Prescribed Public Examinations) (England) Regulations 2010
- The Trust's Funding Agreement

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Debt Recovery Policy
- Financial Procedures Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions will be used:

Charge: a fee payable for specifically defined activities.

Remission: the cancellation of a charge, partly or wholly, which would normally be payable.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The board of trustees will be responsible for:

- The management of the school's delegated finances
- Ensuring the schools act in accordance with this policy at all times.
- Ensuring money is spent for the educational benefit of pupils attending school, and for the benefit of pupils in other schools.
- Recognising its legal requirements regarding charging for school activities under the Education Act 1996 and meeting all additional guidance provided by the DfE.

The headteacher in each school will be responsible for:

- Prioritising and allocating financial resources appropriately, ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and probity in the use of public funds.
- Informing parents on low incomes and in receipt of specific benefits of the support available to them when being asked for contributions towards the cost of school visits.
- Liaising with parents and staff regarding any charges being applied and making decisions regarding appropriate remissions on a case-by-case basis.

The SBM will:

- Process and record payments for activities, taking into account any remissions applied.
- Ensure that the correct invoices are sent to parents, and that payment is received.

4. Charging for education

The trust will not charge for:

- Admission applications.
- Education provided during school hours.
- 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 by the school, or part of religious education.
- Instrumental or vocal tuition, unless provided at the request of the pupil's parent/carer.
- Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school.
- Examination resits, if the pupil is being prepared for the resits at the school.

The trust may charge for:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment, where the child's parent/carer wishes their child to own them.
- Optional extras.
- Music tuition (in certain circumstances).
- Certain early years provision.
- Use of community facilities and other commercial activities.
- Provision of information within the scope of freedom of information.

5. Optional extras

The trust may charge for the following optional extras:

- Education provided outside of school 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 school
 - Part of religious education
- Examination entry fees where the pupil has not been prepared for the examinations at the school

- Transport, other than that required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the trust board 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, e.g. breakfast or out-of-school provision

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

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in relation to the optional extra
- Buildings and accommodation
- Non-teaching staff (including teaching assistants)
- Teaching staff under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra
- The cost, or an appropriate proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide vocal tuition or tuition in playing a musical instrument, where the tuition is an optional extra

The trust will not charge in excess of the actual cost of providing the optional extra divided by the number of participating pupils. Charges applied will not include an element of subsidy for any pupils wishing to participate 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 trust will not charge for the cost of alternative provision for those not participating.

The trust will not charge for supply teachers to cover for teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit.

Participation in any optional activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges; therefore, parental agreement is a prerequisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

If a charge is to be made for a particular activity, such as optional extras, parents/carers will be informed of how the charge will be calculated.

6. Examination fees and resits

The trust may charge for examination fees if:

- The examination is on the set list (which includes SATs, GCSEs and A-levels), but the pupil was not prepared for it at the school.
- The examination is not on the set list, but the school arranged for the pupil to take it.
- A pupil fails, without good reason, to complete the requirements of any public examination where the governing board or LA originally paid or agreed to pay the entry fee.

When a pupil is entered for a second or subsequent attempt at an examination, the trust will pay the fee. Once pupils have left the trust, resits must be taken at their respective school.

If a pupil or their parent/carer consider it to be in the best interests of the pupil to request that an examination is re-marked, any fees involved will be covered by the pupil or their parent/carer. If the awarding body changes the overall grade of the result, the trust will not be charged by the awarding body and the parent/carer or pupil will have their fees refunded.

7. Voluntary contributions

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

No pupil will be excluded from an activity simply because their parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay. If a parent/carer is unwilling or unable to pay, their child will still be given an equal opportunity to take part in the activity. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund an activity, and the trust/school cannot fund it via another source, the activity will be cancelled.

The trust will strive to ensure that parents/carers do not feel pressured into making voluntary contributions.

8. Music tuition

Instrumental and vocal music tuition is an exception to the rule that all education provided during school hours must be free. The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 allow for charges to be made for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually or to groups of any size – provided that the tuition is at the request of the pupil's parents/carers. The charges will not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff providing the tuition. Eligible pupils will be considered for discounts to the charges.

Primary schools only: Charging will also not be made if the teaching is provided under the first access to the KS2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme.

9. Transport

The trust will not charge for:

- Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the LA has a statutory obligation to provide the transport.
- Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing board or LA has arranged for pupils to be educated.
- Transporting pupils to meet an examination requirement when they have been prepared for the examination at the school.
- Transport provided for an educational visit.

10. Education partly during school hours

If 50 percent or more of the time spent on an activity occurs during school hours (including time spent travelling if the travel occurs during school hours), it will be deemed to take place during school hours and no charge will be made.

If less than 50 percent of the time spent on an activity occurs during school hours, it will be deemed to have taken place outside school hours and the school may charge for the activity; however, the trust will not charge if the activity 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 religious education.

The remission of charges for board and lodging payments is the responsibility of the trust. These costs will be borne by the trust.

Any charges for extended day services will be optional.

11. Residential visits

The trust 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, 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 teachers accompanying pupils on visits.

The trust may charge for board and lodging, but the charge will not exceed the actual cost. Parents/carers will be exempt from board and lodging costs if they can prove that they are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:

- 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, provided that they are 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 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)

If the number of school sessions covered by the visit is equal to or greater than 50 percent of the number of half days (any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day) spent on the visit, the school will not charge for the activity.

12. Damaged or lost items

The trust may charge parents/carers for the cost of replacing items that are damaged or lost due to the negligence or poor behaviour of pupils or their parents/carers. Parents/carers will only be charged the replacement cost to purchase the same or equivalent item. The trust will consider waiving costs in exceptional circumstances, e.g. financial hardship.

13. Remissions

The trust will set aside a fund to enable parents/carers in financial difficulty to send their children on visits and activities. The funding will be limited and there is no guarantee that all requests can be met. Assistance will be allocated on a needs basis, and if the full cost of the trip or activity cannot be met through assistance funding and voluntary contributions, the trip or activity will be cancelled.

Parents/carers in receipt of any of the following benefits may request assistance with the costs of activities:

- 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)

To request assistance, parents/carers should contact their school office.

14. School trip refunds

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

In the event that a school trip is cancelled by a party other than the school due to unforeseen circumstances, it is at the trust's discretion as to what happens with the parental contributions for the trip. The trust 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/carers.

In the event that a pupil or their parents/carers 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.

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.

Where a pupil or their parents/carers 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.

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 £5 per pupil.

If a parent/carer wishes to make a complaint about refunds, they will be able to do so via the Complaints Policy.

15. Income generation

In line with the ESFA's ['Academy trust handbook'](#), the trust will set fees for chargeable services at full cost, and reserves the right to apply an additional rate of return when in a commercial environment.

16. Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme

The trust's Freedom of Information Policy and Freedom of Information Publication Scheme will set out where fees may be charged for the provision of information.