

CHARGES AND REMISSIONS POLICY

The Torch Academy Gateway Trust recognises that as a result of the 1996 Education Act there is no statutory requirement to charge for any form of education or related activity and that charging is prohibited except in certain circumstances at the discretion of the Local Governing Body.

The Local Governing Body also recognises that the curriculum as it exists at present cannot continue without asking for voluntary contributions from parents in certain circumstances.

The policy reflects current legislation and is subject to amendment in line with guidance from the Local Authority.

CHARGING POLICY

1. Academy/Free School Admissions
The law prohibits any kind of charge relating to a pupil's admission to school and prohibits consideration of parents' ability to contribute in any way to the school.
2. Educational Activities taking place during school hours
 - 2.1 'School hours' are defined as being those hours during which the academy is in session, but excluding the mid-day break.
 - 2.2 No charges will be made for any activity or materials which are essential to fulfil the statutory curriculum.
 - 2.3 Voluntary contributions may be asked for to enable extra activities, which are deemed educationally desirable, to take place. It may also be stated that such an activity will not be able to take place unless enough contributions are received to finance that activity. The contributions requested will reflect the cost of that activity less any subsidy from funds available to the school.
 - 2.4 Materials required which would result in a finished product, may be charged for as long as parents have been asked in advance if they wish to own that finished product.
 - 2.5 Parents will be expected to provide items of clothing such as aprons and football boots. The Local Authority scheme of assistance continues to apply. The school will continue to provide essential protective equipment such as safety goggles.
3. Educational Activities taking place outside school hours
 - 3.1 Charges for such activities may be made except where the activities are required either:
 - (a) as part of the syllabus of a prescribed public examination;
 - or
 - (b) to fulfil statutory duties relating to the national curriculum or religious education in which case no charge may be made with the exception of board and lodging charges for a residential visit (see sections 4.1 to 4.3)

- 3.2 Where charges are made the cost may not exceed the actual cost to the pupil and cannot subsidise any other pupils participating. The cost of those pupils remitted from charging will be met by funds available to the school.
- 3.3 The costs incurred by teachers providing the activity may be included in the costs to pupils as long as such teachers are engaged on a separate contract by the school for that activity. (Example of such contract attached.)
- 3.4 A pupil's participation in such an activity will be a matter for parental choice and on the basis of a willingness to meet any charges applicable. Thus such an agreement is a pre-requisite to a pupil's inclusion.
- 3.5 Such charges will take into full account any subsidy provided by the Local Authority and reduced accordingly.
- 3.6 It will not be possible to ask parents of participating pupils to subsidise other pupils taking part in the visit.

Definitions by the Act

- 4.1 Day visits and non-residential activities are deemed to take place during school hours if 50% or more of the time spent on the activity, including any connected travel, occurs during school hours. (See Section 2.1) The Charging Policy for such an activity will therefore follow 2.1 – 2.5.
- 4.2 A Residential activity is defined as being one which involves pupils spending one or more nights away from home. Such an activity is deemed to take place during school hours if the number of school sessions taken up by the activity is 50% or more of the number of half days (12 hours) involved (in this connection a 'half day' is defined as any period of 12 hours ending at noon or midnight on any day). The charging policy for such an activity will therefore follow 2.1 – 2.5 except that
 - (a) the full actual costs per pupil for board and lodging may be charged to the parent and
 - (b) such a cost must be fully remitted if the pupil is in receipt of Free School Meals and must be met by funds available to the school.
- 4.3 A residential activity is deemed to take place outside of school hours if the number of school sessions taken up by the activity is less than 50% of the number of half days (12 hours) involved. An appropriate charge may be made to the parents unless the activity is required either:
 - (a) as part of the syllabus of a prescribed public examination; or
 - (b) to fulfil statutory duties relating to the national curriculum or religious education

in which case only board and lodging costs can be charged and these must be wholly remitted if the child is in receipt of Free School Meals.

5. Activities arranged by a third party

It would not be appropriate in any way to arrange or help to arrange an activity for which the County Council has no legal liability. Nor is it anticipated that teachers would be granted leave of absence to participate in such an activity.

6. Entry for Public Examinations

- 6.1 No charge will be made for a candidate's first entry to any prescribed public examination for which the candidate has been prepared at the school, whether during or outside school hours. Resit examinations will be charged unless the candidate is in receipt of free school meals or has suffered illness or a 'life event' that caused the candidate to perform worse in the examination than would normally have been expected.
- 6.2 Candidates will be entered for each examination in a syllabus for a prescribed public examination for which the pupil has been prepared for entry by the school except where;

- (a) in the opinion of the Governing Body there are educational reasons for not doing so; or
- (b) where parents request in writing that the candidate should not be entered.

6.3 Parents will be informed in writing as soon as it has been decided for which examinations candidates should be entered.

6.4 Where the preparation provided by the school would enable a candidate to take two or more prescribed public examinations in the same syllabus the requirement to enter a pupil applies to a single examination entry only. However, no charge will be made to the parents for a “double” entry if the school has prepared the candidate for the examination.

6.5 Where it is agreed to enter a candidate for a prescribed examination for which the candidate has not been prepared by the school, the full cost of the entry may be charged to the candidate or parents.

6.6 Where a candidate has, with parental agreement, been entered for a non-prescribed public examination a charge may be made for

- (a) entry fee
- (b) actual cost of any preparation provided by the school outside school hours.
- (c) costs relating to the school’s teaching staff if the staff have been specifically engaged under a contract for services for the purpose of providing the optional extra.

6.8 Examination entry fees may be recovered from parents if a candidate fails without good reason to complete the requirements for any public examination for which fees have been paid by the Education Committee or school or are liable to pay. Requirements may include coursework or the sitting of final examinations.

7. Music Provision

7.1 Charges will not be made for class music tuition during school hours.

7.2 Music tuition, whether group or individual, will also be free, whether it is provided during or outside school hours, if it forms part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination or required by the national curriculum.

7.3 No charge will be made for group music activities e.g. school orchestras, which take place during school hours.

7.4 A charge may be made for individual music tuition that is not part of the specification of a prescribed public examination or required by the national curriculum, provided parental agreement is obtained before a pupil is given the tuition. The charge can include:

- (a) the cost of the teacher
- (b) the cost of sheet music and
- (c) the hire and insurance of a musical instrument.

7.5 The school charging and remissions criteria will apply. Serious consideration will also be given to written requests from parents suffering financial hardship with each case being judged independently and given at the school’s own discretion.

7.6 Parents are asked to make a full year’s commitment to tuition. Parents will be invoiced termly.

7.7 Parents are asked to give at least one half-term’s notice of cancellation of music tuition in writing to the Head of Music. However they will still be liable for a full year’s costs of a replacement student cannot be found. Should a pupil decide not to attend tuition at any time during a half-term period, no reimbursement of fees will be given.

7.8 Tuition may, at the Music Department’s discretion, be cancelled if more than one term’s invoices are outstanding. However, parents will still be liable for settling any outstanding amounts.

- 7.9 School reserves the right to terminate tuition if it does not consider groups to be viable, or if progress/commitment is unsatisfactory. This will always be done after consultation with the instrumental teachers and parents.
- 7.10 School insurance will cover loaned instruments in school and on the journey to and from school. Parents' own insurance must cover the cost of replacement/repair, should damage occur outside these times. Advice will be given by the instrumental and music teacher. Insurance should be taken out for pupils' own instruments.
8. Voluntary Contributions
- 8.1 Any such contributions must be genuinely voluntary and it will be made clear to parents if contributions are requested that;
- (a) there is no obligation to contribute; and
 - (b) pupils will be treated the same whether or not their parents have contributed.
- 8.2 If an activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, this will be made clear to parents in an initial letter indicating;
- (a) the nature of the proposed activity and its education value;
 - (b) the contribution per pupil which would be required if the activity were to take place; and
 - (c) the activity would not take place if insufficient contributions were forthcoming.
- 8.3 The "Governors Curriculum Fund" supported by voluntary contributions will be used to support families experiencing financial hardship.
9. Breakages and Fines
- 9.1 Parents may be asked to pay for the cost of any damage resulting from a pupil's misbehaviour.
- 9.2 Parents may be asked to pay for the replacement of any lost or damaged materials in the care of the pupil.

Remission Policy

1. All charges or contributions will be fully remitted exclusively where the criteria in Appendix 1 apply.
 2. In every communication relating to charging or voluntary contributions, the parents of all the participating pupils will be advised of their entitlement to the remission of costs as in (1) above and be given the opportunity to claim remission.
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Equality Duty

This policy has been reviewed in the context of the 2010 Equalities Act and assessed as: Neutral

Policy reviewed in October 2013. Name of Reviewer :Mr J Tomasevic

CHARGING FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

1. From 1 April 2010, there has been a change to the Tax Credit income threshold which forms part of free school meals eligibility criteria. The minimum threshold for parents' annual income is £16,190, as assessed by the HM Revenue and Customs. This, in turns, informs eligibility for the remission of board and lodging charges for residential activities which take place within school hours, or which form part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination or fulfil statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum or religious education.

2. From September 2010, there have also been changes to the eligibility criteria for the remittance of charges relating to specified school activities. The full updated criteria are listed below, with new or changed criteria highlighted in bold type:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
- **An income-related employment and support allowance**
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, where the parent is not entitled to Working Tax Credit and has an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs) that does not exceed £16,190.
- **For Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils only (subject to final Parliamentary approval): in addition to the above, families receiving Working Tax Credit and with an annual income that does not exceed £16,190** (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs)
- **The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit**

These changes are reflected in the following paragraphs of the guidance document:

- Main section, para 25
- Annex 1, para 14
- PRU appendix, para 10

Communications to parents re: Charging and Remissions Policy

1. For activities which must take place to fulfil the curriculum the following form of words could be used:

“In order to cover the cost of the a voluntary contribution of per pupil is requested. There is no obligation to contribute and pupils will be treated the same whether or not a contribution has been received. However, a failure to receive such contributions could put financial restraints on other activities within this subject”.

2. For activities which are deemed educationally desirable but are dependent on funds totally from parent contributions, the following form of words could be used:

“This activity has been organised because (reason)
If this activity is to take place, a voluntary contribution of per pupil is necessary. Unless sufficient contributions are forthcoming, the activity will not be able to take place and any contributions made will be refunded in full”.

3. EVERY communication must contain the following paragraph before concluding:

“Parents may claim full remission of all the above-mentioned costs if the pupil is in receipt of Free School Meals.

4. Every communication should have a reply slip which could be set out as follows:

TITLE

I wish/do not wish my son/daughter to take part in the above activity.
I enclose a voluntary contribution of towards the cost of this activity.
I do not wish to contribute to the cost of this activity.
I claim remission of the costs of this activity because I am in receipt of Free School Meals.

SIGNED..... Parent/Guardian DATE

5. Activities which, under the Act, are more than 50% in school time and which involve more than one day away, therefore a residential situation, should have in the letter clearly defined separately.

- (a) the actual charge per pupil for board and lodging and
(b) the voluntary contribution requested to cover other costs e.g. transport.

This should also be reflected on the reply slip.

If such an activity, under the Act, is more than 50% out of school time then the charge per pupil for all costs should be stated and again reflected on the reply slip.

However, the remission situation mentioned in 3 still applies.

NOTES

There is no limit to the voluntary contribution requested and could if desired be raised to cover estimates of shortfall in contributions or those claiming remission. In such a situation, any surplus monies remaining after the event should be transferred to the Governors Curriculum Fund.

Draft Letter/Contract for Services

(For school visits and activities which can be regarded as an optional extra)

Dear ()

(Brief details/dates of school visit or activity)

On behalf of the school governing body, I am writing to confirm the contract for your services as (teacher in charge of/teacher participating in) the above mentioned visit/activity.

In return for your services, the cost of any board, lodging, travel and other approved expenses you incur in connection with the visit/activity will be met by the school but no additional payment will be made to you.

I should be grateful if you would sign and return to me the attached copy of this letter as confirmation of your acceptance of these arrangements.

Yours sincerely

Head of School

Signed -----

Date -----