



Charging and Remissions Policy

September 2024

Review date: October 2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1. NET Academies Trust are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established this policy and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against by our offering of academy trips, activities and educational extras.
- 1.2. In addition, we are committed to adhering to legal requirements regarding charging for academy activities and meeting all statutory guidance provided by the DfE.

2 Admissions

The academy **does not** make requests for financial contributions (either in the form of voluntary contributions, donations or deposits (even if refundable)) as any part its admissions process.

3 Education provided during school hours

Subject to the limited exceptions outlined in this policy, the academy **does not** charge for education provided during school hours, including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or equipment.

4 Education provided outside of school hours

- 4.1 No charge will be made for education provided outside of 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 academy or part of religious education.
- 4.2 If 50% or more of the time spent on an activity occurs during academy hours (including time spent travelling if the travel occurs during academy hours), it is deemed to take place during academy hours and no charge will be made.
- 4.3 If less than 50% of the time spent on an activity occurs during academy hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside academy hours and we may charge for the activity; however, we 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 academy, or part of religious education.

5 School meals

- 5.1 The academy **does not** charge for school meals where the pupil is eligible for free school meals or infant free school meals.

- 5.2 Pupils who are not entitled to free school meals **will** be charged.
- 5.3 Each academy is cashless and operates a system of collecting payments online. Parents should pay in advance on the Monday for school dinners for the current week.
- 5.4 The academy has the following procedures for school meals debt:
- 5.4.1 Arrears of less than one week - a reminder phone call, text and email to the parent,
 - 5.4.2 Arrears of one to two weeks - a letter to be sent,
 - 5.4.3 Arrears of more than two weeks - a final arrears letter to be sent offering a repayment plan and parents will be requested to provide packed lunches for their child until the debt is cleared.

6 Prescribed public examinations

- 6.1 The academy **does not** charge for entry for a prescribed public examination (including re-sits) if the pupil has been prepared for it by the academy.
- 6.2 However, if a pupil fails, without good reason, to meet any examination requirement for a syllabus, the academy **may** seek to recover the fee from the pupil's parent/carer.

7 Materials, books, instruments or equipment

- 7.1 The academy **may** charge for materials, books, instruments or equipment that the parent/carer wishes their child to keep or own.
- 7.2 Such charges **will not** exceed the cost of the item and parent/carer will be made aware at the outset that a charge will be made and the amount.

8 Music, instrumental or vocal tuition

- 8.1 The academy **may** charge for tuition in singing or in playing a musical instrument during school hours if it is provided at the request of the pupil's parent/carer. This applies to individual and group tuition.
- 8.2 The charges **will not** exceed the cost of the provision and may include the cost of the staff to provide the tuition, instruments, music books and exam fees.
- 8.3 **No charge** will be made if the tuition is:
- provided to a pupil who is looked after by a local authority; or
 - provided as part of the national curriculum during school hours or required as part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination for which the pupil is being prepared by the academy.

9 Transport

The academy **does not** charge for:

- transporting pupils to or from the academy's premises where the local authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport
- transporting pupils to other premises where the governing body or local authority has arranged for pupils to be educated
- transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when they have been prepared for that examination by the academy
- transport provided in connection with an educational visit

10 Residential visits

10.1 The academy **does 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 by the academy or is part of religious education
- supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are accompanying pupils on a residential visit

10.2 The academy **will** charge for board and lodging relating to residential visits (see **section 11**).

11 Optional extras

11.1 The academy **does** charge for 'optional extras'.

11.2 Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement will be required before an optional extra for which a charge is made is provided.

11.3 Optional extras include:

- education provided outside of school hours that is not part of the national curriculum, part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for by the academy or part of religious education
- examination entry fee(s) if the pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) by the academy
- other transport (outside of that outlined in **section 9**)
- board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit
- extended day services offered to pupils (for example breakfast club, after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions)

11.4 In calculating the cost of an optional extra an amount **will** be included in relation to:

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

11.5 Any charge for an optional extra **will not** exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra, divided equally by the number of pupils participating. It **will not** include an element of subsidy for any other pupils wishing to participate in the activity whose parent/carer is unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

12 Voluntary contributions

12.1 The academy may ask parents/carers for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the academy or any of its activities.

12.2 Where it is intended that an activity is to be funded by voluntary contributions, the Head of School will ensure that parents/carers are made aware at the outset that:

- the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions
- there is no obligation to make any contribution
- if insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund the activity, and the academy is unable to fund it from some other source, then the activity will be cancelled

12.3 No pupil will be excluded from an activity simply because his or her parent/carer is unwilling or unable to pay. Pupils whose parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay will still be given an equal chance to participate in the activity.

13 Refunds

13.1 Request for refunds for activities will be considered on an individual basis and may be rejected if the academy is unable to recoup the costs incurred.

13.2 In all cases of withdrawal, either voluntarily or otherwise, applications should be made in writing to the Head of School. If approved, refunds will be processed via the original method of payment or by BACS if this is not possible.

13.3 The academy reserves the right not to refund costs where a pupil is withdrawn from an activity by the academy on the basis of a pupil's breach of the academy's behaviour policy.

14 Damage to property and breakages

- 14.1 Where the academy's property has been wilfully or recklessly damaged by a pupil or parent/carer, the academy **may** charge those responsible for some or all of the cost of repair or replacement.
- 14.2 Where property belonging to a third party has been damaged by a pupil, and the academy has been charged, the academy **may** charge those responsible for some or all of the cost.

15 Remissions

In order to remove financial barriers from disadvantaged pupils, the Trust has agreed that some activities and visits, where charges can legally be made, will be offered at no charge or reduced charge to parents in particular circumstances. This section of the policy sets out the circumstances in which charges may be waived.

Parents/carers who can prove they are in receipt of the following benefits **may** be exempt from paying certain costs (including the cost of board and lodging related to residential visits):

- Income Support
- Income based Job-seekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (current HMRC rates for maximum household income to apply)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on
- Income related employment and support allowance
- Universal Credit

To request assistance, parents/carers should contact the Office Manager via the academy office.

The Trust recognises its responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances. To this end we will try to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Where possible, we shall publish a list of visits at the beginning of the term so that parents can plan ahead
- We have established a system for parents to pay in instalments
- We understand that offering opportunities on a 'first pay, first served' basis discriminates against pupils from families on lower incomes and we will avoid that method of selection.

16 Complaints

Complaints regarding this policy or its application should be raised under the academy's usual complaints procedure.

17 Approval and Review

- 17.1 This policy shall be reviewed by the Finance, Audit & Risk, HR and Pay Committee no less than once every two years.
- 17.2 Next review due: October 2026.