SOUTH DOWNS
LEARNING TRUST

CHARGING & REMISSIONS POLICY

Date approved	July 2025
Date of next review	July 2026
Status	Statutory
Lead Author	Executive Business Manager

OUR VISION

A community of primary and secondary academies that are the first choice for students and families in Sussex, with an outstanding reputation for high aspiration and high achievement.

Statement of intent

South Downs Learning Trust (the 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, the Trust is committed to adhering to legal requirements regarding charging for school activities, and meeting all statutory guidance provided by the DfE.

The Trust will:

- Not charge for education provided during school hours.
- Inform parents on low incomes and in receipt of relevant benefits of the support available to them when asking for contributions.

Legal framework

This policy will have consideration for, and be compliant with, the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Prescribed Public Examinations) (England) Regulations 2010
- DfE (2018) 'Charging for School Activities'
- DfE (2019) 'Governance Handbook'
- Academy Funding Agreement

Charging for education

The Trust will not charge parents 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 parents.
- Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school.
- Examination re-sits, if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sits at the school.

The Trust may charge parents for the following:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment, where they desire their child to own them
- Optional extras
- Music and vocational tuition (in certain circumstances)
- Use of community facilities

Optional extras

The Trust may charge parents 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.
  - Religious education

- Examination entry fees where the pupil has not been prepared for the examinations at the school.
- Transport, other than that arranged by the Local Authority for the pupil to be provided with education.

- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit.
- Extended day services offered to pupils.

When calculating the cost of optional extras, the school will only take into account the following:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in relation to the optional extra.
- The cost of buildings and accommodation.
- The employment of non-teaching staff.
- The cost of teaching staff (including teaching assistants) 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.

The school will not charge in excess of the actual cost of providing the optional extra divided by the number of participating pupils. The school will not charge a subsidy for any pupils wishing to participate but whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge. If a proportion of the activity takes place during school hours, the school will not charge for the cost of alternative provision for those not participating.

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 pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra.

Examination fees

The Trust may charge for examination fees if:

- The examination is on the prescribed 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 prescribed 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 Academy or Local Authority originally paid or agreed to pay the fee.

Examination re-sits

Where a pupil is entered for a second or subsequent attempt at an examination, the Trust will pay the fee. Once pupils have left the school, re-sits must be taken at the school.

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

Voluntary contributions

The Trust may, from time-to-time, ask for voluntary contributions towards the benefit of the school or school activities. If an activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, this will be made this clear to parents at the outset. It will also be made clear that there is no obligation for parents to make a contribution, and notify parents whether assistance is available.

No child will be excluded from an activity simply because their parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If a parent 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 school cannot fund it via another source, the activity will be cancelled.

The Trust will strive to ensure that parents do not feel pressurised into making voluntary contributions.

Music tuition

Music tuition is the only 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.

The charges will not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff providing the tuition.

Transport

The Trust will not charge for:

- Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the Local Authority has a statutory obligation to provide the transport.
- Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the Academy or Local Authority 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.

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.

There may be a charge made for board and lodging – but the charge will not exceed the actual cost.

Parents 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 State 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)

Since April 2018, pupils becoming eligible for free school meals under the benefits based criteria will continue to receive free meals until the end of 2025/26 school year.

Education partly during school hours

If fifty percent (50%) 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 is deemed to take place during school hours and no charge will be made.

If less than fifty percent (50%) of the time spent on an activity occurs during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours and the school may charge for the activity; however, the school 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.

Residential visits: If the number of school sessions covered by the visit is equal to or greater than fifty percent (50%) 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.

The remission of charges for board and lodging payments is the responsibility of the school. These costs will be borne by our contingency funds.

Any charges for extended day services will be optional.

Damaged or lost items

The Academy may charge parents for the cost of replacing items broken, damaged or lost due to their child's behaviour. Parents will not be taken to court for failure to pay such costs.

Remissions

The Trust has set aside a small fund to enable families in financial difficulty to send their children on visits/activities. The funding is 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/activity cannot be met through assistance funding and voluntary contributions, the trip/activity will be cancelled.
Parents 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 should contact the Executive Business Manager

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually at the request of the Trustees