Empowering children and young people to live their best lives.

FORWARD EDUCATION TRUST

Charging & Remissions Policy

Date of Approval:	September 2026
Approved by:	Trust Board
Review Date:	September 2028

Working together with purpose

Nurturing potential

Inspiring success

Policy Information:

Date of last review	September 2024	**Review period**	Every 2 years
Date approved	September 2026	**Approved by**	Trust Board
Policy owner	CEO/DFO	**Date of next review**	September 2028

Updates made since the last review:

Review date	Changes made	By whom
September 2024	Replace previous policy, by using template from The Key, capturing pertinent areas from previous policy	CEO
September 2026	Updated to improve equality and inclusion. Letters updated to remove the fixed value and replace with a reference to current meal charges.	DFO

Contents

1. Aims..... 3

2. Legislation and guidance..... 3

3. Definitions..... 3

4. Roles and responsibilities..... 3

5. Where charges cannot be made..... 4

6. Where charges can be made..... 4

7. Voluntary contributions..... 6

8. Activities we charge for..... 7

9. Remissions..... 7

10. Inability of unwillingness to pay..... 7

11. When payment for school meals has not been received..... 8

12. Consequences of non-payment of school meals..... 8

13. Monitoring arrangements..... 8

Appendix 1..... 9

Appendix 2..... 10

1. Aims

Our Trust and all the schools aim to:

- Have robust, clear processes in place for charging and remissions
- Clearly set out the types of activity that can be charged for and when charges will and will not be made
- Offer a range of activities and visits whilst minimising the financial barriers that may prevent some pupils from taking full advantage of these opportunities

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on charging for school activities and the Education Act 1996, sections 449 to 462 of which set out the law on charging for school activities in England. Academies are required to comply with this Act through their funding agreements.

DfE Charging of School Activities Guidance

Academy Trust Handbook (current version)

Trust Funding Agreement

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definitions

- **Charge**: a fee payable for specifically defined activities
- **Remission**: the cancellation of a charge which would normally be payable

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Trust Board

The Trust Board has overall responsibility for approving the charging and remissions policy and may delegate approval of periodic reviews to the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation

. Details of the authority delegated to Local Academy Councils and Headteachers are detailed within the Policy.

4.2 Headteachers

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring staff are familiar with the charging and remissions policy in their school, and that it is being applied consistently. The Chief Executive Officer and Director of Finance and Operations are responsible operationally for the implementation of the policy across the Trust.

4.3 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Implementing the charging and remissions policy consistently
- Notifying the headteacher of any specific circumstances that they are unsure about or where they are not certain if the policy applies.

The school will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation.

4.4 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to notify staff or the headteacher of any concerns or queries regarding the charging and remissions policy.

5. Where charges cannot be made

Below we set out what we **cannot** charge for:

5.1 Education

- Admission applications
- Education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment)
- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of:
  - The National Curriculum
  - A syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
  - Religious education
  - Instrumental or vocal tuition, for pupils learning individually or in groups, unless the tuition is 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 re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school

5.2 Transport

- Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local authority (LA) has a statutory obligation to provide transport
- Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the Trust Board or LA 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 at the school
- Transport provided in connection with an educational visit

5.3 Residential visits

- 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

  A syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school

  Religious education
- Supply teachers, covering for teachers who are absent from school, accompanying pupils on a residential visit

6. Where charges can be made

Below we set out what we **can** charge for:

6.1 Education

- Any materials, books, instruments or equipment, where the child's parent/carer wishes the child to own them

- Optional extras (see section 6.2)
- Music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances (see section 6.3)
- Certain early years provision
- Community facilities
- Examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school **and** the pupil fails, without good reason, to meet any examination requirement for a syllabus

6.2 Optional extras

We are able to charge for activities known as 'optional extras'. In these cases, schools can charge for providing materials, books, instruments or equipment. The following are optional extras:

- Education provided outside of school time that is not part of:
- The National Curriculum
- A syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
- Religious education
- Examination entry fee(s) if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school
- Transport (other than transport that is required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the LA or governing 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 (such as breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions)

When calculating the cost of optional extras, an amount may 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 (including 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

Any charge made in respect of individual pupils will not be greater than the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating.

Any charge will not include an element of subsidy for any other pupils who wish to take part in the activity but whose parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

In cases where a small proportion of the activity takes place during school hours, the charge cannot include the cost of alternative provision for those pupils who do not wish to participate.

Parental agreement is necessary for the provision of an optional extra that is to be charged for.

6.3 Music tuition

Schools can charge for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually or to groups of pupils, provided that the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent/carer.

Charges may not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff giving the tuition.

Charges cannot be made:

- If the teaching is an essential part of the National Curriculum

- If the teaching is provided under the first access to the Key Stage 2 instrumental and vocal tuition programme
- For a pupil who is looked after by a local authority

6.4 Residential visits

We can charge for board and lodging on residential visits, but the charge must not exceed the actual cost.

6.5 School meals

There is no charge for children who are entitled to free school meals or universal infant free school meals in line with current DfE provision. Pupils who are not entitled to free school meals will be charged a set amount per day, decided by the Trust upon advice from our outsourced catering provider. The cost of a school meal will be reviewed annually, taking into consideration the local average school meal cost and the increases in cost coming from our catering provider.

Staff meals are not subsidised by the Trust and will be charged at a rate determined annually. The charge may be reviewed and amended during the year where necessary to ensure that the full cost of provision is recovered.

6.6 Extended services

Forward Education 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 academies/schools to provide:

- high-quality learning opportunities either side of the school 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.

The total charge will not exceed the cost of providing the activity and no parent will be asked to subsidise others.

6.7 damage to property and breakages

Where a student or parent of the academy/school has wilfully or recklessly damaged school property the Trust may charge those responsible for some or all of the cost of repair or replacement.

Where a pupil has damaged property belonging to a third party, and the school has been charged, the school may charge some or all of the cost to those responsible.

Any charge will be limited to the actual cost of repair or replacement and will be determined following investigation of the circumstances. Whether these charges will be made will be decided by the Headteacher and dependent on the situation.

7. Voluntary contributions

As an exception to the requirements set out in section 5 of this policy, the Trust is able to ask for voluntary contributions from parents/carers to fund activities that would not otherwise be possible.

Some activities for which the school may ask parents/carers for voluntary contributions include such things as school trips and sports activities, for example.

There is no obligation for parents/carers to make any contribution, and no child will be excluded from an activity if their parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay. When requesting voluntary contributions, schools will inform eligible families of any available remission arrangements or financial assistance

If the Trust is unable to raise enough funds for an activity or visit then it will be cancelled.

8. Activities we may charge for

The schools may charge for the following activities:

Breakfast, after school clubs and sporting activities and events. If charges are proposed, these will be advised in advance, along with an explanation as to how costs were derived.

For regular activities, the charges for each activity will be determined by the Local Academy Council and the Headteacher and reviewed in readiness for the start of each school year. Parents/carers will be informed of the charges for the coming year in September each year.

9. Remissions

In some circumstances, the school may not charge for items or activities set out in sections 6 and 8 of this policy. This will be at the discretion of the Local Academy Council and will depend on the activity in question.

9.1 Remissions for residential visits

Parents/carers who can prove they are in receipt of any of the following benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging for residential visits:

- 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 you're 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 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – if you apply on or after 1 April 2018, your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

The Trust may provide additional discretionary financial support for educational visits, music tuition, extracurricular activities and enrichment opportunities where financial hardship would otherwise prevent participation The Trust will seek reasonable evidence to substantiate claims, applications for discretionary remission will be treated confidentially.

10. Inability or unwillingness to pay

Forward Education Trust is committed to ensuring fair access and treatment of all pupils, and this means ensuring that no child is excluded from an activity because the parents or carers of that child are unwilling or unable to pay. If there is insufficient funding for an activity, it will be cancelled for all pupils. Payments already received from parents or carers will either be refunded, or allocated to an alternative activity, upon consent from the paying parent or carer.

The identity of the child or parents of the child who did not want to make the payment, or could not make the payment, will not be disclosed.

11. When payment for school meals has not been received

Dinner money debts accumulated over two weeks will result in the suspension of school meals. In such circumstances, parents/carers should provide a packed lunch for their child. If the weekly payment for school meals is not received by Friday of the school meals week, parents/carers will receive a payment reminder. If debt payment is not received within two weeks, the school will write to the parent/carer to inform them that meals are suspended and they must provide a packed lunch for their child.

The school will contact the parent/carer by text or telephone to discuss non-payment and to agree a way forward.

It is important that all parents who believe they may have become eligible for free school meals for their child to inform the school immediately so that their child is not left at risk of having school meals suspended. The school will advise how parents can progress any free school meals application.

12. Consequences of non-payment of school meals

Subject to following all of the initial protocols to chase payment from parents/carers , if payment of the debt is not received within seven days of final reminder, the Trust reserves the right to take reasonable steps to recover outstanding debts which may include referring the debt to a debt collection service and parents/carers will be notified in writing if this is the case. If legal action becomes necessary, collection charges will be added to the total amount of the debt.

The Trust will never allow a child to go without a meal during the school day. Where any parent/carer does not provide their child with a packed lunch after being informed of the suspension of school meals due to debt, the school will make arrangements for the child to be provided with a meal. Where concerns arise regarding a child's welfare or access to suitable nutrition, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures. A letter (Appendix 3) will be sent to parents/carers reminding them of the need to send a packed lunch and what action could be taken if no packed lunch is provided.

The Trust is committed to ensuring that charging arrangements do not unfairly disadvantage pupils on the basis of:

- disability
- special educational needs
- ethnicity
- religion or belief
- sex
- socio-economic disadvantage

Decisions under this policy will be applied consistently and fairly.

13. Monitoring arrangements

The Chief Executive Officer, supported by the Director of Finance and Operations, in conjunction with Headteachers monitors charges and remissions, and ensures these comply with this policy.

This policy will be reviewed by the CEO every 2 years or sooner if there are significant legislative, regulatory or operational changes

At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trust Board.

Appendix 1. Non-payment of debt week 1

On headed paper

Name of Parent/Carer
Address of Parent/Carer
Name of Pupil and Class

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL MEALS DINNER MONEY

We have not received any Dinner Money this week for your child**.** There is an outstanding balance of **£14.40.** Can you please ensure that the outstanding dinner money is paid online via [ParentMail/ MCAS (My Child at School)'] by day and date.

Current meal charges are published on the school website *The cost varies depends on whether primary or secondary*

Can I remind you that dinner money should be paid every Monday morning. Dinner Money has to be paid in advance and should not be paid late. You can pay weekly, half termly or for the whole term.

Please note that it is important that your child's dinner money is paid on time to ensure that a meal is reserved for them. We are happy for you to pay a full term in advance if it would be more convenient for you.

We look forward to receiving the outstanding balance and if you have any queries or if there is anything you do not understand please call me on the number shown at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

School Administrator

Appendix 2 Non-payment of debt week 2

On headed paper

Name of parent/Carer
Address of parent/Carer
Name of Pupil and class

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL MEALS DINNER MONEY

We have not received any Dinner Money for this week or last week for your child**.** There is an outstanding balance of **£26.40.** Can you please ensure that the outstanding dinner money is paid via [ParentMail/ MCAS (My Child at School)'] by , day and date.

Current meal charges are published on the school website *The cost varies depends on whether primary or secondary*
The school is unable to provide credit for school meals. I must remind all parents that it is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly to the school, in advance of meals being taken. **If you are unable to pay the outstanding balance this week please send a packed lunch with your child from next Monday date until the debt is paid in full.**

We look forward to receiving the outstanding balance and if you have any queries or if there is anything you do not understand please call me on the number shown at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

School Administrator