



THE SIGMA TRUST

## CHARGING & REMISSIONS POLICY

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## **Introduction**

Sections 449-462 of the Education Act 1996 set out the law on charging for school activities, The Sigma Trust must have a policy on charging students to participate in school activities. This policy has been produced in line with this legislation and is adopted by the Local Governing Boards of each member academy in the Trust.

## **Admissions**

There will be no charge made for admissions to any of the Trusts academies.

## **Education**

The Trust has determined that none of its academies can charge for:

- Education provided during school hours, including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment (see below for a definition of school hours);
- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the student is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- Tuition for students learning to play musical instruments if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the student is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the student has been prepared for it at the school;
- Examination re-sit(s) if the student is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school.

Exceptions to this are:

- If a student fails, without good reason, to meet any examination requirement for a syllabus (e.g. failure to turn up), the fee can be recovered from the student's parents.
- Examination entry fee(s), including re-sits, if the registered student has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school then he or she can be required to pay for the entry;
- The cost of any materials, books, instruments or equipment where the student's parents' wishes him or her to own them;
- The costs associated with a finished product, (e.g. ingredients for food technology) where the student's parents have agreed in advance that they would like the finished product brought home.
- Parents can be asked to provide specific items of clothing, e.g. PE and Sports kit and protective aprons for Technology
- Optional extras (see below);
- Music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances (see below).
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- Wilful damage/Loss of school property

## **Transport**

The school cannot charge for:

- Transporting registered students to or from the school premises, where the local education authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport;
- Transporting registered students to other premises where the Local governing board or local education authority has arranged for students to be educated, including any Consortium arrangements;
- Transport that enables a student to meet an examination requirement when he has been prepared for that examination at the school;

- Transport provided in connection with an educational trip during school hours.

The school can charge for:

- Any other transport linked to trips outside of school hours
- Travel from home to a work experience placement

### **Optional Extras**

Charges may be made for some activities that are known as “optional extras”. Optional extras are 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 student is being prepared for at the school; or part of religious education.

Optional extras include, but are not limited to:

- Board and lodging for a student on a residential trip;
- Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra.
- Entrance fees to museums, theatres, etc.
- Non-teaching staff employed to provide the optional extra;
- Teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra, this includes supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra;
- The cost, or a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, where the tuition is an optional extra.

Any charge made in respect of individual students may not exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of students participating. It may not therefore include an element of subsidy for any other students wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unable to pay the full charge. Furthermore, 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 students who do not wish to participate. Therefore, no charge can be made for supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying students on a residential trip.

The charge cannot exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra or the board and lodging.

Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

### **Residential Trips**

The school cannot charge for:

- Education provided on any trip that takes place during school hours;
- Education provided on any trip 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 student is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying students on a residential trip.

The school can charge for:

- Board and lodging, but the charge must not exceed the actual cost.
- Transport, where the trip falls outside school hours and does not form part of the National Curriculum

When the school informs parents about a forthcoming trip, we will make it clear that parents who can prove they are in receipt of the following benefits will receive financial support for part of the cost of board and lodging:

- Income Support;
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance;
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- Child Tax Credit, provided that Working Tax Credit is not also received;
- Income related employment and support allowance;
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit.

However, in such cases the school will ask parents to make a voluntary contribution to the board and lodging (see below).

### **Music Tuition**

Although the law states that all education provided during school hours must be free, music lessons are an exception to this rule.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a regulation-making power which allowed the Department for Children, Schools and Families to specify circumstances where charging can be made for music tuition. The new regulations, which came into force in September 2007, provide students with greater access to vocal and instrumental tuition. Charges may now be made for teaching either an individual student or groups of any appropriate size (provided that the size of the group is based on sound pedagogical principles) to play a musical instrument or to sing. Charges may only be made if the teaching is not an essential part of either the national curriculum, a public examination syllabus being followed by the student or where it has been specifically requested by a parent.

### **Voluntary Contributions**

Where a charge is not permissible the school may ask parents for a voluntary contribution towards the cost of:

- Any activity which takes place during school hours, including trips
- School equipment
- School funds generally

If the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, the school will make this clear to parents at the outset. The Local governing board or academy Headteacher\* will also make it clear to parents that there is no obligation to make any contribution. It is also important to note that no child will be excluded from an activity simply because his parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a trip, then it will be cancelled.

If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child must still be given an equal chance to go on the visit. The school will make it clear to parents at the outset of any trip how places will be allocated.

Where a charge does apply and a parent has difficulty in making the contribution any support that is offered will be at the discretion of the Headteacher.

*\*The term 'Headteacher' is used to identify the most senior employee within each Sigma academy, who may be referred to locally as Executive Headteacher, Principal or Co-Headteacher*

### **Education partly during school hours**

Where an activity takes place partly during and partly outside school hours, there is a basis for determining whether it is deemed to take place either inside or outside school hours. However, a charge can only be made for the activity outside school hours if it is not part of the National Curriculum, not part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the student is being prepared for at the school and not part of religious education.

### **Non-residential activities**

If 50% or more of the time spent on the activity occurs during school hours, it is deemed to take place during school hours. Time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours. School hours do not include lunchtime, but do include registration and morning break and currently total 5 hours and 35 minutes

Where less than 50% of the time spent on an activity falls during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours. For example, an excursion might require students to leave school an hour before the school day ends, but the activity does not end until late in the evening. A charge can therefore be applied to any non-educational trip of duration of 11 hours and 10 minutes or longer.

### **Residential visits**

If the number of school sessions taken up by the trip is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on the trip, it is deemed to have taken place during school hours (even if some activities take place late in the evening). Whatever the starting and finishing times of the school day, regulations require that the school day be divided into 2 sessions. A “half-day” means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

#### **Example 1: Visit during school hours**

Students are away from noon on Wednesday to 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 9 half days including 5 school sessions, so the trip is deemed to have taken place during school hours.

#### **Example 2: Visit outside school hours**

Students are away from school from noon on Thursday until 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 7 half days including 3 school sessions, so the trip is deemed to have taken place outside school hours.