

# Thomas More Catholic School



## CHARGING AND REMISSIONS POLICY

### Mission Statement

**To Care** for, respect and value all people and our environment.

**To Learn** that justice and love are the foundations of our Faith.  
To make these the guiding principles of our community in its commitment to academic excellence and personal integrity.

**To Achieve** beyond our highest expectations, creating challenging opportunities which take us all confidently through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

<b>Date Reviewed</b>	Autumn Term 2020
<b>Review Confirmed by</b>	Full Governing Body
<b>Statutory / Non Statutory</b>	Statutory
<b>Review Frequency</b>	Annual
<b>Next Review Due</b>	Autumn Term 2021

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We believe in the highest quality of provision for our pupils and we allocate resources appropriately and within guidelines to ensure that good value for money is achieved.

In accordance with the Education Reform Act of 1988 and in accordance with Sections 449 - 462 of the Education Act 1996 no charges are made to any registered pupil for any books, materials, equipment or apparatus used during School hours.

We apply the charging policy in line with Section 457 of the Education Act 1996 which e.g. allows charges to be made for residential School trips and artefacts made in School and taken home.

Questions and queries about this policy or discussions regarding the application of this policy to an individual student can be addressed by contacting the main School office and enquiries will be dealt with in confidence by a senior member of staff.

## 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'

## **Voluntary Contributions**

We believe that no student should be disadvantaged as a result of home or family background circumstances and apply a remissions policy. The Headteacher and Governors may remit some charges in part or in full as reasonable in particular individual circumstances.

The charging and remissions policy is an integral part of our inclusive arrangements for pupils and is applied equally to all pupils.

In normal cases, letters sent out when a charge is made (e.g. for a trip) will be accompanied by a clear verbal instruction by the organiser that arrangements may be available to support parents/families who are eligible for remissions.

Departments can seek support for pupils via their line manager for activities which would normally incur a charge according to the policy.

## **School Trips and Visits**

### **Voluntary Contributions and Responsibilities of Staff**

Nothing in legislation prevents a Governing Body or Local Authority from asking for voluntary contributions that would benefit the school or any school activities and the school will invite parents and others from time to time to make voluntary contributions to enable the provision of activities and visits which may not otherwise be possible. If the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, this will be made clear to parents at the outset. The Governing Body or Headteacher will make it clear to parents that there is no obligation to make any contribution.

No student will be excluded from an activity because his or her parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay. However, if insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a visit, it may not go ahead. Staff organising visits should make this clear to parents. Staff organising a trip will make it clear to parents at the outset what their policy for allocating places on the visit will be.

Activities outside of normal lesson times and not within the National Curriculum (ranging from visits abroad to school matches) are classed as 'optional extras'. Parents may be asked to meet the full cost of these activities. In the case of residential experiences, every effort will be made to offer value for money but the cost might be quite high. It is intended that school-based extra-curricular activities should be free or very low cost. The school will do its best to offer assistance or remission of charges in any case where there is hardship.

For activities during normal school hours and/or within the National Curriculum, parents may be asked to make a voluntary contribution to cover the cost of the activity to enable it to go ahead. Each year, such visits are likely to include visits to museums, theatre trips etc. The costs of visits will vary accordingly.

## Charging Structure

For residential trips during the time of normal school hours, parents can be asked to meet the full cost of board and lodging, and to make a voluntary contribution towards any travel expenses. The school will meet the costs for pupils whose parents receive the income support benefits, where it is still possible for the visit to go ahead. The school will do its best to offer assistance and remissions in any case where there is hardship.

## Activities and Visits

If the number of school sessions taken up by the visit is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on the visit, it is deemed to have taken place during normal school hours (even if some activities take place late in the evening). Whatever the starting and finishing times of the day, regulations require that a school day be divided into two sessions: a 'half day' means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day. Time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours. Activities during normal school hours may only involve a request for a voluntary contribution; parents may be charged an amount to cover the costs incurred to the school for activities mainly taking place outside of school hours.

Parents should be informed of the decision to ask for contributions at the planning stage of activities. Planned activities may be cancelled if financial support is not forthcoming. Parents may be asked to make a voluntary contribution towards activities taking place during school time, or towards activities which are a necessary part of the National Curriculum. Parents will be asked to meet the full cost of optional extra activities that occur outside of normal school hours, where these activities are not a necessary part of the National Curriculum. Parents will be asked to meet the full cost of board and lodging, and to make a voluntary contribution towards travel expenses for residential visits which fall, in the main, during normal school sessions. Pupils whose parents are receiving the following benefits should not be prevented from taking part in any school activity or trip that is open to other pupils:

- 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)

Any charge made in respect of individual pupils will not exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, 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 parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge. In 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;

- non-teaching staff;
- teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra, this includes supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra; and
- 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.

In cases where a small proportion of the activity takes place during School hours, the charge will include the cost of alternative provision for those pupils who do not wish to participate. Therefore no charge will be made for supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from School accompanying pupils on a residential visit. 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.

When the School informs parents about a forthcoming visit, the member of staff leading the trip should make it clear that parents who can prove they are in receipt of income support benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging. However, where voluntary contributions would not cover the cost of a visit, it would be likely that the visit would be cancelled where the trip was not an essential element of the curriculum.

### **Examination Entries**

A charge will be levied in respect of examination entries for pupils where the School has not prepared the pupil for the examination.

A charge will be levied in respect of examination entries for pupils where the School has prepared the pupil for the examination and it considers that for educational reasons the pupil should not be entered and the pupil's parent/carer wishes the pupil to be entered (or the pupil him/herself when over 18 years old). In these circumstances, if the pupil subsequently passes the examination, the School may refund the cost.

A charge may be levied for pupils re-sitting an examination.

A charge will be levied where a pupil fails without good reason to complete the requirements of any public examination where the School paid or agreed to pay the entry fee.

The charge levied above will be the cost of the examination entry, plus any applicable centre administrative fee.

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.

### **Materials & Textbooks**

Where a pupil or parent wishes to retain items produced as a result of art, craft and design, or design and technology, a charge may be levied for the cost of the materials used.

In the case of Food Technology, pupils are requested to make a contribution to the school towards the purchase of food for practical work. The school then supplies the ingredients.

Textbooks are provided free of charge, however in some subjects, additional revision guides are available, for which a charge is made.

### **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.

### **Out of School Activities**

No charge will be made for activities outside School hours that are part of the National Curriculum or religious education, or that form an essential part of the syllabus for an approved examination. If a pupil is prepared, outside School hours, for an examination that is not set out in regulations, a charge will be levied for tuition and other costs. For all other activities outside School hours, a charge up to the cost of the activity will be levied.

### **Damage/Loss to Property**

A charge will be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of School property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials), the charge will be the cost of replacement or repair, or a lower cost may be set at the decision of the Headteacher. A charge will be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials) belonging to a third party, where the cost has been recharged to the School. The charge to be the cost of replacement or repair, or a lower cost may be set at the decision of the Headteacher.

### **Lettings**

The School will make its facilities available to outside users at a charge of at least the cost of providing the facilities. The scale of charges will be determined annually by the Finance Committee.

### **School Minibus Travel**

Schools may charge for transport in their minibuses only if they hold a permit issued under Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985. A permit is not required if no charge is made in cash or kind. The Local Authority supplies permits for School minibuses.

The charges for use of the minibus will be based on mileage and an admin charge plus a flat fee.

Any charges made may be used to recover some or all of the costs of running the vehicle, including loss of value. The service may not make a profit either directly through the fares charged or incidentally as part of a profit making activity, even if any profit would go into the School's other running costs or for charitable purposes. A charge is any payment in cash

or kind (for example a club subscription) by or on behalf of a person that gives him/her a right to be carried.

### **Other charges**

The Headteacher, Resources Committee or Governing Body may levy charges for miscellaneous services up to the cost of providing such services.

e.g. for providing a copy of a student record, OFSTED report, photocopying and telephone calls.

### **Non Attendance or Cancellation**

There will be no refunds (full or part) for non-attendance of chargeable sessions.

Fees for additional sessions are chargeable for a full term and cancellation of the agreement will result in a cancellation charge for the remainder of fees due up to the end of the term. The cancellation charge may be waived or reduced at the discretion of the Head of School basing individual requests on their own merit. All requests for waiving/reduction of cancellation fee must be put in writing to the Head of School.

### **Remissions**

We have 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 Senior Finance Assistant via [hju@tmore.org.uk](mailto:hju@tmore.org.uk).

### **School trip refunds**

All initial deposits for school trips will be non-refundable. Parents will be informed of this when they are provided with initial information about the trip.

In the event that the school has to cancel a trip due to foreseen circumstances, parental

contributions will be refunded.

In the event that a school trip is cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, it is at the Headteacher's discretion as to whether a refund is given to parents. The Headteacher will consult the governing board on the matter, taking into account the cost to the school, including alternative provision cost.

In the event that a school trip is postponed due to unforeseen circumstances, it is at the Headteacher's discretion as to what happens with the parental contributions for the trip. The Headteacher will discuss options with the governing board, which could include carrying forward the money until the trip takes place, transferring the money to another trip, or refunding parents.

In the event that a pupil or their parents cancel their place on a trip, it is at the Headteacher's discretion as to whether a refund is given to parents. The Headteacher will consult the governing board on the matter, taking into account the reason for cancellation, whether the school will be reimbursed for the pupil's place on the trip, and whether the place on the trip can be offered to another pupil.

Where a pupil or their parents have previously cancelled a place on a trip and received a full refund, the school has the right to refuse to allow the pupil to attend future trips and visits.

In the event that a pupil cannot attend a trip at the last minute (e.g. due to illness), it is at the Headteacher's discretion as to whether a refund is given to parents. The Headteacher will consult the governing board on the matter, taking into account whether the school will be reimbursed for the pupil's place on the trip and whether the place on the trip can be offered to another pupil.

Once trip arrangements have been booked and confirmed, if contributions exceed the total cost of the trip, a refund will be given where the excess is greater than £1 per pupil. If the excess is less than £1 per pupil, this will be paid into the school's account.

Excess expenditure will be subsidised by the school fund.

The school will deal with cancellations and refunds on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that all pupils and their families are treated equally.

If a parent wishes to make a complaint about refunds, they can do so via the Complaints Procedures Policy.