

Charging and Remissions Policy

Rationale

It is the Governors responsibility to provide clear guidance to staff and parents on the charges the school may make to parents/students. The implementation of the Charging and Remissions Policy is the responsibility of the Headteacher.

Charging and Remissions Policy

The charging and remissions policy adopted by the Governing body ensures that statutory requirements are met and is intended to reflect the general principles of the 1996 Act which identifies activities for which:

- 1) Charges will not be made
- 2) Charges will be made
- 3) Charges may be waived

Voluntary Contributions

The school will seek voluntary contributions for any activity in order to benefit the school or support a school activity whether during or outside school hours, residential or non-residential and including inviting parents to pay for materials or ingredients where they wish to own the finished product. However all requests for voluntary contributions will emphasise their voluntary nature and the fact that students of parents who do not make such contributions will be treated no differently from those who have. Such contributions must be genuinely voluntary.

There is no limit to the level of voluntary contributions which parents or others can make to school activities, nor is there any restriction placed on the use which can be made of such contributions, provided they are used for the purpose specified in the request for them. They could, for example, be used to subsidise students from low-income families, or the cost of travel for accompanying teachers. The Law says that if the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions the parents will be notified of this from the outset. No child will be excluded from an activity because the parents are unable or unwilling to pay. If insufficient contributions are raised the trip or activity may have to be cancelled.

Education Provided Within School Hours

Education provided by any maintained school for its registered students should be free of charge if it takes place wholly or mainly during school hours, school hours being those hours when a school is actually in session and not including the break in the middle of the day. This means that neither the student nor his or her parents or guardian may be required to pay for, or to supply, any materials, books, instruments or other equipment for use in connection with education provided during school hours.

Education Provided Out of School Hours

Where education is provided out of school hours, charging is permitted, except where the education is provided:

- to fulfil any requirements specified in the syllabus for a prescribed Public examination; or
- specifically to fulfil statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum;
- to fulfil duties relating to Religious Education.

In these cases the only charge that may be made is for board and lodging on residential trips.

Is an Activity In or Out of School Time?

If the number of school sessions on a residential trip is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on a trip it is deemed to have taken place during school hours (even if some of the activities take place in the evening), so charging is not permitted. Whatever the length of the school day, regulations require that the school day is divided into 2 sessions. A 'half day' in this context means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

If the activity is deemed to take place during school hours, or is out of school hours but is covered by the criteria set out above, the governing body may not charge for anything unless it has drawn up a statement of general policy on charging.

Music Tuition

The main exception to the principle of free education, which the law allows is that a charge may be made in respect of individual tuition in playing any musical instrument, even if such tuition takes place during school hours. Parental agreement must be obtained before a student is given that tuition.

Third Party Activities

The Act permits an organisation other than the governing body to levy a charge directly on parents for activities organised in school hours by a non-school organisation. The school will not be involved in collection of charges on behalf of the third-party organisation. Where students are granted leave of absence to attend these activities it would be for parents and any staff members similarly released to satisfy themselves about the adequacy of the arrangements made by the third party to secure the safety and welfare of the children.

Charging Policy

If a charge is made for each student it should not exceed the actual cost. If further funds are needed for additional costs e.g. to help hardship cases this must be by voluntary contributions or general fund raising. The permitted charge may include an allowance for the costs of teachers from the school who supervise the activity.

Board and Lodging on Residential Visits

Board and lodging on residential visits may be charged for whether or not the visit takes place within school time and whether or not the activity is provided to fulfil the requirements of the syllabus of a prescribed public examination; or of the National Curriculum; or to fulfil statutory duties relating to religious education.

Charges for board and lodging must not exceed the actual cost to the student. They must not, for example, include any element representing a share of the costs of staff accompanying the visit. (This may, however, be covered by voluntary contributions.)

Governors will, as a statutory minimum, remit any charges for board and lodging in the case of students whose parents are in receipt of relevant benefits such as Income Support, Child Tax Credit etc. where the activity is deemed to take place in school hours, if out of school hours then the decision on whether to remit charges will rest with Governors.

'Optional Extra' Activities

'Optional extra' activities are those which take place wholly or mainly outside school hours, but which are not provided as part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination and are not required in order to fulfil statutory duties relating to the national curriculum or to religious education.

Participation will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet such charges as are made. Any charge made in respect of individual students may include an appropriate element for the following: a student's travel costs; a student's board and lodging; materials, books, instruments and other equipment; non-teaching staff costs; entrance fees to museums, theatres etc.; insurance costs.

It should be noted that any charge for an 'optional extra' activity, as distinct from a request for a voluntary contribution, should not exceed the actual cost of providing that activity, divided equally by the number of students willing to participate. It may not, therefore, include an element of subsidy for any other students wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

The costs of teaching staff involved in optional extra activities may only be passed on through charges if:-

- they are engaged specifically by the governors for the purpose of providing the activity;
- they are employed by the governors to provide instrumental music tuition; or
- they are teachers already employed by the governors, who have been engaged on a separate contract for services to provide the optional extra.

VAT and School Journeys

To enable schools to reclaim VAT on school journeys the visit should be part of the curriculum and the school should have purchased all elements, apart from accommodation directly and not via a travel/tour operator.

Public Examination Entries

The governing body is required to enter a student for each examination in a syllabus for a prescribed public examination for which the student has been prepared. A student is regarded as having been prepared for the specification at the school if the school has provided any part of the necessary preparation. The requirement to enter a student may only be lifted where, in the opinion of the governing body, there are educational reasons for not entering the student, or where the student's parents request in writing that the student should not be entered.

If a student fails, without good reason, to complete the examination requirements for any public examination for which the governing body has paid or is liable to pay an entry fee, that fee can be recovered from parents.

School Minibus or Transport Provided by the LA

Transport must be provided free of charge if it is provided in school hours by the LA or the school to carry particular students between parts of the school's premises or between the school and any other place where education is to be provided by the LA or the school. However, if a student makes use of transport not provided by the LA or school to travel direct from home to an activity sanctioned, though not provided by the LA or the school, then parents may be asked to meet the cost of such travel. An example of this would be travel direct from home to work experience and vice versa.

Charging in Kind

The cost of ingredients, materials, equipment etc. needed for practical subjects such as craft or food technology, must be budgeted for and borne by the school. Parents who are willing to contribute in cash or kind can however be encouraged to do so on a voluntary basis. The school may charge for, or require the supply of, ingredients and materials if parents have indicated in advance a wish to own the finished product, if there is one. Schools should obtain written confirmation from parents that they wish to supply or pay for materials on this basis.

Students must not be treated differently according to whether or not materials are being provided by their parents. It should be recognised that much of the practical work in craft or food technology is of an investigative nature and will not necessarily result in a "finished product", however this is an essential part of the learning process.

Breakages and Fines

The school may ask parents to pay for the cost of replacing a broken window or defaced, damaged or lost textbook where this is the result of a student's behaviour. Parents cannot, however, be taken to court for this money.