

Hertfordshire County Council

Children, Schools and Families

Charging, Remissions and Debts Policy

**St Paul's C of E VA Primary School,
Chipperfield**

**Policy written: February 2012
Reviewed: February 2018
Next review February 2020**



We believe that all our pupils should have an equal opportunity to benefit from school activities and visits (curricular and extra-curricular) independent of their parents' financial means. This charging and remissions policy describes how we will do our best to ensure a good range of visits and activities is offered and, at the same time, try to minimise the financial barriers which may prevent some pupils taking full advantage of the opportunities.

The policy has been informed by *A Guide to the Law for School Governors* and the DCSF guidance "*Planning and Funding Extended Schools*" and "*Charging for School Activities*" (January 2009).

The policy complements the school's equality scheme, teaching and learning policy and the Financial Management Standards for Schools.

The headteacher, staff and governors will ensure that the following applies:

1. No charges will be made for:

- Education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books or other equipment)
- education provided outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education
- Tuition for pupils learning to play musical instruments (or singing) if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum.
- The education part of 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 the school's basic curriculum for religious education
- Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential trip

2. Activities for which charges may be made

a) Activities outside school hours

Non-residential activities which take place outside school hours, if the majority of the time spent on that activity takes place outside school hours (time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours).

b) Residential activities

Board and lodging costs of residential trips deemed to take place during school time.

c) Residential trips deemed to take place outside school time (other than for those activities listed in 1 above).

d) Music tuition

Music tuition for individuals or groups of up to four pupils.

Charges will be made as indicated below. Parental agreement will be obtained before a charge is made.

Activities which can be charged for (with the exception of board and lodging for residential trips) are regarded as "optional extras".

Charges will not exceed the actual predicted cost (per pupil) of provision as the school does not aim to profit from any activity. In the event of a profit being accidentally made, a refund will be offered if the profit is greater than 5% of the overall cost. (See refunds section)

Examples of charges and remissions are given in the table below

Activity or thing which will or may be charged for	Notes
Charges will/may be made for any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where a parent wishes their child to own them	For example, a clay model – a charge to cover the cost of the clay.
Charges will/may be made for music tuition	The cost, or a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument or singing, where the tuition is an optional extra for an individual pupil or groups of up to four pupils
Charges will be made for the board and lodging component of residential trips	The charge will not exceed the actual cost

3. Families qualifying for remission or help with charges

In order to remove financial barriers from disadvantaged pupils, the governing body has agreed that some activities and visits where charges can legally be made will be offered at no charge or a reduced charge to parents in particular circumstances.

Category A

Parents in receipt of

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance

Additional categories of parents may claim help with some costs in some circumstances. Remission of music tuition fees may be available for families on these benefits through application to the County Council. Other applications for help or remissions of charges need to be made in writing to the Resources Committee of the Governing Body.

4. Additional considerations

The governing body recognises its responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances. To this end we will try to adhere to the following guidelines:

- we have established a system for parents to pay in instalments

- when an opportunity for a trip arises at short notice it will be possible to arrange to pay by instalments beyond the date of the trip
- we acknowledge that offering opportunities on a “first pay, first served” basis discriminates against pupils from families on lower incomes and we will avoid that method of selection.

Voluntary contributions

- **The Acorn Fund** As a voluntary aided school, St. Paul’s receives only 90% funding of capital money for its buildings and ICT hardware from central government. The remaining 10% has to be found by the school. The governors therefore request a small voluntary donation from parents of £5 per month towards this shortfall. This fund is administered by the finance governor. No members of the educational staff of the school know which parents pay into the fund.
- **Other voluntary donations** The school sometimes requests voluntary donations towards the cost of certain activities (eg cookery ingredients and some school trips). Although payment is voluntary, letters always state that where there are insufficient funds activities will not be able to take place in future. The school acknowledges that in some cases, where payments are made on a voluntary basis, there will be some that do not pay.

Refunds

- Where a planned trip does not take place, parents will be refunded in full.
- A refund will not normally be given if a child is absent for a trip through illness. However, if a child missed a residential trip due to accident or illness, costs may be recovered through the insurance policy.
- Where a parent has reserved a place for their child on a trip and the school has secured this place with the company concerned, payment will not be refunded to the parent unless the school is able to cover its related costs.
- If, for any unforeseen reason, parents have been overcharged, refunds may be required where overall profits exceed 5%. Likewise, if undercharged, it may be necessary to ask parents for either additional payments or voluntary contributions.

Arrangements for the collection of monies owing to the school

- **Dinner Money** If families opt for a school lunch they are required to sign up with School Gateway/School Comms. Parents accounts must be in credit at all times to cover the cost of a school meal. They are advised of the cost of a school dinner and from this they can work out how much their child’s amount is likely to be and can then add to their account online at any time keeping it topped with a minimum of £10. Free school meals may be available to families with limited income and can be applied for through application to the County Council. If not paid, the following steps apply.
 1. Parents are sent a text message informing them they have an outstanding balance.
 2. If no response has been received by school then a text is sent reminding to pay immediately or provide packed lunch from the following day.

3. If a child's account still has not been credited or money sent to the school office by the end of the next day then the office will call home to make sure that messages have been received. This gives the parents the opportunity to explain why the outstanding amount has not been paid or a packed lunch has not been provided.
4. If the situation has still not been resolved despite reminders then a letter will be sent home stating dinners will be discontinued and the debt will be placed in the hands of Herts Catering who will take all reasonable steps to reclaim the money.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover this debt. If parents continue to send their child to school after being notified without making arrangements for their lunchtimes, social services may be informed that they are not carrying out their responsibility to care for their child by not providing them with food at lunchtime.

- **Milk Money:** Milk is not compulsory but if opted for is paid at the end of each term in advance. If no money is received, no milk is ordered.
- **Music Tuition:** Lessons are not compulsory but an optional extra for those families wishing their children to have instrumental tuition. Remission of fees to those families in receipt of certain benefits (see above) may be available by applying to the County Council.
Lessons are payable termly **in advance**. Lessons cannot commence if payment has not been received. Notice of termination of lessons needs to be given by half term for the lessons to cease at the end of that term. Unpaid invoices are passed as bad debts to the County Council.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

The Resources Committee of the governing body will monitor the impact of this policy by receiving on a termly basis a financial report on those activities that resulted in charges being levied, the subsidies awarded (without giving names) and the source of those subsidies. It will seek to evaluate the impact of the school's extended services on those children most in need of additional support.

Date established by governing body: March 2012

Reviewed: February 2018

Date of next review: February 2020