



Charging and Remissions Policy

Reviewed: March 2021

Next Review: March 2022

Introduction

1. Sections 449 – 462 of the Education Act 1996 (herein known as the Act), sets out the law on charging for school activities in schools in England.

The charging policy covers activities that may or may not be charged for when activities take place either during or outside school hours, including residential activities. The policy also covers voluntary contributions, and details the charges for school uniform and music tuition.

The remissions policy sets out circumstances in which charges will be remitted in whole or in part, and this is covered, if applicable, under the category of change.

Schools must ensure that they inform parents on low incomes and are in receipt of the following benefits of the support available to them when being asked for contributions towards the cost of school visits.

- Universal credit in prescribed circumstances
- Income support
- Income based jobseekers allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit (providing Working Tax Credit is not also received and the family income (as assessed by HMRC) does not exceed the sum given in the HMRC rules
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- An income related employment and support allowance introduced on 27 October 2008

Principles of Charging

2. Education

Schools cannot charge for:

- an admission application to any state funded school – paragraph 1.9(n) of the 'Schools Admission code 2012' rules out requests for financial contributions as any part of the admission process;
- 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 or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of 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;
- Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school; and
- Examination re-sits if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sits at the school. However, if a pupil fails, without good reason, to meet any examination requirement for a syllabus, the fee can be recovered from the pupil's parents.

Schools can charge for:

- Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him/her to own them;
- Optional extras (see later);
- Music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances (see later);
- Certain early years provision (The Education (Charges for Early Years Provision) Regulations 2012);
- Community facilities (s.27(1) of the Education Act).

"School hours" are those when the school is actually in session and do not include the break in the middle of the school day. Equipment does not include school uniform, which parents are required to provide.

3. Education outside of school hours

Where an activity takes place partly during and partly outside school hours, parents can be charged for activities when these activities are not a necessary part of the national curriculum or do not form part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education. The Act describes activities that can be charged for as "optional extras". It is up to the trust to decide whether to make a charge to parents for these activities, and to decide if the delegated school budget should be used to subsidise an activity, in whole or in part.

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 the break in the middle of the day.

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 pupils to leave school an hour before the school day ends, but the activity does not end until late in the evening.

Voluntary Contributions

4. Nothing in legislation prevents a school from asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activities. However, if the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, this must be made clear to parents at the outset. It must also be clear to parents that there is no obligation to contribution.

It is important to note that no child should be excluded from an activity simply because his or her parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a visit, or the school cannot fund it from some other source, then it must be cancelled. Schools must ensure that they make this clear to parents. If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child must still be given an equal chance to go on the visit. We do not treat these children differently from any others. Schools should make it clear to parents at the outset what their policy for allocating places on school visits will be.

When making requests for voluntary contributions, parents must not be made to feel pressurised into paying, as it is voluntary and not compulsory.

Optional Extras

5. Charges may be made for some activities that are known as 'optional extras'. Where an optional extra is provided, a charge can be made for providing books, materials, instruments or equipment.

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;
- The cost of buildings and accommodation;
- 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 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 cannot exceed the cost of the provision for each pupil, and this cost will include transport, board and lodgings, materials and equipment, and the appropriate proportion of teaching and non-teaching costs for staff required to provide the activity. Staff costs for supervising optional extra activities will be covered by a simple letter or email confirming the agreement of the member of staff to take part in the activity, in return for board and lodgings and free travel.

The following is a list of activities organised by the schools, which require voluntary contributions from parents. These are known as 'optional extras'. This list is not exhaustive.

- Visits to museums / galleries
- Sporting activities, which require transport expenses
- Outdoor adventure activities
- Visits to the theatre
- Musical events
- In-house experiences
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit
- Sports club additional coaching
- Extended day services offered to pupils (for example breakfast club, after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions)
- Cooking ingredients / materials for a technology lesson where the child wishes to take home the finished product
- Revision guides

Participation in any optional extra activity will be based on 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.

School Activities during the school day that may incur a charge

6. Schools may provide a small number of school trips that take place during the school day for enrichment purposes that are not essential to the curriculum and these fall outside the scope of voluntary contributions. Students are offered the opportunity to

take part in these trips subject to a charge to cover the cost of the activity, and some schools may provide a rebate of part or all of the cost.

Residential visits

7. If the school organises a residential visit in school time or mainly school time, which is to provide education directly linked to the National Curriculum, there are no charges for the education or travel expenses.

However, we do make a charge to cover the costs of board and lodging. Parents who can prove they are in receipt of certain benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging.

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 school hours (even if some activities take place late in the evening).

Breakfast Club

8. Some of our schools charge for attending the breakfast club – this differs from school to school. This is to cover the cost of supervising the club and providing breakfast, which is not met by the Local Authority. Children in receipt of Pupil Premium may be exempt from payment.

Music Instrument Tuition

9. The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 permit charges to be levied in schools during school hours for tuition in singing or in playing a musical instrument for an individual pupil or group of two or more if the pupil's parents request it. Charges may not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of staff providing the tuition. A charge is not permitted with respect to children who are looked after by a local authority. Nor is a charge permitted where such tuition is part of the National Curriculum or if it is provided to pupils in Key Stage 2 under the DCSF policy Instrumental and Vocal Tuition.
10. The school will charge for teaching an individual student or groups of up to four to play a musical instrument, if the teaching is not an essential part of the National Curriculum or a public examination syllabus being followed by the student. Charges for music tuition can be paid annually in advance or each term, and should payment not be received, the tuition will cease. Parents are sent a letter, which clearly explains the charging arrangements.
11. The annual charges are per term per instrument. This charge may be reduced for pupils eligible for pupil premium. The price set for music tuition is set by each individual school as is the notice period required to cancel lessons.

Swimming

12. Our primary schools organise swimming for children. These take place in school time and are part of the National Curriculum. We make no charge for this activity. We

inform parents when these lessons are to take place, and we ask parents for written permission for their child to take part in swimming lessons.

Hire of School Premises & Facilities

13. Certain schools within our Trust have premises and facilities they hire out on an hourly basis. The charges are set by each individual school.

Transport

14. Schools cannot charge for:
 - Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport;
 - Transport that enables a pupil to meet examination requirements when he / she has been prepared for that examination at the school;
 - Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the school has arranged for pupils to be educated; and
 - Transport provided in connection with an educational visit unless a voluntary contribution can be requested.
15. Parents will be expected to provide and pay for transport for work experience, unless a student has a statement of special educational needs that refers specifically to the provision of transport. Transport provided by the school to take part in work experience will be provided free.

Activities not run by the School

16. When a non-school organisation arranges an activity during school hours, the organisation may charge parents. Parents must ask the school to agree for their child(ren) being absent as they would in the case of a family holiday.

Public Examinations

17. No charge will be made for entering students for public examinations for which they have been prepared by the school. The school will charge an examination entry fee if an examination is not on the set list, or the pupil was not prepared for the set list examination at the school, or a student fails without good reason to complete the requirements of a public examination.

No charge will be made for preparing a student for an examination, unless the tuition takes place outside school hours for an examination that is not set out in regulations.

Music exams are not considered public examinations and pupils are entered at the parent's request and therefore a charge is made according to the cost of the entry.

Breakages and Fines

18. No charge will normally be made for broken windows, damage to school property or lost library books, but parents will be asked to pay for them if they result from pupil's misbehaviour / misadventure.

Recovery of Charges

19. Any sums payable by parents for wasted examination fees, or charges for optional extras, for which they agreed to pay, or for board and lodging, are recoverable as a civil debt, should the decision be made to pursue the outstanding debt.

Staff Telephone Calls

20. Staff must always have the permission of the Headteacher prior to making use of the school's facilities for private calls. Any such calls will be charged based on the actual cost incurred.

Photocopying Charges for Staff

21. The school reserve the right to charge staff for the cost of private photocopying and staff must advise the school of any undertaken.

Nursery Provision

22. From September 2017, the primary schools may offer 15-hours of free provision to every child in Nursery, and 30-hours of free provision for those eligible and in receipt of an approved 'code' (up to a maximum of 5 places, which is reviewed on a termly basis). These hours do not include lunchtime provision, which will be classed as childcare and charged at an hourly rate advised by the school.

School Uniform Charges

23. Students are required to wear school uniform, however not all our schools sell uniform directly to parents and students. Please contact your school for further details.

Community Facilities

24. Schools are allowed to provide facilities that may be used by the local community. These facilities further any charitable purpose for the benefit of pupils at the school or people who live or work in the locality in which the school is situated.
25. Schools can charge for the use of these facilities and a profit can be generated, provided it is spent on the purposes of the school and / or on community facilities.

School Lunches

26. School lunches are chargeable. Some schools may offer a subsidy toward school lunches. From September 2017, the cost of a school lunch will be free for children in Reception and Key Stage 1 for as long as the government subsidy exists. Students eligible for Free School Meals will be exempt from any charge.
27. Staff lunches are charged at the rate it costs the school to pay for catering. Staff may be entitled to a free school meal at some schools when staying in the dining hall and eating with the children – this is at each school's discretion.

Remissions

28. In order to remove financial barriers from disadvantaged pupils, the Headteacher, may decide not to levy charges in respect of a particular activity, if it feels it is reasonable in the circumstances. In these instances, activities and visits where charges can legally be made will be offered at no charge or a reduced charge to parents in particular circumstances. This remissions policy sets out the circumstances in which charges will be waived.

Additional categories of parents may claim help with some costs in some circumstances, which will be decided by the governing body taking into account as to whether additional help is justified.