Charging, Debt & Remission Policy

This policy was agreed by governors:

Committee:	**Date:**	**Next Review Date:**
Finance & Premises Committee	23rd February 2015	Spring Term 2018
Finance & Premises Committee	8th February 2018	Spring Term 2021
Finance & Premises Committee/Full Governing Body	17th March 2021	Spring Term 2024
Finance & Premises Committee/Full Governing Body	14th March 2024	Spring Term 2027

Principles
This statutory policy has been drawn up to conform with the charging arrangements for Maintained Schools as set out in the Education Act 1996 and the advice issued in the DfE document Charging for School Activities, issued in October 2014.

Aims
The Governing Body recognises that the Act prohibits charges for school activities that take place within school hours and/or are part of the school curriculum. This Policy reinforces that principle, whilst setting out those school activities for which a charge may be made or a voluntary contribution requested, and those circumstances in which charges may be remitted.

Income due will be collected before or at the time the relevant sale or service is provided unless set out below. A remission is the cancellation of a charge which would normally be payable.

Staff are responsible for implementing the charging and remissions policy consistently and notifying the Head Teacher of any specific circumstances which they are unsure about.

Practice
Educational Activities taking place during School Hours

- 'School Hours' are defined as those during which the school is in session, but excluding the midday break.
- Education provided during school hours will be free of charge
- No charge will be made for books, materials or equipment deemed necessary to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

The school can charge for the following:

i Education

- Any materials, books, instruments or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him or her to own them
- Optional extras (see below)
- Music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances
- Community facilities

ii Optional extras

We are able to charge for activities known as 'optional extras'. In these cases, the school can charge for providing materials, books, instruments or equipment. The following are optional extras:

- Education provided outside of school time that is not part of the national curriculum; nor a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school; nor religious education
- Examination entry fees if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school

- Transport (other than transport that is required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the local authority/governing board has arranged for the pupil to be provided with education)
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit
- Extended day services offered to pupils (such as breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, lunchtime clubs and supervised homework sessions, should the Head Teacher decide to make a charge).

When 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 (including supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra)
- 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 made in respect of individual pupils will not be greater than the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating.

Any charge will not include an element of subsidy for any other pupils who wish to take part in the activity but whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

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 pupils who do not wish to participate.

Parental agreement is necessary for the provision of an optional extra which is to be charged for.

iii Music tuition

Where a non-school or Local Authority organisation arranges an activity to take place during school hours and parents/carers give their consent to their child/ren to take part in the activity, that organisation may make a charge.

iv Residential visits including remission

The school can charge for board and lodging on residential visits, but the charge must not exceed the actual cost. A voluntary contribution will be requested to meet the remainder of the cost of the residential visit as this is considered an optional extra.

Remission for the Year 6 residential visits is available for those eligible for a free school meal for the board and lodging element and the school will also look to use its Pupil Premium funding to see if it can reduce the cost to the parent/carer where parents have previously been in receipt of a free school meal.

Educational Activities taking place outside School Hours

For all activities outside school hours such as the extended school clubs run by the school, the charge will be set to cover the cost of such items as:

- Transport/travel costs
- Entrance fees
- Insurance Costs
- Any materials, books and equipment required for the activity
- Incidental expenses
- Additional staff costs
- Incremental building and accommodation costs

The calculated charge will not subsidise any other pupil participating. Any remission of charges for individual students will be agreed by the Head Teacher and met by the School. If insufficient funds are received to cover the cost of the activity, the activity may be cancelled.

Examples of extended school clubs currently run by school staff which are charged for include the Breakfast Club, Art Club and Cookery Club. External clubs run by outside agencies at the school are outside the scope of this Policy.

Voluntary Contributions

The school is able to ask parents for voluntary contributions to fund any activities which take place during school hours which would otherwise not be possible, including the purchase of school equipment. Voluntary contributions are currently requested to enable the School to run activities such as school day trips, swimming lessons, workshops and shows in school which are deemed educationally desirable.

In addition, parents/carers are invited to make a financial contribution to the separate school fund account via ParentPay. The amount asked for is subject to annual Governing Body approval.

It will be made clear in correspondence to parents/carers that such contributions are wholly voluntary and that no pupil will be treated differently according to whether or not their parent/carer has contributed. If insufficient funds are received to cover the cost of the activity or a visit, it may be cancelled.

Breakfast Club

All fees for the Breakfast Club must be paid in advance or on the same day so accounts are kept in credit. The school uses the online cashless system called Parentpay to collect all payments unless child care vouchers/tax free payments have been agreed with the school office. There are some circumstances whereby cash or cheque payments will be accepted and this must be agreed on a case by case basis with the School Office.

Uniform

A limited number of items, including blazers, ties and PE t-shirts bearing the school logo are available for sale from the school office for mid term starters. These items must be paid for at

the point of sale and a receipt will be offered. The majority of the uniform is sold online through the school's supplier MAPAC – refer to Uniform Policy.

Loss of or Damage to School Property

Loss of, damage to or breakage of school property e.g. books, windows, furniture, equipment etc may be charged for if caused by carelessness, negligence or deliberate act. The charge will be the cost of replacement or repair, or such lower cost as the Head Teacher may decide.

Similarly a charge may be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of property belonging to a third party, where the cost has been accepted by and recharged to the school.

Other Charges

The School may levy a charge for miscellaneous services up to the cost of providing such services e.g. for providing a copy of an Ofsted Report other than to parents & carers or as specified under the Freedom of Information Act and in accordance with the latest legislation on subject access requests and the school's Data Protection Policy.

The school also makes a charge for external lettings as set out in the separate Lettings Policy.

Debt Policy

For 2023-24 and 2024-25, the Greater London Authority is funding free school meals for children, therefore there are no ongoing school meal debts.

In relation to the Breakfast Club service, the school has adopted a no debt policy and thus requires all attendances to be paid for in advance. If unrecoverable debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers. Every parent/carer will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child's account is kept in credit at all times. If the online ParentPay account goes into debit the following procedure will apply:

- The school recognises that parents/carers may forget to pay for their child's breakfast club so will continue to accept the children into the club. Once there is a minimum of 3 days debt a gentle reminder debt letter is to be emailed twice a week.
- Firmer action is taken once the debt reaches 1 week of club fees. Contact is made by telephone and a specific letter is sent home twice a week to request that the debt is cleared immediately and to refrain from using the breakfast club from the next school day until the debt is fully cleared.
- **The school will not provide a breakfast club place until the debt is cleared or the Head Teacher has agreed with the parent/carer an alternative arrangement**.
- The School Office will request the parent/carer credits the account with a week of club fees.

If, despite reminders from the school, payment of any debt is not received, then the school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt. The school's financial procedures set out the process for debt write-off if the debt is not recoverable.

Remission of Charges

This policy sets out the circumstances in which the school proposes to remit (wholly or partly) any charge which would otherwise be payable to them in accordance with the charging policy.

The governing body agrees to remit in whole the charges for a set number of pupils in receipt of all elements of Pupil Premium Grant for extended school clubs. The decision over which children attend the clubs at no cost to the parent/carer is made by the school and agreed with the parent.

The school will make it clear that parents/carers who are eligible for free school meals will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging element of the Year 6 Residential Trip, however if the parent/carer is willing to contribute towards these costs, this will be clarified to the parent as being a voluntary contribution.

The Head Teacher also has discretion as to whether to remit any other element of the residential trip's cost for those both in receipt and not in receipt of the above benefits.

Any other charge, including school meals and extended school clubs, may be remitted in whole or in part in response to a request by the parent/carer in writing to the Head Teacher or at the discretion of the Head Teacher under the Vulnerable Pupils Policy.