

Charging & Remissions Policy

Document: Charging & Remissions Policy

Ref:

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Responsibility: The Department for Education 'Charging for School Activities' guidance May 2018 states that: School governing bodies and local authorities, subject to limited exceptions referred to in this document, cannot charge for education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment). Gloucestershire County Council does not have a policy on charging for school activities. Therefore, the Governing Body of St Mary's Primary School [the School] has developed the following Charging and Remissions policy.

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1. Introduction

St Mary's Primary School [the School] is committed to policy providing the best possible educational opportunities available within the funds allocated by the Local Authority. The law states very clearly that governing bodies and local authorities cannot charge for education provided during school hours however there are limited exceptions when a school can charge for materials, instruments or other equipment. Furthermore, schools must ensure that they inform parents on low incomes and in receipt of certain benefits of the support available to them when being asked for contributions towards the costs of school visits. The School warmly endorses these principles and is committed to uphold the legal requirements.

It is recognised, however, that many educationally valuable activities which enrich the curriculum have been and will continue to be dependent on financial contributions in whole or in part from parents. Without that financial support, the school would find it quite impossible to maintain the quality and breadth of the educational programme provided for pupils.

Where possible the school will seek learning opportunities using the resources on the school site including Forest School, the wildlife pond and the school field. The school also regularly uses resources within walking distance including the local churches, secondary school, parks and wildlife areas.

The school's concern is to keep financial contributions to a reasonable minimum and to ensure as far as possible that all children are able to take part, irrespective of their financial circumstances. However, should insufficient voluntary contributions be received visits may need to be cancelled. Charges and remissions are defined as follows:

Charge - a fee payable for specifically defined activities

Remission - the cancellation of a charge which would normally be payable

2. Background

The DfE requires that policy statement should be made to take account of each type of activity that can be charged for and explain when charges will be made. If a charge is to be made for a particular type of activity, for example optional extras, parents need to know how the charge will be worked out and who might qualify for help with the cost. This information should be available to parents.

As a state funded primary school St Mary's cannot charge for:

- 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 parent; and
- entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school; and
- examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school.

Furthermore – paragraph 1.9 (n) of the 'School Admissions Code 2012' rules out requests for financial contributions as any part of the admissions process.

It can however charge for:

- any material, books, instruments, or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him/her to own them;
- optional extras (see Section 3)
- music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances
- certain early years provision
- community facilities.

The policy statements in Sections 3 to 11 have been developed with reference to the DfE's 'Charging for School Activities' Departmental Advice document, May 2018 and the Charging Policy of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom.

3. Optional Extras

Where an optional extra is being provided the School can make a charge for providing materials, books, instruments, or equipment. Optional extras are:

- education provided outside of school time that is not:
 - part of the national curriculum;
 - part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school; or
 - part of religious education.
- transport (other than transport that is required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the local authority/governing body have 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 (for example breakfast club, after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions).

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 made in respect of individual pupils must not exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating. It must therefore not include a subsidy for any other pupils wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

Furthermore, in cases where a small proportion of the activity takes place during school hours the charges cannot include the cost of alternative provision for the pupils who do not wish to participate. Therefore, no charge can be made for supply teachers to cover for those 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.

4. Voluntary Contributions

Nothing in legislation prevents the School from asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activities. However, if the activity cannot be funded and, therefore cannot go ahead, without voluntary contributions, the Governing Body or Headteacher must make this clear to parents at the outset. The Governing Body or Headteacher must also make it clear to parents that there is no obligation to make any contribution.

At St Mary's no child will be excluded from an activity because his/her parents are unwilling or unable to pay. With the exception of swimming lessons (which fall within the national curriculum and will go ahead nonetheless) a visit or activity will be cancelled if insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund it, or the school cannot fund it from another source.

When making requests for voluntary contributions, parents will not be made to feel pressurised into paying as it is voluntary and not compulsory. The School will not send colour coded letters to parents as a reminder to make payments and direct debit or standing order mandates will not be sent.

5. Day Visits

For visits where more than 50% 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.

For these visits the School will invite a voluntary contribution from parents to meet the costs, in accordance with Section 4.

For visits where less than 50% of the time spent on an activity falls during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside of school hours. In this instance a charge can only be applied if it is not part of the national curriculum, not part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at school and not part of religious education.

6. Vocal & Instrumental Tuition

Although the law states that, in general, all education provided during school hours must be free, instrumental and vocal music tuition is an exception to that rule.

St Mary's Primary School offers peripatetic music and vocal lessons through a number of private peripatetic teachers. These teachers request payment for these services directly to the responsible parent. The school will not receive any payment for these lessons neither will the money for these services pass via the school.

No charge will be made in respect of a pupil who is looked after by the authority (within the meaning of section 22(I) of the Children Act 1989).

7. Residential Visits

Residential visits offer valuable extracurricular opportunities for all pupils and in particular for pupils who do not get the chance to experience these opportunities as part of their family life experiences.

Residential visits are considered by St Mary's Primary School to be Optional Extras and as such charges will be made for board and lodgings (and depending on the duration or timing of the visit - i.e. outside schooling hours) also transportation costs and costs of the activities undertaken during the visit.

Where the visit takes place during schooling hours, board and lodgings will not be charged but, instead, voluntary contributions will be requested from parents in relation to transport and the cost of the activities undertaken during the visit but no pupil will be treated differently according to whether or how much their parents have contributed. The contribution requested from individual pupils will be equal to the cost charged by the organisation providing the residential visit divided equally by the number of pupils participating.

Parents who can prove that they are in receipt of the benefits listed in Section 10 will be exempt from paying the cost of the board and lodging. The Headteacher may also waive or reduce the cost of transport and activities for these pupils following discussion with the parents.

8. Swimming Lessons

Swimming forms part of the National Curriculum and as such St Mary's Primary School will offer swimming lessons to pupils, at some point during their time at the school, up to the point school has assessed them as meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Voluntary contributions will be requested from parents to cover the cost of the hire of, and transport to and from, the swimming pool. However, no pupil will be prevented from participating because his/her parent cannot or will not make a contribution. There is no obligation on parents to provide a contribution and if insufficient monies are received to cover the cost from parental contributions, it should be noted that the school will fund the costs from another source as swimming instruction forms part of the national curriculum and, therefore, the activity will not be cancelled.

9. Classroom Materials

The school may make a charge to cover the costs of materials/ingredients for subjects such as design or food technology where parents have indicated in advance that they would like their child to bring home the finished product.

10. Optional Activities Outside of the School Day

The School will charge for optional, extra activities provided outside of the school day when these activities are not part of the National Curriculum or religious education, nor are they part of an examination syllabus. These activities include, but are not limited to:

- Breakfast Club
- Twiglets After School Club

- School clubs which are run by outside organisations/people.

10. Remissions

Parents who are in receipt of the following benefits can apply for Free School Meals:

- 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 Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're 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 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

Children who are receiving Free School Meals will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging for residential visits.

At the Headteacher's discretion, and on an individual basis, a subsidised place at Breakfast Club or Twiglets After School Club may be offered to pupils who would benefit socially and emotionally from such an arrangement.

11. Review of the Policy

This Charging Policy shall be reviewed each year by the Resources Committee, with any recommended changes approved by the full Governing Body.

The next review is due on, or prior to, 3rd February 2024

Signed: Agreed at Resources Governors Meeting on 3rd February 2023

Date: February 2023