



# Charging Policy

## 1. Introduction

Under the charging provisions set out in legislation, governing boards and local authorities of state funded schools may choose to charge for certain defined activities, but only if they have first drawn up charging and remissions policies. These policies should be made available to parents on request.

- 1.1 All activities, materials and transport, except as detailed in Section 2, which take place wholly or mainly within the school hours for the benefit of registered school pupils, shall be free.
- 1.3 Where less than 50% of the number of hours spent on non-residential activity takes place outside school hours, then that activity shall be deemed to take place during school hours.
- 1.4 In the case of an activity involving an overnight stay, it shall be deemed to take place outside school hours if more than 50% of the number of half-day sessions is spent away from school. A half-day means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight.

## 2. Charges to be Applied

2.1 Charges will be made in the following circumstances only:

- (a) To cover the costs of providing "optional extras" i.e. activities which take place outside school hours and are not a necessary part of either the National Curriculum or a religious education programme under Section 10 of the Education Reform Act 1988.
- (b) To cover the costs of preparing for public examinations not on the DfE list of Prescribed Public Examinations.
- (c) To cover the costs of entering a pupil for a prescribed public examination for which the school has not prepared that pupil.
- (d) To recover the costs of entering a pupil for a prescribed public examination if the pupil fails without good reason to sit the examination. Good reasons will include:

Sickness or injury, for which a medical note can be provided.

Absence, due to death of a member of the pupil's immediate family.

- (e) To recover the costs of deliberate damage, or damage due to negligence, of school property or items permitted to be on the school premises.

- (f) For Board and Lodging where an activity involves pupils in nights away from home (e.g. Outdoor Education Centre or at a Field Study Council Centre).
- (g) To cover the costs of materials used in practical lessons in school hours for which the parents/guardians have notified the school in advance that they wish to own the finished product.

2.2 No charges may be made for any materials necessary to undertake an activity during school hours. Parents/guardians may be invited to provide their children voluntarily with particular items but no child should be at a disadvantage if a parent/guardian is unable or unwilling to contribute in this way. For practical lessons such as CDT or Home Economics, schools must be prepared to provide or pay for any ingredients, materials, equipment etc. needed for practical subjects. Parents/guardians who are willing to contribute in cash or in kind are encouraged to do so on a voluntary basis. If parents/guardians wish to own the finished product of a practical lesson the school may charge or ask parents/guardians to provide the ingredients or materials. This must be done in advance. At present students are usually asked to pay in cash or in kind for materials and ingredients for use in Home Economics lessons. With changes in the syllabuses required by GCSE and possible inclusion of Home Economics in the National Curriculum as part of the delivery of Technology, capitation at current levels will be under greater strain. It is also likely that as parents/guardians realise they do not have to contribute, less will.

### 3. Activities for which charges may be made.

- (a) Individual music instrument tuition – unless it forms part of the National Curriculum or forms part of the syllabus for a prescribed Public Examination. At present, all music tuition in the Authority is free of charge. It would be possible to charge students for any lessons after school or on Saturday mornings. Students do, however, pay for examination fees.
- (b) Board and lodgings on any residential trip – even if it takes place during school hours. At present parents are asked to contribute to a proportion of such costs where pupils attend residential activities at the Outdoor Education Centre and Field Study Centres. It is proposed that such charges should continue to be made.
- (c) 'Optional extras'. These are defined as activities which take place 'wholly or mainly outside school hours' and are not designed to fulfil any requirements specified in the syllabus for a prescribed public examination; or are not related to fulfilment of the National Curriculum or religious education requirements laid down in Section 10 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Optional extras could include, therefore,

- Lunchtime and after-school clubs
- Weekend sporting activities
- Residential trips outside school hours
- Evening theatre trips
- Current after school classes – dance, canoe, capsized drill, football, netball, judo, games, fencing and horse riding.

Parents/ guardians must choose to allow their children to take part in optional extras, and must agree in advance to meet any charges. Any charges made must not exceed the cost of the provision.

Teaching staff costs may be included in the total cost only if the teacher engaged to teach the optional extra is on a separate contract. The costs of any optional extra undertaken by any pupil whose parents/guardians are unable to pay may not be included in the charge to other pupils but must be funded by the Governing Board or the LA (depending on which is funding the activity).

The Governing Board may fund optional extras from within its delegated budget or other funds at its disposal. It can then decide whether or not to pass on charges to parents/guardians.

- (d) Examinations, which are not on, the prescribed list. A charge could be made for the entry fee and any costs incurred in preparing the pupil for that examination if the preparation takes place outside of school hours.
- (e) Schools may also charge if they agree to enter a pupil for a prescribed public examination for which they have not prepared the pupil.
- (f) If a pupil fails to sit an examination (prescribed or otherwise) for which the school have paid or are liable to pay an entry fee may be recovered from parents/guardians. 'Good Reason' must be defined in the LA/Governing Board Charging Policy.
- (g) Although there is no reference in the Act the Circular advises Governors to make provision for requiring parents/guardians to pay for the cost of replacing damaged or broken goods.
- (h) Parents/Guardians may be charged for materials used in lessons such as Home Economics or CDT, if they have indicated in advance a wish to own the finished product.

#### **4. Voluntary Contributions.**

- (a) Schools are able to ask for voluntary contributions from parents/guardians for the benefit of the school or any school activities. Schools can, therefore decide to seek voluntary contributions from parents/guardians, e.g. to a general school fund, out of which certain school activities would be paid or to cover a specific activity such as a theatre trip or to purchase a finished product of a practical lesson.
- (b) If any voluntary contribution is sought from parents/guardians it must be made clear to them that they are not obliged to contribute and that no pupils will be treated differently with regard to activities during school hours according to whether or not parents/guardians have made a voluntary contribution.

#### **5. Activities arranged during school hours by a third party.**

Under the Act it is permissible for an organisation other than the LA or Governing Board to arrange an activity which will take place during school hours. Parents/guardians would ask the school to grant leave of absence to join the activity. Under the terms of Section 18 (4) the third party would be able to levy charges direct on the parents/guardians in return for service provided. The LA or Governing Board would not take part in the transaction and it would be for the parents/guardians, and any staff members released for the activity, to satisfy themselves about the adequacy of the arrangements made by the third party to secure the safety and welfare of the children. The Head Teacher and the Governing Board would need to consider whether or not the release of the children was justified, given the need to meet the statutory requirements of the school curriculum in respect of both those pupils

and those pupils remaining in school. Pupils are not to be granted more than two weeks leave of absence in any one year, save in exceptional circumstances.

### **Remissions Policy**

1. Parents in receipt of Income Support or Family Credit have a statutory right to full remission of costs in respect of board and lodging for any optional extras which are:
  - (a) required by the National Curriculum, or
  - (b) are part of an examination course, within or outside of school hours, provided by the school or LA, or are
  - (c) required to fulfil statutory duties relating to religious education.
  - (d) or take place wholly or mainly in school time.
- 1.a The school or LA may however provide subsidies above the statutory minimum if they wish to do so.
2. Where the authority makes a charge for the activities listed below it will remit in full charges to pupils whose parents receive Income Support or Family Credit.
  - (a) Residential activities at the Authority's Outdoor Education Centre and Field Study Centres.
  - (b) Examination fees, not included in the prescribed Public Examination List produced by the DfE, which result from music tuition at the Academy of Music.
3. Where an activity organised by the school falls within the criteria outlined in Section 1.1 above and involves a charge for board and lodging, governors must ensure that they remit these charges in full to pupils whose parents receive Income Support or Family Credit.

In other cases subsidy or remission is at the discretion of the board funding the activity. In practice however the LA would wish to see the families experiencing financial hardship should be reimbursed the full costs of board and lodging or 60% of full costs, whichever is greater. Governors are reminded that the provision of an allowance for educational visits is made within schools delegated budgets, which will assist in remitting these charges. Where a governing board adopts a remission policy which is less generous than that for which the provision has been made in the schools budget, then the LA may deduct the appropriate amount from its resource allocation formula. This prevents double funding and should encourage more generous remission levels.
4. When a school undertakes an activity where a charge for board and lodging can be made and statutory remission regulations apply, the Head teacher should advise all parents that anyone in receipt of Income Support or Family Credit is entitled to claim remission.